

Tooa, the nephew of Malietoa, who acted as spokesman, and whose countenance betokened the interest he felt in the business, attracted attention in the second degree. Then came Mole, the son of Malietoa, Maletau, their general, the most renowned leader in the war of Aana, and Tai-ma-le-lagi, Malietoa's brother. There were also present a number of chiefs of less distinction, among whom was old Pea of Apia; although he was compelled to take his place, yet he did not fail to be conspicuous, not merely by his personal appearance, but by his officiousness.

The proceedings were conducted with great ceremony, but there was a marked difference between this fono, and the solemnity of our Indian councils. The Samoan assembly appeared more quiescent, the proceedings exhibited more refinement, and the customs partook of an Asiatic character.

In all such meetings, a rigid order of precedence, that seems well understood by every one, is established; all conversation is carried on in a whisper; no one is seen standing in the presence of a superior, and sitting with outstretched legs is considered indecorous. Articles were never passed over a person, and no native ever ventured to come in contact with a chief.

The background on the side of the natives was filled up with inhabitants from different parts of the island.

On the opposite side of the building, the officers of the squadron and the missionaries formed a numerous group. Among the latter was our friend Mr. Williams and his son, whom I had appointed to act as consul until the pleasure of the government of the United States was known, and whom it was intended to present in this capacity to the meeting, in order that he might be recognised formally by the chiefs, Messrs. Heath, Mills, and Wilson were also present; and Mr. Heath, who was believed to be best acquainted with the Samoan language, was kind enough to officiate as our interpreter.

The object I had in view, in requesting the fono to be called, was to procure the formal enactment of laws and regulations which might secure to our whale-ships a certainty of protection and security, and at the same time to prevent impositions being practised by them upon the native government, of which, as has been stated, complaint had been made. To the breach of these laws, it was intended that the penalty of a fine should be attached, in order to secure obedience to them.

The meeting being organized, I in the first place presented Mr. John Williams, as the consul of the United States, whom the chiefs recognised as such with great willingness and satisfaction.