

Book Review

John Leman, lecturer, CLTC

Semisi Nau, *The Story of My Life: A Tongan Missionary at Ontong Java*, edited, and with an introduction, by Allan K. Davidson (Suva Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1996).

Mission histories and biographies of missionaries have tended to focus on the role of the white missionaries, and to overlook the vital part played by Pacific Islanders themselves. Alan Tippet's well-known book, *The Deep Sea Canoe* (1997), was written to help correct this imbalance, by focusing on the role of the Pacific Islanders in spreading the gospel throughout the Pacific.

Story follows the tradition of *The Deep Sea Canoe*. It describes the career of Semisi Nau, a Tongan missionary at Ontong Java, from 1905 to 1919. Ontong Java, is a low-lying atoll, in the northern part of the Solomon Islands.

Semisi Nau's own story is actually a very small part of the book, less than 40 pages. Unfortunately, the story is not complete, but stops abruptly in mid-sentence, somewhere in 1914. This is because the latter part of Semisi's manuscript is missing. Although the story is very interesting, the reader may feel frustrated at not being able to read the whole account.

The introduction, written by Allan Davidson, of New Zealand, actually forms the biggest part of the book, about 80 pages. This provides some of the background details, so the reader can get a better understanding of Semisi's story. He writes in a fairly scholarly way, with extensive use of endnotes, which might appeal to the student of Pacific mission history.

My guess is that the book will be of greatest interest to the people of Ontong Java, to the church in Tonga, and to students of mission history in general.