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**GERMAN-TONGAN DIASPORA:
*The Movement of German-Tongans
to Europe from 1920***

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Abstract

The German citizens who moved to the South Pacific during the colonization and emigration period of the mid to late 1800s were a unique breed. While many other German *Volk* moving to Brazil and the United States, for instance, built insular communities to preserve *Deutschtum* (“Germanness”—the German national ideal), South Seas Germans in Tonga did something different. Almost full integration with Tongans led to the German language and culture being all but lost after just the first generation. Although German-Tongan descendants growing up in the islands and elsewhere often have some idea of their European heritage, their German ancestry is usually not a decisive factor in their careers, homes, or lives. The fact that several German-Tongans have ended up back in Germany, the homeland of their forefathers, is interesting, given their confessed lack of connection to those earlier emigrants. This article explores relationships and conceived personal identities of Germans in Tonga historically and German-Tongans in Germany today, against the comparative backdrop of German emigration to other areas of the world .

Keywords: German Diaspora; Tongan Diaspora; German colonial history; Germans in Tonga; Polynesians in Europe; Mixed Race; German-Tongan; Tongan-German; Germans in the South Pacific; German Emigration; Tongan Emigration.

History of German Emigration to Tonga and Elsewhere

Germans began arriving in foreign nations in large numbers in the early 1800s, migrating from mostly rural areas of Germany.¹ As Stefan Manz, author of *Constructing a German Diaspora: The "Greater German Empire", 1871-1914*, writes: "[t]he key 'push-factor' [...] was the transition from predominantly agrarian to industrial societal structures, causing rifts in the labour market which could not absorb a [German] population which doubled in the course of the century."² In his article "Hallelujah, We're off to America!" Brian Lambkin gives the exact figures: "Between 1820 and 1879 about 3 million Germans went overseas, and by the end of the 19th century another 2 million had followed."³ Although the United States was the main recipient of these European emigrants, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, China, Southwest Africa and Australia were primary destinations for many.

One of these German emigrants was a man named Christian Friedrich August (August) Sanft, from Prussia. Family history reports that Sanft left Europe in 1850 for the United States, hoping to

¹ Bayern, Niedersachsen, and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern were some of the larger sources of emigrants abroad, although from the time of the turn of the century to the First World War, Brian Lambkin reports that "individual men and women emigrated from all parts of the German-speaking area." In "Hallelujah, We're off to America!: The European Cultures of Origin in Western, Central and Northern Europe." *Leaving Home: Migration Yesterday and Today*. Eds. Knauf, Diethelm and Barry Moreno. Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2010, p. 39.

² Stefan Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The "Greater German Empire", 1871-1914*. New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 26.

³ Brian Lambkin, "Hallelujah, We're off to America!: The European Cultures of Origin in Western, Central and Northern Europe." In *Leaving Home: Migration Yesterday and Today*. Eds. Knauf, Diethelm and Barry Moreno. Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2010, p. 39.

strike it rich in the California mining rush. By 1855, however, he had already travelled on to both Australia and Samoa, finally settling in Vava'u, Tonga, to work in the copra business, the “white gold” of the Pacific.⁴ Sanft was the first of an estimated over one thousand Germans who would eventually emigrate to, live, or work in Tonga from the mid-1800s to the early 20th century.⁵ By 1888 Germans would be responsible for importing and exporting a greater value of goods to and from Tonga than any other nationality when compared to the British, Danish, Americans, Chinese, French, or native Tongans.⁶ Yet, as will be seen, Germans in Tonga did not follow “normal” patterns of colonist or settler behaviour, as compared to other areas of the world in which numbers of emigrating Germans were far greater.

Not surprisingly, the United States was the main destination for most German emigrants at that time. Brian Lambkin reports that ninety percent of German citizens leaving Europe in the nineteenth century were bound for America,⁷ with a smaller percentage moving to Asia and the southern hemisphere—Africa, South America, and the Pacific. In general these German *Volk* were average citizens

⁴ Caroline Wolfram Irwin, *Beyond the South Seas: Wolfram Family History—1996*. North Logan: Family Printer, 1996, p. 1.1.

⁵ James Bade, “Tonga—The friendly Isles”. In *Leaving Home: Migration Yesterday and Today*. Eds. Knauf, Diethelm and Barry Moreno. Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2010, p. 171.

⁶ John March, *Tonga: Statistics of the Tonga Islands: For the Half-Years ending 30th June, 1887 and 1888: Trade and Commerce: Compiled from official records in the office of the collection of customs*. Suva: Government Printer, 1888. Microfilm, p. 2-5.

⁷ Brian Lambkin, “Hallelujah, We’re off to America!: The European Cultures of Origin in Western, Central and Northern Europe.” In *Leaving Home: Migration Yesterday and Today*. Eds. Knauf, Diethelm and Barry Moreno. Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2010, p. 39.

seeking a better life. Within the host cultures of their new nations, however, they were often elevated to places of social prestige, due largely to the desire of many host states to “whiten” their local populations.⁸ In many cases emigrating Germans did not mix widely with their indigenous neighbours, however, nor did they always intend to stay abroad permanently; formed communities (“enclaves”) of purely German-emigrants helped them maintain their mono-ethnicity. Jürgen Buchenau, one researcher of German communities in Mexico, describes this attitude of temporary emigration as the first and second phases of displayed national identity demonstrated by Germans in Central America. He maintains that German acculturation into a host nation usually followed a three-step pattern:

1. The formative phase of a “come, conquer, return home” mentality
2. The enclave phase of creating a “*Heimat* abroad”
3. The assimilationist phase of integration with indigenous language and culture

According to Buchenau, in Mexico this third phase did not begin to occur until after the end of World War II.⁹

⁸ “The Brazilian elite [...] was strongly influenced by racist theories based on presumably scientific criteria that gave the highest rating to so-called Nordic peoples, which, of course, included the Germans.” Frederick C. Luecke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*. Champaign: U Illinois P, 1999, p. 114. Kasia Cook, *Germans in Tonga: A Look at Racial Integration and Relations in the late-Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Centuries*. BA Honours Thesis. Provo, 2011, p. 3.

⁹ Jürgen Buchenau, “Blond and Blue-Eyed in Mexico City, 1812-1975.” In *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*. Eds. Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagan. Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2005, p. 86.

A similar pattern was true for Germans in Brazil. Frederick Luebke, author of *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*, writes that Germans living in ethnic enclaves in Brazilian cities often planned to stay only temporarily, and looked contemptuously down on the indigenous population in the meantime—they worked to keep themselves separate from any extensive interaction with their host culture. Reportedly this mind-set included a resistance to learning Portuguese and a desire to “perpetuate their own [German] language and culture indefinitely.”¹⁰ Luebke reports: “Because of the isolated character of most German rural settlements, the social interaction of the Germans with other Brazilians was infrequent and often superficial.”¹¹ The extent and effects of this inveterate segregation can be seen in more-modern Brazil, where according to the 1940 census, German was the second most commonly spoken language after Portuguese.¹² Today there are an estimated over 5 million Brazilian-Germans,¹³ and according to a 2008 article by Ciro Damke, a docent at West Parana State University in Brazil, the number of speakers of German in Brazil at that time was over 2 million.¹⁴

¹⁰ Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*. Champaign: U Illinois P, 1999, p. 115.

¹¹ Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*. Champaign: U Illinois P, 1999, p. 115.

¹² Instituto Brasileiro De Geografia E Estatística. “Censo Demográfico: População e Habitação.” Série Nacional Vol II. 1940. Web.

¹³ “[A Imigração Alemã no Brasil](#)”. *Deutsche Welle* (in Portuguese). Retrieved 8 June 2015. Web.

¹⁴ Ciro Damke. “Políticas lingüísticas e a conservação da língua alemã no Brasil.” *Revista de estudios literarios*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. 2008. Web.

German South-West Africa (GSWA) is another example of German expatriate behaviour. Modern-day Namibia, which was administrated as a German colony from 1884-1915, was the effectual diamond mine of the German colonial empire. Settlers who were drawn by the economic possibilities extensive copper and precious stone mining in the area presented moved there in droves from all areas of the German realm. At its peak population size it is reported that there were over 14,000 “white” people living in GSWA¹⁵; the majority of these were German. Yet racial prejudice kept the European settlers and indigenous people from peaceful cohabitation. By the early 1900s disagreements and subsequent violent “law-enforcement” enacted by colonial leaders led to almost complete annihilation of the Herero and Namaqua people, two indigenous groups living in GSWA.¹⁶ As in Brazil, Mexico, and other areas of the world, established segregated communities and tension between them prevented colonizers and indigenous people from extensive interaction. One of the most effective segregationist tools Germans in GSWA, Brazil and other areas of the world used were schools.

In 1905, the *Verein für das Deutschtum im Auslande* (VDA—Association for Germandom Abroad) published an annual report detailing its ideological aims, and deterrents to achieving them. “There is,” they wrote, “one menacing danger to Germandom abroad: the de-Germanisation (*Entdeuschung*) of our younger

¹⁵ Daniel Walther, “Creating Germans Abroad: White Education in German Southwest Africa, 1894-1914.” *German Studies Review* 24.2 (2001):325-351. Print.

¹⁶ Lewis H. Gann. “Marginal Colonialism: The German Case.” *Germans in the Tropics: Essays in German Colonial History*. Ed. Arthur J. Knoll and Lewis H. Gann. New York: Greenwood P, 1987. 1-17. Print.

generation [...] which is lost to Germandom and devoured by alien folkways. That is what we want to prevent.”¹⁷ One advocate of German schools, Mr Hans Amrhein, further explained:

The German school abroad is called to protect maternally the holiest achievements of our people which they helped to create in the homeland through a national education (Erziehung) in the foreign country as a true custodian. It [the school] leads the struggle (Kamp) out there against the dangerous, foreign spirits which court the German heart of our youth there. [...] in those places in foreign parts, where our brothers have erected for themselves a German hearth, the school aspires to maintain and to strengthen the humanity in the German character (Prägung). How soon would the inheritance of our fathers be made apparent and our people be made poor if the school, as conscientious trustee, did not always convey anew to the young progeny the ever-increasing cultural assets.¹⁸

It is obvious from Amrhein’s explanation that at some point, the German *Reich* began to take the issue of the *Germanisation* of its rising generation very seriously.

¹⁷ VDA, qtd. in Stefan Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871-1914*. New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 228.

¹⁸ Hans Amrhein, *Die deutsch Schule im Auslande*. Leipzig, 1905. 29-20. Qtd. in Daniel Walther, “Creating Germans Abroad: White Education in German Southwest Africa, 1894-1914.” *German Studies Review* 24.2 (2001):327-328. Print.

One of the “cultural assets” at risk to which Amrhein referred and the VDA specifically mentioned related to the languages spoken by Germans abroad. Specifically they were concerned at the lack of German language fluency among the rising generation of German or mixed-German children growing up in foreign lands. The idea that language carried the heart of cultural identity was a belief deeply held by many Germans at that time. Stefan Manz, in quoting Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), described it this way: “It [is] through a common language that humans interpret [] the world around them, and this create[s] the strongest possible social bond for a *Volk*.”¹⁹ Luebke described the lack of political unification as the reason language was so powerful: “[B]ecause Germany did not exist as a unified state until 1871, a German was simply someone who spoke the German language.”²⁰ Whatever the reason behind it, language preservation became the goal and purpose of many German schools at that time.²¹ By 1906 the concern for the perpetuation of Germandom abroad led to the establishment of an office for school affairs, under the umbrella of the Foreign Office of the German Reich. Teachers were trained through teaching seminaries, and although “conveying a sense of diasporic connectedness to pupils

¹⁹ Johann Gottfried Herder, qtd. in Stefan Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871-1914*. New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 229.

²⁰ Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*. Champaign: U Illinois P, 1999, p. 111.

²¹ An important distinction is the difference between schools established in diasporic German communities for the purpose of educating and acculturating their youth, and the German colonial schools which were established in Africa and China, for instance. In the first case the intent was to foster *Deutschtum* in ethnically German or part-German children. In the second it was the *Germanizing* of supposedly -inferior “natives.” This article focuses solely on the first case.

was not on the curriculum of these secular schools,”²² that is just exactly the peace of mind German schools in the colonies gave the nation back home.²³ Schools taught German subjects in the German way and brought the proverbial “taste of home” to each respective foreign nation.²⁴ Scholars estimate that by 1914 more than 5,000 German schools existed abroad, being on every continent. Although most were built in areas of the world with high concentrations of Germans (the US, Brazil, and Argentina, for example), even places with smaller populations of German emigrants (e.g. Russia, Romania, Panama, and Persia) were able to boast at least a handful of German schools.²⁵

Of course, not all Germans moving abroad planned to stay only temporarily, and not all felt towards their host culture the way those in Mexico, Brazil, and GSWA as described above did either. In writing about the counter-attitude to this displayed ethnocentricity, Luebke reports that there were some individuals (in Brazil) who felt differently:

Like any other immigrant group, the Germans [in Brazil]
[also] included many persons who were favourably

²² Stefan Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871-1914*. New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 232-33.

²³ According to Stephan Manz, German teachers being sent to schools abroad were instructed to “Go forth into the world and preserve the Germanness of the German youth you will find there, and make the indigenous youth which will approach you into friends of German *Bildung* and of the German *Volk*.” *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871-1914*. New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 238.

²⁴ Stefan Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871-1914*. New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 238.

²⁵ Stefan Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora: The “Greater German Empire”, 1871-1914*. New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 231.

disposed toward the language and culture of the host society and wanted to become part of it as quickly and as painlessly as possible. Through daily contacts at work, at the store, at church, in school, or even in the home, they learned Portuguese readily. Whether they learned quickly or slowly depended upon individual circumstances and whether they had good or poor opportunities for interaction with speakers of Portuguese.²⁶

These German individuals in Brazil, as Luebke indicates, did not seek out German schools to attend, and for this and other reasons integrated much more quickly.

Germans living in Tonga tended to follow this second pattern. Relations between Germans and Tongans were generally congenial, and although Germans were sometimes neighbours with each other, they did not tend to build exclusive communities or associate with each other as much as their countrymen in other areas of the world did.²⁷ One large contributor to their interdependence and integration with the Tongans around them was the lack of a German school there. Despite the high population of Germans in the Islands, which would certainly have warranted some kind of educational institution (and the report by Paula David, a German woman who lived with her businessman husband in Tonga from 1887-1894, that a German

²⁶ Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*. Champaign: U Illinois P, 1999, p. 116.

²⁷ See Paula David, *Zehn Jahre auf den Inseln der Südsee: 1887-1897*. Eds. Schlossmuseum Sonderhausen, James Bade and James Braund. Dresden, 2011 and Emma Schober, *South Seas Reminiscences: Mrs. Emma Schober in the Kingdom of Tonga 1902-1921*. Ed. Kurt Düring. Nuku'alofa: Island Press, 1997.

teacher did once come to Vava'u²⁸), perhaps due to Tonga's status as a British Protectorate, no German school was ever established in Tonga.

Being common German parents who generally believed in the need to provide a "proper German education" for their children, the next best option for many Germans living in Tonga was to send their children overseas for education. However existing options were almost exclusively English. Mrs. Emma Schober, the wife of a successful German businessman in Tonga and mother of three, described the unpleasantness of this situation:

Many German families resident in the South Seas placed their children in colonial boarding-schools. Then after some years the children returned as English and completely estranged from their parents. We did not want to share the fate of these families, rather we wished to give our three sons a German school education. The Riechelmans [sic] wanted the same for their children. But this was a problem for the future [because there was no German school available].²⁹

The lack of feasible options for Mrs. Schober's young sons to attend a German school in Tonga proved to be the catalyst for the Schober family's eventual return to their homeland in 1921, after nearly twenty years in the South Pacific. Mrs. Schober's further

²⁸ Paula David, *Zehn Jahre auf den Inseln der Südsee: 1887-1897*. Eds. Schlossmuseum Sonderhausen, James Bade and James Braund. Dresden, 2011, p. 27.

²⁹ Emma Schober, *South Seas Reminiscences: Mrs. Emma Schober in the Kingdom of Tonga 1902-1921*. Ed. Kurt Düring. Nuku'alofa: Island Press, 1997, p. 54.

explanation of the situation is illustrative of the duty many German parents felt to provide their children with a German education.

The year 1919 drew to a close. Heinerle was now six years old and we had to think seriously about sending him away to school. Mrs. Mills, an acquaintance of ours, had established a small private school and was teaching the European children their first lessons, all in English. Heinerle attended this school, but it could only be an interim solution.

During the year 1920 we came to the conclusion that the only possibly course of action was to migrate, with the children, back to Germany.

...

The thought of leaving our beloved South Seas home and all our dear brown friends was infinitely painful to me. ... But all Germans who live overseas and have children have the duty (if circumstances permit) to have them educated in their native land. Many German families ha[ve] realized too late the moral dangers present in the tropics.³⁰

It is unclear to what specific “moral dangers” Mrs. Schober refers, though a statement she makes about negative aspects of

³⁰ Emma Schober, *South Seas Reminiscences: Mrs. Emma Schober in the Kingdom of Tonga 1902-1921*. Ed. Kurt Düring. Nuku'alofa: Island Press, 1997, p. 56.

miscegenation in the islands, which will be mentioned in greater depth later, leaves room for speculation.

It definitely appears from the actions of some German parents of half-Tongan children, that they felt the same way towards the education of their children as Mrs. Schober describes. Three Wolfgramm brothers, well-known German businessmen in Vava'u who married and had children with Tongan women, were among them.³¹ One photograph from a family history source shows six young Wolfgramms as photographed in Germany after arriving from the Islands to go to school, circa 1920.³² Although several of the young people died in Germany while pursuing their education,³³ two are known to have returned to the Pacific,³⁴ one died as an adult in Germany³⁵, and one lived on to adulthood and pursued a successful career as a medical doctor in Berlin.³⁶ These children represent the exception—the few German or German-Tongan children who were taught to be German. Although the scope of this essay does not permit a look into each of their stories individually, overall, given the opportunities they were afforded, each of them conformed to the

³¹ Kasia Cook, *Germans in Tonga: A Look at Racial Integration and Relations in the late-Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Centuries*. BA Honours Thesis. Provo: UP, 2011, p. 43-52.

³² Wolfgramm and Sanft Family. Web. 22 Sept. 2014.

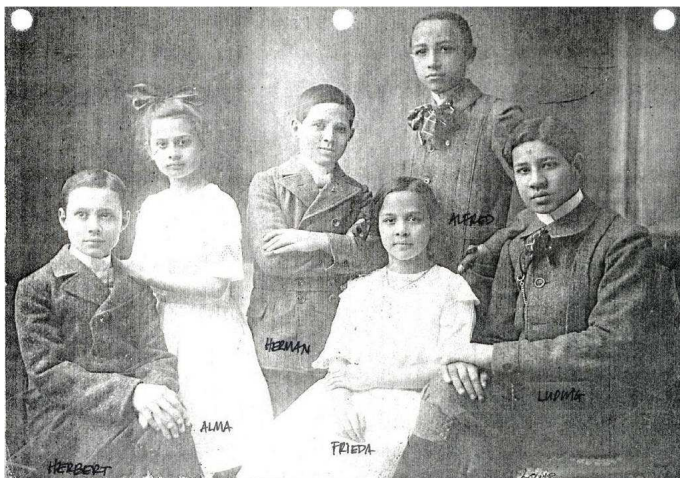
³³ Herbert, Heinrich, Fritz and Ludwig Wolfgramm

³⁴ Herman and Arthur Wolfgramm

³⁵ Frieda Wolfgramm. See Kasia Cook, *Germans in Tonga: A Look at Racial Integration and Relations in the late-Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Centuries*. BA Honours Thesis. Provo: UP, 2011, p. 43.

³⁶ Alma Wolfgramm. See James N. Bade, *Germans in Tonga*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014, p. 120.

ideological standards established by the VDA for the *Germanisation* of the rising generation.³⁷



But such was not the case for most others. For those German-Tongan children who either grew up in the Islands or were sent overseas to an English boarding school, being German was not something that was taught to or carried on by them. The lack of a school aside, German citizens living in Tonga did not even seem to interact with one another very often, at least not for purposes of cultural preservation, or to the extent Germans in other areas did. During her seven years in Tonga, Paula David wrote only four times of specific interactions with other Germans, though it is clear she

³⁷ Kasia Cook, *Germans in Tonga: A Look at Racial Integration and Relations in the late-Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Centuries*. BA Honours Thesis. Provo: UP, 2011, p. 43-52.

hoped for more.³⁸ Religious and cultural celebrations (like Christmas) were upheld as much as possible,³⁹ yet although Mrs. Schober reports a somewhat more extensive network of German friends and workmates than Mrs. David does, Tonga never offered institutions outside the family unit for instilling further *Deutschum* in the growing German or part-German population.⁴⁰ Thus, whereas many Germans living in other areas of the world had the luxury of relying on their largely-German communities to support the perpetuation of German language and culture even outside of school, overall Germans in Tonga did not.

Fred and Emily Wolfgramm were two of the first-generation German-Tongans growing up in Tonga after the turn of the century and around the beginning of the First World War, and their stories shed greater light on this time of inter-racial integration in the islands. Children of Ludwig Hermann Christian Wolfgramm and his wife Sela Maele, Emily now lives in the United States, as did Fred before his death in 2011. In 2010 the brother and sister gave an interview in which they were asked what aspects of German culture and life were passed on to them as children and young people in Tonga. They reported that they knew a few German words (“*ja*,” “*nein*,” and “*danke mein Herr*”), and they were taught to eat

³⁸ Paula David, *Zehn Jahre auf den Inseln der Südsee: 1887-1897*. Eds. Schlossmuseum Sonderhausen, James Bade and James Braund. Dresden, 2011, p. 17, 23, 27, 29.

³⁹ Emma Schober, *South Seas Reminiscences: Mrs. Emma Schober in the Kingdom of Tonga 1902-1921*. Ed. Kurt Düring. Nuku'alofa: Island Press, 1997, p. 15.

⁴⁰ Emma Schober, *South Seas Reminiscences: Mrs. Emma Schober in the Kingdom of Tonga 1902-1921*. Ed. Kurt Düring. Nuku'alofa: Island Press, 1997, p. 7-20, 35-56.

differently (i.e. at a European table). They felt that they knew what it meant to be German according to manners, but mostly, they just knew they were different from other Tongans. They were called *Palangi*, the Tongan word for “white person” or “outsider.” Their differences to other, full-Tongan children let them know they were not the same. As there was no formal training on what “being German” was, Fred and Emily reported that they were simply *Siamane*--German, or German-Tongan people.⁴¹ Continued research on descendants of German-Tongan families has shown that Emily and Fred’s story is not unique, and it allows for a clearer understanding of why German culture and language have not been passed on to modern descendants of German-Tongan families: one cannot preserve what one has not been given.

This lack of fully identifying with either culture brings into focus the “middle world” German-Tongan descendants often describe themselves as living in. Fred and Emily explained it as a difference from both their full-German or full-Tongan friends and relatives, and it was apparently something so obvious that even an outsider could recognize it—as a German woman living in the Tonga of the early 1900s, Mrs. Emma Schober recorded her thoughts on the miscegenation of the mixed-families, and especially the fate of the children:

Often I felt sorry that many of the German men living here [in Tonga] had made liaisons with native or half-

⁴¹ Fred and Emily Wolfgramm. Personal recorded interview, Las Vegas, Nevada, Sept 2010.

caste women. They quickly found that it was a mistake, but by then it was too late. Although Tongan women were very happy to marry a European, they were not suited. ... The children of these mixed marriages have to be objects of pity, because they are accepted nowhere, even when fine-looking and clever. The parents, particularly when German or other European, are usually kind and well-meaning, often sending them to Australia or New Zealand to secondary schools, where they study for many years. And the result? After years overseas the grown children return to their beloved South Seas homes, and it seems that their time away has raised them to different standards and Europeanised them. Yet the mother blood must be strong in them, because they slowly revert to the Tongan standards they left behind.⁴²

Mrs. Schober's description is very important as it illustrates conceptions of race, culture, prejudice, identity, and so-called "mixed-race" family life relative to Germans in Tonga at that time.

But times have changed. As evidenced by the widespread dispersion of Tongans (German-Tongans included), to many areas of the world outside of Tonga, emigration patterns to and from the islands have reversed since the nineteenth century, as have ideas about right and wrong regarding bi-racial families. A recent research trip to Germany and work with the German-Pacific Society (Deutsch

⁴² Emma Schober, *South Seas Reminiscences: Mrs. Emma Schober in the Kingdom of Tonga 1902-1921*. Ed. Kurt Düring. Nuku'alofa: Island Press, 1997, p. 13, 15.

Pazifische Gesellschaft), among other organisations, have unveiled a living German-Tongan diaspora which now reaches from the individuals' native islands back to the homeland of their original forefathers in Germany and wider Europe.

The remaining sections of this essay will illustrate how research about and interviews with two individuals with German-Tongan heritage, one having formerly lived in Germany and one currently living there, provide new answers to questions about German-Tongan ethnic identity in Europe including to what extent individuals with German-Tongan ancestry in Europe are aware of their heritage—how much culture was passed on to them—and how that heritage has influenced their choice to reside in Europe. In addition this article explores the ways in which Tenisia Hager and Falamoe Weber, respectively claim that their German-Tongan heritage has either benefited or proved a deterrent to their occupational success or treatment by others in Europe. Finally this essay focuses on statements of personal identity given by Tenisia and Falamoe to illuminate conceptions of race, culture, and heritage in a German-Tongan diasporic context.

The German-Tongan Diaspora in Europe Today

According to a study by Cathy Small and David Dixon, two experts on Tongan migration, there are an estimated 216,000 Tongans in the world, half of them living outside of Tonga, with “almost every household [in Tonga] ha[ving] a relative who is

resident in another country.”⁴³ One 2011 United Nations survey on migration, remittances, and development in Tonga reports Tonga’s expatriate community as being divided primarily between Australia (20%), New Zealand (40%), and the United States (40%), and “The CIA World Factbook in 2010 estimated 55 percent of migrant Tongans as resident in New Zealand and Australia, 36 percent in North America, 5 percent in Asia, 2 percent in Europe, and 1 percent each in Africa, Latin America[,] and [the] Caribbean.”⁴⁴

Tongans with German ancestry represent an even smaller percentage of the figures given. Yet those numbers still reach the thousands, with descendants of German emigrants to Tonga residing in each of the areas of the world mentioned. Of particular interest for this project are those currently living in Europe, or those who lived there for a significant amount of time.

In 2007, according to an informal survey by the German-Pacific Society among its members in Germany, there were thirty-one Tongan individuals living there (or at least participating in the Society).⁴⁵ A more recent estimation by a Tongan woman living near Stuttgart is that that number is now actually closer to fifty⁴⁶ Despite

⁴³ Cathy A. Small and David L. Dixon, “Country Profiles – Tonga: Migration and the Homeland.” In *Migration Policy Institute*. Washington, D.C.:MPI, 2004, 7-8. Web. 01 Sept. 2014.

⁴⁴ Pita Taufatofua, “Migration, Remittance and Development: Tonga.” In *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific Islands Report*. Rome: FAO, 2011. Web. 01 Sept. 2014. These numbers, of course, represent only those individuals who identify themselves as Tongan—numbers would be far greater for those who do have Tongan ancestry, yet identify more closely as another ethnicity.

⁴⁵ Manfred Aßmann, “Tongan list.” Private email correspondence. 26 Jun 2014.

⁴⁶ Falamoe Weber. Personal recorded interview, 11 Sept. 2014. Skype..

this modest population, there does not seem to be either an overarching reason for emigration to Germany, nor a clear pattern of settlement once there.

As the following stories from two German-Tongan women in Europe demonstrate, the catalysts behind Tongan and German-Tongan individuals' moves to Europe in the past forty years seem to have little to do with an interest in or feeling of connectedness to any European forefathers they may have. Rather, research reveals motivating factors varying from educational to occupational to personal—a few simply fell in love with a German citizen. Many Tongans now living in Germany trace their emigration to following the footsteps of a “trailblazing” relative, either a sister, brother, aunty, or cousin who had moved to Europe before them (such is the case for the two sisters described here). Similarly, although there seems to be a slightly larger percentage of Tongan individuals living in the south-western part of Germany,⁴⁷ there is no clear trend.

A more in-depth report of all Tongans in Germany, including the personal identities of next-generation German-Tongans born and raised in Germany, is not available⁴⁸ and would have been beyond the scope of this project. Instead this essay focuses in particular on the lives and experiences of just two Tongan sisters, to answer the

⁴⁷ I.e. closer to Stuttgart—this is based on information from Tenisia Hager (Personal recorded interview, 22 Sept. 2014) and Manfred Aßmann (“Tongan list.” Private email correspondence. 26 Jun 2014).

⁴⁸ This would be a marvellous project in the future and a great contribution to the world of German-Pacific studies.

questions posed above and compare the experiences of modern German-Tongans in Germany with the stories of their forefathers.

Tenisia Fau'ese Hager was one of the first Tongans to move to Germany in the past half-century. In fact, in a personal telephone interview from her present home in Christchurch in September 2014, she reported that she knew of only two other Tongans in Germany when she arrived (1983), with whom she came into contact over the course of her residency there.⁴⁹ Born and raised as the second of nine children on the main island of Tongatapu, Tonga in 1960, Tenisia (and her sister Falamoe, who will be discussed later) is a distant descendant of Friedrich Wilhelm Sanft, a trader from Pyritz, Prussia, who settled in Vava'u, Tonga around or slightly before 1873.⁵⁰ She reports that while she was always aware of her German ancestry when growing up, it was not a factor in her decision to move to Germany. Rather she was influenced by what she described as "simple romance." As a twenty-two year old nurse finishing her degree at Vaiola Hospital in Tonga in 1982, Tenisia met Robert Hager, a young doctor from Germany who was doing his practicum in the Islands. Over the course of a year Robert and Tenisia courted and fell in love. Tenisia ultimately decided to accompany Robert back to Germany where they would marry.

⁴⁹ Tenisia Hager. Personal recorded interview, 22 Sept. 2014. Telephone.

⁵⁰ According to online family history records, Friedrich married Fifita Haliote Afu in Tonga "about 1873." Therefore he would have had to have arrived in Tonga around or before then. In "Frederick Wilhelm Sanft, 1849-1928." Index. *FamilySearch*. Web. 3 Dec. 2014.

Although unsure how she would be received by her future parents-in-law, Tenisia described feeling shocked at being described first as “it” rather than by her name. Yet she is quick to defend her late husband's family: “You can imagine how [my in-laws] felt,” she explained. “They were this very old, very proud German family and now their son is coming home and saying how he is going to marry someone he met in an unknown island—I was just a little, shy black girl to them.” To Tenisia, not only was the language of her future husband’s family foreign, but their body language was as well. His parents greeted her very coolly. Coming from the “hugging, kissing tradition of the islands” Tenisia said that she was surprised because “those people [Germans] are a shaking-hands people. In the end they all hugged because of me, but in the beginning there was this far-away handshake.” Although initially treated as an exotic, foreign, and not wholly welcome intruder into the family, Tenisia reports that everything changed with her acquisition of the language.

Once I learned the language I was at home. All at once I would sit down and talk with the old fashioned people. [After three months and learning the language] I turned around and talked to [my husband’s mother]. It was like I went there [to Germany] to educate them. [My mother in law] turned around and told everyone “oh my gosh, it talks just like you and me!” They had more respect. [My mother-in-law] told her friends “Oh my gosh, it must be intelligent,” because they didn’t think that after three months my German would be so fluent.

Once I spoke [the German language] I told them exactly what I liked and everything. The more and more I came with my own talking, I made them look [at the world more]—they asked about my country. It was education for them every day. And all at once I was the one who actually t[old] them things. They were absolutely primitive. No one had ever flown in a plane. They only knew the things around them.

Tenisia's description here is illuminating in many ways. Firstly, despite being the one from the supposedly backward, third-world country, she was actually a more well-rounded young citizen at twenty-two than her parents-in-law, who were first-world baby boomers. Secondly, her description of them as "absolutely primitive," is a reflection of the closed mind-set she encountered when first moving to Germany. Despite having German heritage herself, Tenisia says that her skin tone is "very dark," and she doesn't look as though she has any European (white) ancestry. She mentions that her parents-in-law and first friends in Germany saw her as nothing but "a black girl from an unknown tiny island"—a narrow and racist view on any level. However, as she recalls, that mind-set gradually changed with her acquisition of the language and continued stay in Germany. Over time Tenisia reports that she came to feel very happy and at home there.

But Tenisia's story in Germany at that time ended very tragically. She gave birth to a son in 1984 and was six months pregnant with their second child when her husband was killed in a

car accident in 1985. Although she had previously felt “*zuhause*” (at home) in Germany, Tenisia described all of a sudden feeling “*fremd*.” “I didn’t belong there,” she said. “The only person I belonged to was gone and I didn’t want to belong to that country anymore.” Tenisia briefly returned to her family (who had since moved to New Zealand) to give birth to her daughter Roberta, named after her late husband. But due to visa restrictions on her still-Tongan passport she was forced to return to Germany in 1986. This time she chose to take her younger sister with her.

Falamoe Fau’ese Weber was the fifth of her parent’s children. Born and raised in Tonga until she was eighteen years old, Falamoe finished her last two years of high school in New Zealand before moving to Bamberg, Germany in 1985 to be a babysitter to her sister’s two young children. Visa restrictions meant that it was not allowable for her to stay in the country without either a student visa or marriage to a German citizen, so after studying the German language for one and a half years, she enrolled at Bamberg University in 1986 where she studied Business Administration.

It was around the time that Falamoe entered university that Tenisia met her next partner, a Dutch man who was living in New Zealand. As she still wanted to return to her family in New Zealand with her children, Tenisia left Germany in 1986 for Christchurch, where she lives to this day. Yet her ties to Germany remain. “I am a lucky one. I think me and my kids have travelled to Europe every second or third year of their whole lives,” she reports. Mostly this travel was to visit their father’s parents in Bavaria, and Tenisia states

that both of her children to Robert have chosen to learn German and keep it up in order to be able to speak with their extended family. Tenisia herself has never lost her German; she is a polyglot, speaking more than half a dozen languages fluently including Maori, Spanish, German, French, Japanese, Tongan, English, Italian, and Dutch. She credits her young adult life in Germany with helping her get started down this path.

Tenisia's story is unusual and interesting. To leave her home islands for a country on the other side of the world is testament to her personal courage and adventurous spirit. One might suppose that her own German heritage might have contributed to that decision. However as stated, Tenisia never felt especially connected to her European heritage, and she says that it was not a motivating factor in her decision to go to Germany. She also reports the fear and worry expressed by others she encountered in the Islands when she told them she was moving to Germany. "They said 'Why? Why would you go there? That's Hitler-land. Don't you know anything? Aren't you scared?'"⁵¹ Tenisia's story reveals ethnocentricity and cultural stereotyping on both sides.

Falamoe's story is a bit different. Despite being left in Germany by herself after Tenisia's return to New Zealand, Falamoe explains that she does not remember ever feeling alone or out of place. During the time she was living and studying in Germany, she remembers returning to visit her family in New Zealand on several

⁵¹ Tenisia Hager. Personal recorded interview, 22 Sept. 2014. Telephone.

occasions but never for any great length of time. Regardless of obvious racial differences between her, a Polynesian girl, and her white German acquaintances, she reports having many friends in Germany who, when they commented on or questioned her ethnicity, either thought she was from South America or a “war baby”—the product of a German military father stationed somewhere exotic, and a “native” mother.⁵² Yet Falamoe was very happy in Germany. By 1986 she had already met her future husband. When asked how connected she felt to her Tongan heritage at that time, having already learned German and with no other islanders around her, Falamoe answered that although she always “felt Tongan,” it was not at the front of her mind. Besides, there was not much room to practise “being Tongan” in the hustle and bustle of business-comes-first Germany. After marrying in 1993, she and her husband, an electrical engineer, settled near Stuttgart. Falamoe gave birth to their daughter Liana (a member of yet another generation of German-Tongans) a few years later.

It was not until the next decade, after more Tongans had moved to Germany, that Falamoe began to go back to her Island roots. Whereas Tenisia reported knowing only one or two other Tongans in Germany in the 1980’s, by the turn of the century and through the establishment of the German-Pacific Society, that tiny network had grown to over a dozen Tongan individuals and families living and working in Germany.⁵³ It was through the Society that Falamoe met

⁵² Falamoe Weber. Personal recorded interview, 11 Sept. 2014. Skype.

⁵³ Falamoe Weber. Personal recorded interview, 11 Sept. 2014. Skype.

a few Tongan friends, with whom she started a Tongan dance group in 2001. She reports that regular practices and performances over the next few years became the starting point for her to be able to reconnect in Germany with her Tongan culture. However, she opted not to teach her daughter, now age sixteen, the Tongan language, and infrequent visits to the islands create a sense of separation from mainstream Tongan culture and life.

Now, in 2014, Falamoe has been married for over twenty years and continues to live and work in Germany. She and her husband are the owners of a successful, medium-sized, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning company in Stuttgart. When asked how she describes herself, Falamoe laughed and said, “I think I am a very *German Tongan*”. She joked about the cultural elements she has absorbed from her German surroundings (talking about the weather, wanting to have all of her time structured), which she says her Tongan friends and family constantly comment on. As a milestone, Falamoe also talked about how she felt when taking the German citizenship test in July of this year. She said,

All those years it was very tiring to have to apply for a visa to go everywhere [when she wanted to travel or go places internationally], but I never really felt comfortable with applying for German citizenship. But I did it this year and I was so surprised with how comfortably I identify myself with being German, with the German citizenship also. So it’s really accepting it, after such a long time and living here for such an amount of time, and

adapting yourself. ... But through that I am really Tongan-German. Or German-Tongan. A very German Tongan. In my nucleus, I think I am still Tongan.⁵⁴

Falamoe's story seems to illustrate that she relates most closely to the culture and traditions she has spent the most amount of time in and has adopted. She describes how she stands out among her Tongan peers when she visits the Islands, and that life there is much too casual for her now. Although she specifically mentioned feeling as if there is a "puzzle piece inside [her] that is missing"—referring to her desire to "do something for Tonga," in the end, she doubts that she would be entirely happy if she returned to live there. She feels that she has changed too much.

Tenisia's and Falamoe's stories are not only interesting personal accounts but important narratives of living conceptions of identity within a diaspora. They are illustrative of several key points relevant to the questions of the larger "German-Tongan Diaspora" project. It is clear from the women's stories that although they are both aware of and proud of the German parts of their heritage, strong

⁵⁴ Falamoe Weber. Personal recorded interview, 11 Sept. 2014. Skype. The citizenship law in Germany is notoriously strict. Until December 2014, dual citizenship was allowed only if both citizenships had been acquired from birth (e.g. a child born to a German mother and an American father), but the other citizenship had to be surrendered at the age of twenty-three if the person wished to maintain their German citizenship. Exceptions existed only in the case of an EU or Swiss national, or in the case of individuals from countries which do not allow their citizenship to be relinquished—these were allowed to retain their dual-nationality indefinitely. Having been changed in 2014, although the new law allows children of foreign parents who have been raised in Germany to now maintain dual citizenship past the age of twenty-three, this was not the case at the time for Falamoe, even if the new exceptions had applied to her. Instead, her German naturalisation in July 2014 required the relinquishment of her Tongan citizenship and passport. Up until that time (while living as a German permanent resident), she had proudly retained both.

ties to it was not a key factor in either of them deciding whether or not to live in Germany. For both women, main reasons for remaining in Germany had to do with love, friendship and a sense of belonging. These things were experienced by both of them as they learned the language and sought to fully integrate themselves within their host society. Despite reporting certain distinctive physical characteristics like “very *palangi*-looking” relatives, nothing significant regarding heritage or cultural identity was passed down from their German forefather to become a factor in their decision about where to live. In the same vein, neither sister reports that the German part of their heritage was ever a contributing factor to either any occupational success or their treatment by others in Germany. Tenisia’s story about her parents-in-laws’ attitude to her is illustrative of their racism and ignorance, but she is extremely forgiving in her recollection. She did not mention other negative experiences she may have had in Germany, and Falamoe mentioned none. Thus it is unclear what, if any, effect this treatment had on either woman’s conception of her own identity.

Aside from treatment by others, both women relate that living in Germany—the culture itself—is something that has most definitely had an impact on the way they perceive their own identity. Tenisia reports that she is still Tongan, but as she is now integrated with so many other cultures, she feels little need to identify herself—she lets others make the judgement for themselves as belonging to one specific culture or another when they meet her. Falamoe, on the other hand, is very proud of and open about her Tongan identity. She

reports that her nationality is often something that is brought up even in business—her husband’s partners will make a point to research Tonga before business meetings in order to understand her better or to impress. At the same time, Falamoe herself acknowledges that she is no longer a “full” Tongan. Her language and behaviour have changed, and the way she thinks has also been altered.

The Fau’ese sisters have come a long way, literally and figuratively, since growing up in Havelu in Tonga. For both, residence in Germany has forever changed them. From Tenisia’s becoming a young widow to Falamoe’s development into a successful business owner, neither have followed a “normal” path of residence in and continued strong ties with their mother nation, language, or culture. Like their German forefathers more than a century earlier, these women have fully adapted to their host nations, making them, and the language, their own.

Conclusion

When looking at worldwide German emigration from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, two common patterns stand out. Either emigrants conformed and assimilated to their new host nations, as was the case in Tonga, or, what was more common, they formed enclave societies which assisted in the preservation of *Deutschtum* into a more modern age. The pattern these emigrants chose had a direct result on their progeny. As the stories of Tenisia and Falamoe illustrate, the lack of cultural handover from earlier

generations means that the experiences of modern German-Tongans are decidedly different from that of Brazilian-Germans today, for example, many of whom claim much stronger organic ties to both German language and culture.⁵⁵ This juxtaposition between descendants of Germans who left Germany around the same time can only be attributed to the differences in the emigration practices of Germans in Tonga versus those in other areas.

Additionally, the stories of Tenisia and Falamoe, as representatives of a modern German-Tongan generation, demonstrate that although the island nation of Tonga is geographically small, it is rich in a history and reach which intersects that of many other countries. Although the Germans who moved to Tonga in the late 1800s failed to establish effective methods for preserving *Deutschtum* in future generations, many of their German-Tongan descendants have nevertheless brought their stories full circle. Over time, with moves to and residence in Germany, Tenisia Hager and Falamoe Weber repeated the pattern set by their progenitors, but in reverse. They have adapted, acculturated, and changed, as reflected in their own descriptions of their personal identities.

In the world of mixed-race Diasporas the stories of these two women are not unique. Many bi-ethnic individuals all over the world have similar stories of migration, acculturation, and change. They

⁵⁵ See Prof. Dr. João Klug, "Wir Deutschbrasilianer: Die deutsche Einwanderung und die Herausbildung einer deutschbrasilianischen Identität im Süden Brasiliens." *Tópicos 1* (2004), 26-27.

are, however, important, inasmuch as they assist in answering questions about whether or not individuals with German-Tongan ancestry living in Europe feel a particular connection to the continent because of their heritage and cultural patterns set by their progenitors, and how they perceive their own identity. Despite reporting their lack of connection with their German ancestry while growing up, both sisters now claim that heritage proudly, and personal experience has helped them to feel more connected to their original forefathers and to others. In Tenisia's own words, "I am always Tongan inside, but I don't have to be just Tongan. I am at home with everyone."⁵⁶

⁵⁶Tenisia Hager. Personal recorded interview, 22 Sept. 2014. Telephone.

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