The Journal of Sāmoan Studies

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Cover design by Nadya Vaa of Capital Designs

The cover design by Nadya Va’a comprises abstractions of breadfruit leaves and ocean colours illustrating the growth and development of Sāmoa, its natural resources and land. The fale motif represents the social, political, economic and religious structures of Sāmoa, with tapa (siapo) motifs and textures in the design referencing fa'asāmoa and cultural heritage. The diagonal elements from old tapa designs symbolize quantified information.
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Climate Change Opportunities for Small Island Developing States (SIDs) – the Sāmoan experience.

Susana Tau’a’a, National University of Sāmoa

Abstract

The paper explores the opportunities that climate change offers for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) with particular emphasis on Samoa. There is an extensive literature reporting on the adverse impacts of sea level rise, especially on small islands and low lying coastal areas with the possibility of wiping out entire island communities. A further two-degree rise in global temperature will fuel more frequent and severe tropical cyclones /hurricanes as witnessed with Irma and Maria in the Caribbean in September 2017. Increasing ocean acidity will not only threaten the livelihood of fishing communities in the SIDS, but will also accelerate erosion of coastal infrastructures particularly sea walls and coastal roads. Among this gloom and doom, there is optimism in the positive influences and opportunities that climate change may generate for Samoa. Green Climate Fund (GCF)resources are pivotal to address climate change threats, risks and vulnerabilities that Samoa are experiencing since the completion of the first assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1990, the same year cyclone Ofa struck the Samoa islands. The opportunities presented by GCF are highlighted as the way forward and around the ongoing climate change conversation.

Keywords: Climate change, livelihood, sea level rise, opportunities.

Introduction

The paper explores some critical issues pertaining to the impacts of climate change on Small Island States (SIDS) with particular reference to the Sāmoa group of islands. But first, a recap of how ‘climate change’ is defined in the literature. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change is a change in the state of the climate as a result of natural and man-made activities as manifested in changing statistical information (such as average temperatures, rainfall variability) collected over extended periods of time (IPCC Fourth Assessment Report 2007). The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) definition of climate change, however, focuses on human activities and how they alter global temperatures as observed over comparable time frames (United Nations 1992: 7). Putting this climate change definition into perspective is best illustrated by looking at the impacts on small island states (SIDs). The 2014 SIDs conference in Apia, Sāmoa, generated a plethora of discussion papers and publications on the impacts of climate change on small island states. For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth and Fifth Assessment Reports give a succinct and clear indication of what is in store for SIDS in terms of air temperature increases and precipitation change over three 30 year periods in the different regions (Table 1 and 2).

Table 1: Projected increase in air temperature (degree centigrade) by region, relative to the 1961-1990 period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2010-2039</th>
<th>2040-2069</th>
<th>2070-2099</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean</td>
<td>0.60-2.19</td>
<td>0.81-3.85</td>
<td>1.20-7.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>0.48-1.06</td>
<td>0.79-2.45</td>
<td>0.94-4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Ocean</td>
<td>0.51-0.98</td>
<td>0.84-2.10</td>
<td>1.05-3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Pacific</td>
<td>0.49-1.13</td>
<td>0.81-2.48</td>
<td>1.00-4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Pacific</td>
<td>0.45-0.82</td>
<td>0.80-1.79</td>
<td>0.99-3.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IPCC Fourth Assessment Report 2007
Table 2: Projected Change in Precipitation (%) by region, relative to the 1961-1990 period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2010-2039</th>
<th>2040-2069</th>
<th>2070-2099</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean</td>
<td>-35.6 to +55.1</td>
<td>-52.6 to +38.3</td>
<td>-61.0 to +6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>-14.2 to +13.7</td>
<td>-36.3 to +34.2</td>
<td>-49.3 to +28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Ocean</td>
<td>-5.4 to +6.0</td>
<td>-6.9 to +12.4</td>
<td>-9.8 to +14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Pacific</td>
<td>-6.3 to +9.1</td>
<td>-19.2 to +21.3</td>
<td>-2.7 to +25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Pacific</td>
<td>-3.9 to +3.4</td>
<td>-8.23 to +6.7</td>
<td>-14.0 to +14.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IPCC Fourth Assessment Report 2007

**Risks and Hazards**

The tropical and sub-tropical locations of SIDS imply strong ocean-atmosphere interactions that determine the climatic variations observed over the years. Extreme weather conditions such as hurricanes and tropical cyclones are linked to increased storm surges, coastal flooding and erosion causing extensive damages to coastal infrastructure. The small size of many SIDS mean that when hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes and drought strike, the entire island(s) are affected. In the case of Sāmoa, it is expected to receive more frequent and extreme rainfall events as well as more frequent and longer dry spells (UNDP 2011) that will pose serious risks to agriculture, food and water resources as well as the general health of the population.

This paper presents a case study from Sāmoa where positive influences and possible opportunities generated by climate change are presented.

**Sāmoa**

Sāmoa (formerly Western Sāmoa) is situated in the central South Pacific between latitudes 13º 15’ and 14º 5’ south and longitudes 171º 20 and 172º 50’ west. The group consists of ten volcanic islands of Upolu, Savaii, Manono, Apolima which host a population of 187,820 and the remaining smaller islands, Namu’a, Nu’utele, Nu’ulua, Nu’usafe’e, Nu’ulopa and Fanuatapu are designated tourist sites, bird sanctuaries or village conservation lands (SBS 2011). The islands cover a land area of 2,830 sq.km with a coastline of about 403 kilometers and are aligned in a southeast-northwest direction along a chain of volcanic vents of which the oldest are in the southeast and youngest in the northwest (Ward and Ashcroft 1998). The rock mass is volcanic basalt from the sub crustal magmatic material common to the Pacific Basin and built progressively higher by successive lava flows, producing four distinct topographic divisions: lowlands (sea level to about 750 ft.), foothills 750ft to the start of the upland plateau of 1,800-2,000 ft), upland (2,000ft to about 4,000 ft.) and the highlands above 4,000 ft. (Wright 1963: 11).

Sāmoa is one of the Least Developed Countries that graduated to Developing Country status in 2010. But the decision to graduate into a Developing country status was put on hold for three years due to the global financial crisis around that time and the 2009 tsunami that killed 155 people and completely destroyed several coastal villages in the south and south-east coast of Upolu Island. In January 2014, Sāmoa moved from a Least Developing Country to a Developing Country status with a global Human Development Index ranking of 94 out of 182. Sāmoa is placed fourth out of fifteen Pacific Islands in the Pacific Human Development Index (World Bank 2011: 11).
The economic basis of Sāmoa is premised on foreign aid, private remittances, services (tourism), agriculture and fishing. According to the Asian Development Bank Outlook for 2016, the country’s GDP stood at 6.6 percent (785.9 million US dollars) in 2016 propelled by a 41.0 percent increase in fisheries and a 9.4 percent increase in visitor arrivals (Asian Development Bank 2017). Similar increases in Hotels and restaurants income were recorded at 36.9 percent due to higher visitor spending despite slower growth in visitor arrivals. Steady tourism and low fuel prices contributed to 21.9 percent growth in transport during the year (Asian Development Bank 2017). However, a lower growth of 2.0 percent is predicted in 2017 and will slow down to 1.5 percent in 2018.

**Positive influences of climate change**

Any positive influences of climate change for Sāmoa can be conceptualized through the Government of Sāmoa support and ratification of several conventions, agreements and treaties related to climate change and sustainable development. By committing the country to multilateral systems both at the global and regional levels demonstrates how Sāmoa views these systems as a vehicle to address climate change. Actions to address climate change cut across all levels from government to non-government, private sector, village and community to households and individuals. For instance, piloting climate change adaptation in the coastal zones targets rural areas on a national scale. There is also capacity building for government ministries across all sectors at the national level through National Adaptation Programmes of Action to identify priority activities to address urgent and immediate needs to adapt to climate change (Pacific Center for Environment and Development 2011).

The increasing volume of scientific evidence forecasting rising sea levels and increased intensity and frequency of tropical storms in the Pacific region is gradually aiding in convincing Sāmoans that climate change poses a real threat to the livelihoods of communities and their ecosystem services. Cyclone Evans in 2012 demonstrated the value of mangroves in coastal protection, where coastal areas that had undertaken extensive mangrove rehabilitation programmes in the mid-1990s sustained less damage from storm surges and coastal flooding compared to areas completely stripped of their pre-existing mangrove forests. This incident was significant in raising awareness among the coastal communities on the links between climate change, ecosystems conservation and their livelihoods.

Climate risk financing is another positive off shoot of climate change for Sāmoa and the Pacific Islands. Initiated by Tuvalu in the Pacific government officials’ forum in Apia in June 2017, the consensus was to present the idea at the Pacific Leaders meeting hosted by Sāmoa in September 2017. Climate risk financing includes insurance against agricultural productivity loss from frequent and severe climate events including ‘slow-onset’ events like coral bleaching and sea level rise. And given the costly and restrictive nature of the insurance sector to things such as material possessions (house, car), life and health, any proposed insurance against climate-related shocks and disasters that directly affect people’s livelihoods is equally important.

The plethora of research studies and discussion papers triggered by climate change dialogue and forums that particularly focus on the Pacific (Sāmoa for example) is an indication of the realization that climate change will continue to pose risks to the physical, social and economic wellbeing of Pacific islanders (Latai-Niusulu 2017; Nunn 2017; Taylor et al. 2016), these in
themselves are positive influences to talk about the plight of small island states and their coping mechanisms that will draw the world’s attention and funding to the region. The UNESCO office in Apia for example, is one of many UN agencies working with the local communities to deliver awareness programs focusing on community understandings of climate change and down scaling the science of climate change to community level adaptation. Acknowledging climate change as a one of many drivers of food security in Sāmoa is a positive step in the right direction to embrace ‘climate smart’ approaches. Creating employment and careers is perhaps another positive influence of climate change in Sāmoa that is particularly linked to the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the UN agencies set up in Apia such as the UNDP (Climate Change and Tourism Adaptation Expert), FAO (Climate Change Advisor).

**Positive opportunities generated**

Sāmoa cannot do much about its small size and the projected global impacts of climate change on Small Island developing states (SIDs) in general (IPCC 2015; Keener et al. 2012). What can be done [and already underway] is focusing efforts on curtailing probable and possible risks to the islands particularly low lying coastal areas of the group. A partnership in 2014 between the Government of Sāmoa, through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), Ministry of Finance (MOF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) culminated in a pledge of US $12.3 million from the Least Developed Countries Development Fund of the Global Environment Facility to strengthen national and local planning for adaptation to climate change as well as enhancing local communities (particularly those residing in the low lying greater Apia Urban Area) resilience to climate change induced flooding (UNDP 2014). More than 37,000 residents including the business community in the greater Apia Urban Area will benefit from an integrated flood management project that will upgrade and strengthen drainage infrastructure. In 2011, Sāmoa received a grant of USD 25 million from the World Bank for climate resilience investment to develop and implement urgent project based activities to adapt to climate change and climate variability. Two major intervention projects were funded from this grant; to enhance the climate resilience of (1) the main airport road (Apia to Faleolo) through major road extension work and (2) seawall construction particularly around the northern and western coasts of Upolu Island (World Bank 2011).

The Water Sector is one other area with substantial investment opportunities targeting climate change objectives. In 2010–2014, US$4.17 million from the European Union (2010–2014) was injected into the sector for water policy development (water for life sector plan), budget support, improving public access to safe water supply, strengthening water resources management and improving rural water supply (Climate Finance in the Pacific 2017; Global Climate Change Alliance 2015). In December 2016, the government of Sāmoa signed an agreement with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) providing the latter with Privileges and Immunities. And the government of Sāmoa through its Prime Minister in his speech to open the GCF’s board meeting of 2016 in Apia, acknowledged the crucial role of the GCF in providing positive opportunities to empower small islands such as Sāmoa to deal with climate change. Integrated flood management in the catchment of the Vaisigano river is one of the major projects under way to strengthen and widen the Vaisigano river channel and embankments to cope with increased water flow during flood events. Major infrastructure works to improve drainage are being carried out to ensure residential properties, government complexes, and the greater Apia Urban Area community assets, lives and livelihood are protected from increased incidence and intensity of flooding.
Integrating climate change risks into the agriculture and health sectors in Sāmoa is another significant opportunity to address food security issues and climate related water-borne and vector-borne diseases that is already undermining an overly stretched and poorly funded public health system. Given the country’s growing dependence on imported refined food products, coupled with declining food production and unsustainable practices in ecosystem management, the opportunity exists for Sāmoan people to explore ways of producing a diversified range of food crops with the help of aid donors such as China as demonstrated in the recently signed China-Sāmoa Intergovernmental Agricultural Technical Cooperation Project in 2017. Moreover, the incidence of non-communicable diseases and obesity is on the rise, and this is one area that climate change funds are channeled into for public awareness and prevention programs implemented by the Ministry of Health.

Migration induced by climate change is another opportunity that has come up as one of the options open to Pacific island populations (Campbell and Warrick 2014). While economic and social factors are significant factors that determine people’s migration decisions, climate change is also another contributing factor particularly for small low lying islands such as Tuvalu and Niue. Sāmoa’s experience with climate related migration can be categorized into two forms. First, are internal movements (relocation) from the coastal lowlands into the elevated inlands of villages such as Lotofaga and Lepa (Flores-Palacios 2015). A handful of coastal villages in the south and south-east coast of Upolu island that were severely affected by the 2009 tsunami, have already moved inland. Improved access and trunk roads are fully operational to facilitate the relocation. Seasonal labor migration for work in New Zealand is the second form of climate-related migration, that is linked to economic opportunities. It is difficult to isolate climate-change and economic opportunities for migration in the context of Sāmoa [and other Pacific islands] given the precarious nature of subsistence farming in Sāmoa, where pests, disease, weed, poor soils, unpredictable weather and expensive fertilizers, are a few of the many obstacles small farmers encounter on a daily basis, which makes seasonal work a more attractive option to undertake and many of them have done so in the past five years.

Pushing for renewable energy development has been a longstanding issue for Sāmoa. While Sāmoa and many of her island neighbors have low greenhouse gas emissions, the opportunity to contribute to reducing emissions demonstrates a level of commitment to walk the talk. In May 2015, at the Pacific Climate Change bi-annual meeting in Apia, Sāmoa’s Prime Minister made a bold statement committing the country to 100 percent renewable energy by 2017 (SPREP 2015). The latest developments in Sāmoa’s pathway to 100 percent renewable energy is stated in the country’s national communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Strategy for the Development of Sāmoa 2012–2016 as follows:

- the target year is 2025 measured against the base year of 2014
- continued commitment is conditional on reaching the 100 percent renewable energy generation target in 2017.
- the target area is the energy sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity sector.
- the country’s commitment to 100 percent renewable energy depends on external assistance both technological and financial
Further, the newly created Pacific Climate Change Center (PCCC) housed in the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) will enhance climate data collection for the region and provide a base for human resource training and capacity building on climate change issues. The center is touted as a hub for inclusive collaboration between island states’ government officials, development practitioners and climate change experts.

Finally, climate change provides an opportunity for world leaders to hold meaningful dialogue to explore and embrace indigenous knowledge that have proven useful to indigenous societies long before climate change became a problem that is beginning to absorb almost half of the developed world’s funds to solve. Indigenous knowledge of the land, sky, and ocean provides valuable insights to complement scientific data. Furthermore, indigenous or traditional knowledge can be used as a basis to build climate change adaptation and mitigation actions for small island communities like Sāmoa. For example, traditional taboos and fishing methods imposed on fishing a particular species such as sharks and bonito, avoids over fishing of the species and enables the species to regenerate.

Lessons learned

It makes good sense to inject funding into building and strengthening infrastructure and the people’s resilience to climate change impacts. Equally important these investments will be less effective if the potential synergies between the country’s overall development efforts and climate change are overlooked. Understanding the linkages between Sāmoa’s social-economic development processes and climate change adaptation policies ensures the latter is factored into the national development strategies. In the same vein, development practitioners, government ministries and climate change donors need a community inclusive approach to raising awareness and understanding about the science of climate change particularly among the grass root communities. This is a positive step towards trust building and establishing strong working relationships to ensure the effective delivery of climate change mitigation and adaptation activities.

One of the important lessons learned from the Sāmoa case study, that is inadequately addressed in the government policy literature, is the need to expand on the energy and food sectors particularly in relation to a broader sustainable development focus. The energy, food and water sector have numerous linkages to climate related adaptation strategies. These linkages need to be clearly spelled out in national development strategies to ensure that the intended solutions to address problems in one sector do not compromise other sectors in the chain. For instance, while the country is aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity sector, the increased importation of LPG for cooking and heating (water) has not reduced the pressure on forest resources for fuel (wood) supply. The opportunity exists to explore clean and renewable energy sourced from wind, waves and biogas, but that requires extensive technical cooperation and partnerships with the donor community.

Equally important is the need to adopt an integrated approach to managing climate change impacts among multiple stakeholders in government and the private sector. An important lesson learned in downstream flood mitigation is the need to regulate and manage all forms of development activities in the watershed. Extensive replanting of native tree species in the upstream areas of the watershed has strongly assisted in flood mitigation in downstream areas particularly in urban Apia. This is a reminder of the interconnectivity between upstream and downstream areas, that was once observed and spoken about in traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices,
such as the ‘sa o manuvao’ a ritual acknowledging sacred boundaries between people and the forest (Tui Atua 2017). Manuvao was the god of the forest, and in those days, before a tree was felled, a ritual was paid to Manuvao to acknowledge the relationship between humans, their environment and responsibilities.

**Conclusion**

Climate change impacts and the implementation of adaptation and mitigation programs is a challenging task as identified by Prime Minister Tuilaepa on Radio New Zealand (RNZ Pacific News, 7 March 2016). Efforts to address the implementation of adaptation programs require a multi-sectoral integrated approach to climate proof the island nation. Two important documents (National Policy on Combating Climate Change and the National Action Plan) spell out the country’s commitment to tackle climate change as well as the prescribed actions. However, climate-adaptation solutions require sustainable funding, and sourcing and accessing funding can be a challenge. To overcome this hurdle, the government of Sāmoa is advocating strong partnerships between local communities, non-government organizations, private sector and government to address some of the inherent weaknesses such as poor institutional capacity to absorb and manage climate funds that is preventing ease of access to Green Climate Fund resources (Keresoma 2017). Locating the Pacific Climate Change Center (PCCC) in Apia will also provide the much needed support for Sāmoa and the rest of the small Pacific islands to tackle the effects of climate change (SPREP 2016). Optimism remains high that the real and forecasted impacts of climate change for Sāmoa will be managed in such a way that future generations will continue to have a place they call home.

**References**


Transformations to Fa’amatai [Sāmoan Chiefly System]: Implications for Climate Change Resilience in Samoa

Anita Latai Niusulu, National University of Samoa

Abstract

Being resilient in the face of climate change is important for island societies such as Samoa, which currently face the consequences of rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall and wind patterns, and sea level rise, yet there is a dearth of academic literature on the subject. This paper argues fa’amatai connections are crucial to the protection and survival of individual Sāmoans and communities. Therefore, understanding the resilience of Sāmoans to climate change requires assessment of Sāmoans’ perceptions and actions in the context of their positioning (and related connections, responsibilities and obligations) within this complex system. The author uses a non-equilibrium cultural ecological lens to demonstrate fa’amatai’s resilient nature as a social system. In the past two hundred years, fa’amatai has evolved to become a complex system encompassing not just connections within extended families and villages but also churches, central government and non-governmental organizations that operate within and outside Samoa. The multiple and multi-layered connections which currently exist within fa’amatai has provided opportunities for individual Sāmoans and communities to develop resilience to climate change.

Keywords: fa’amatai, resilience, climate change, Samoa

Introduction

Climate change science has shown that the impact of these events is heightened on islands, but there is insufficient information on how island societies are enduring and anticipating climate change. This article draws on non-equilibrium cultural ecological views of the resilience of systems to demonstrate how the Sāmoan institution of fa’amatai has enabled Sāmoans to endure environmental challenges and could possibly develop their resilience to future climatic changes. The article first explains why a non-equilibrium cultural ecological view of social systems is appropriate to assess the resilience of Sāmoan society. Next, it provides a snapshot of the fa’amatai system, the changes which have occurred since the 1800s and how these changes have been crucial to the development of national frameworks for climate change resilience in Samoa. The final part of this paper proposes conceptualizing the perceptions and activities of Sāmoan individuals and communities within fa’amatai structures would yield a more adequate portrayal of their resilience to future climatic and other environmental changes.

Conceptualizing resilience from a ‘non-equilibrium cultural ecological’ view

Non-equilibrium views of the resilience of systems

Perspectives of resilience in ecology and evolutionary economics have provided useful insights that inform understandings of resilience and provided the theoretical grounding for this paper. The author adapted the ‘non-equilibrium’ view of resilience in its assessment of Sāmoan society because it provides a more realistic depiction of the nature of systems as well as environmental changes. The non-equilibrium view recognizes the complex and dynamic nature of systems (Holling 1973; 2005; Holling et al 1998; Grabher and Stark 1997) and the importance of time and spatial scales in contextualizing such changes (Gunderson and Holling 2002; Pendall et al 2007). Furthermore, the non-equilibrium view emphasizes the important role of experiencing disturbances in developing the
buffering capacities of systems to endure future disturbances. Exposure to changes or disturbances is seen here as crucial to developing resilience as it allows the system to ‘probe its boundaries’ and develop response mechanisms/ buffering capacity. Moreover, exposure to disturbances could enable transformation of the system or its parts. Echoing Holling’s ideas, Berkes and Folke 1998 (Folke 2006), in their studies of social-ecological systems, stated resilience concerns the opportunities that disturbances create in terms of the recombination of evolved structures and processes, renewal of the system and emergence of new trajectories. Using the non-equilibrium view of resilience is therefore significant in the context of islands and climate change as it enables one to explore how islands are taking advantage of opportunities created by environmental changes including climatic events. Understanding the resilience of island communities, from a ‘non-equilibrium’ view requires the knowledge that climate is part of the environment which is continually evolving across space and over a time continuum. Climate events have always interacted in complex ways with other biophysical and human elements to change the character and appearance of the environment at various spatial scales and will continue to do so.

**Cultural ecological perspectives of systems and their adaptability**

The cultural ecological approach is used because of several important reasons. First, cultural ecology repositions humans into studies of the environment. Here, investigations of resilience emphasize social rather than physical indicators of resilience. Secondly, this approach recognizes the adaptability of human societies. The cultural ecological notion that ‘humans have the capacity to adapt’ and survive environmental changes (Sauer 1952; Steward 1955; Boserup 1965) is used to challenge the deterministic and hazards-based nature of Western science and the related notion of vulnerability of traditional societies which underpins the literature on climate change and islands (IPCC 2001; Storey and Hunter 2010; Veiyataki 2010; Sutherland et al 2001).

Moreover, cultural ecological studies have provided historical evidence and insights which prove that human societies living in extreme environments are highly dynamic, employing various survival strategies. Even though some authorities have argued that the ‘crisis effect’ of past environmental changes on islands such as Rapa Nui in the Pacific Ocean (Easter Island) (Bahn and Flenley 1992 cited in Barnett 2001; Nunn 2007) the majority of island communities have historically been able to adapt and survive into the current century. Survival strategies include agricultural diversity and various techniques for storing and preserving food (Buck 1930; Watters 1958; Waddell 1975; Thaman 1990; 1995; East and Dawes 2009; Thomas 2015), observing *tapu* [sacred places] (Grimble 1933; Zann 1990; Johannes and Yeeting 2000), occupational multiplicity\(^1\) (Comitas 1963; Frucht 1967; Baldaccino and Bertram 2009), monitoring and anticipating, even predicting, changes in the weather through the behaviour of animals, plants and other physical elements of the environment (Lefale 2010; Hetaraka 2012).

Furthermore, the cultural ecological approach was employed because it asserts the importance of holistic and place based methodologies to exploring how human societies adapt. It is the

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\(^1\) These longitudinal studies of islanders reveal individuals who respond to shifting opportunities in different stages of their lives. They revealed most islanders avoid rigid specialization. Instead they would pursue several occupations, either simultaneously or successively, and in a variety of places.
interconnectivity or the combined role of structures, processes and activities which buffer societies from disturbances and which have ensured their survival. For instance, many studies have noted the interplay of island social networks, mobility and capital and how it had sustained island societies over time and space (Keesing 1934; Waddell 1975; Chapman and Prothero 1985; Chapman 1985; Watson 1985; Hauofa 1993). Recent studies argue island societies have expanded internationally with remittances from islander diasporas, such as Pacific communities in New Zealand, Australia and the United States, supporting economic life in the islands which have been particularly crucial to islands enduring natural disturbances such as cyclones and tsunamis (Betram and Watters 1985; Fauolo 1993; Barnett 2001; Bertram 2006).

Sāmoan society and its institution of Fa’amatai

A key aspect of Sāmoan society which is crucial to the assessment of its resilience is fa’amatai because the organization and governance of ‘āiga [extended family unit] and nuu [village] in Samoa is based upon this system. Fa’amatai ensures participation by all related members (refer to Figure 1). Each Sāmoan family comprises matai [holders of chiefly titles], tama tane [sons], feagaiga [daughters], paolo [in-laws] and children. The sa’o [main chiefly titleholder] is the head of the ‘āiga. In the Sāmoan context, pule [authority] over resources is held in the chiefly title, yet the person who holds that title is only the trustee or caretaker (Aiono Le Tagaloa 1992; Vaai 1999). The notion of sulī [heir through blood connection] means every family member has a right to become a matai, upon the agreement of all of the other sulī. According to Aiono Le Tagaloa (1992: 122), “…the holder of the matai title is either male or female, very young or old, wealthy or poor, western-educated or not…”

The organization and governance of the village mirrors the situation at the extended family level. The village is managed by the fono [village council], a decision-making body consisting matai. Access through blood connections to the matai ensures that the authority of the village council is neither supreme nor separate (refer to Figure 1). These connections guarantee a voice for opinions through the family member who holds the title when he or she stands to represent her or his family in a village council meeting. The societal groups that constitute the fa’amatai, notably the aumaga [untitled men] and aualuma [daughters of the village] are integral, connected through blood and impact upon decision making that occurs at the centre rather than at the top. All groups play a role in the process of government and in the provision of goods and services (translated from Aiono Le Tagaloa 1997).

Soalaupule [consensus or consultative decision making] and autasi [consensus agreement] are central to decision-making in fa’amatai. Both concepts signify the holistic nature of the system and how it enables the inclusion of everyone in the decision-making process. Soalaupule refers to the importance of every member of the council being included in the process. Therefore, a decision is not final unless all members of the council agree. Time does not control such deliberations. “Rather the emphasis is on agreement and assurance so that all parties are satisfied. The discussion of an issue...can be postponed for another day if some members do not agree, as in the saying E sili ona moe le too” (Latai 2008: 64). The ultimate decision is that ‘sanctioned’ by the village council (Meleisea 1987), afioga tutasi [council decree] (Tuimalealiifano 2001). Issues such as recognition of land claims, boundaries and fishing rights become effective by the agreement of the fono. ‘Outsiders’, notably nofotane [female in-laws] and faiva [male in-laws] of village residents are not
directly involved in the decision making process. Their opinions could only be voiced through their spouses and children.

Figure 1: Fa’amatai in the early 1800s (Source: after Aiono Le Tagaloa 1997).

Suspension from village fono activities and banishment from the village are the two main forms of disenfranchisement. “In the first form, detractors are cut off from participation in local governance but are allowed to remain on their land and in their houses. The second form is... dislocation from the village” (Tuimalealifano 2001: 319). According to Meleisea (1987), banishment was reserved for offences that made it impossible for the village to tolerate the presence of the offender. In most cases, when a matai was banished, his entire ‘āiga was sent into exile with him. Refuge is usually sought in another village where relatives live. There, they take on refugee status until, after certain obligations had been met, such as ifoga [ceremonial request for forgiveness], they can be re-admitted to their home village. In some cases, exiled families can request to become incorporated into the host village through titles of refugee origin.

The resilient nature of fa’amatai: adapting external influences since the 1800s

As the next sections demonstrate, the flexibility of fa’amatai is demonstrated in how it managed to effect connections with imposed institutions such as Christianity and centralized national institutions which have, since the early 1800s, been established. Moreover, fa’amatai practices remain
significant at the village level in contemporary Sāmoan society and its resurgence at the national level has great implications for the development of climate change resilience.

**1830s: European missionaries and integration of Christianity into fa’amatai**

The arrival of missionaries and adoption of Christianity in the 1830s created a new group of people who held honorary positions of high status in the village, but outside fa’amatai (refer to Figure 2). When the missionaries arrived they brought in local residents from other villages as pastors, and this selection method is still practised today. The formal Sāmoan word for pastor is fa’afeagaiga, with the prefix faa meaning characteristic of or like in the manner of the same kind (Milner 1966), relating the relationship between pastor and village to that between a brother and a sister. The sister in the Sāmoan context is the feagaiga [covenant and/ or agreement] relating to the va-tapuia [sacred space] between a brother and a sister (Latai 2008; Latai 2015). In a similar way va-tapuia between the pastor and the village demands caution and mutual respect. The pastor is an outsider, so he does not sit within the circle of the fa’amatai of the village he ministers to, though out of respect it is common that the opinion of the pastor will be sought to smooth out any conflict that may arise in the council. This is similar to the role of the sister as the pae ma le auli [peacekeeper in the ‘āiga]. This does not mean that a pastor is fated to exclusion. He is a participant in the fa’amatai of his home village, where he is an untitled man (refer to Figure 2). But, the creation of fa’afeagaiga role saw the failure of Christianity to penetrate fa’amatai. While religion has become a central part of Sāmoan society, churches exist as separate entities in the village with existing mechanisms for information flow and interaction with village councils (Aiono Le Tagaloa 1986; 1996; Latai 2008; Latai 2015). In any given village, whether there are two or seven different churches, village councils accord the same protection, status and respect to each of those ministers.

**Figure 2: Position of the pastor in traditional Sāmoan society (a) in the village he ministers, and (b) in his home village (Source: Latai Niusulu 2017).**

**1900- 1961: Colonial governments- Germany (1900- 1914) and New Zealand (1914- 1961).**
In addition to missionaries, colonial administrations of Germany and New Zealand were established and led to the creation of a centralized national governance system. Between 1830 and 1900 Germany, Great Britain and the United States competed to establish spheres of influence and control in Samoa. This period of actively competing influences was succeeded by the colonial administrations of Germany from 1900 to 1914, and New Zealand from 1914 to 1961 (Vaa 2006). In February 1900, the municipal organization of Apia was abolished, and German centralized rule penetrated to the sphere of the village council. The appointment of Sāmoans as pulenuu [government officials] in this new German government enabled a centralized bureaucracy to penetrate fa’amatatia (Meleisea 1987: 54), where a member of the village council now had responsibilities to the colonial regime. This is vastly different from the situation in fa’amatai, where the matai is loyal to his ‘āiga, the source of his authority. The role of pulenuu still exists today. The establishment of the Land and Titles Commission (in 1903), later the Land and Titles Court (in 1937), saw authority over land given to an external agency that operated according to German law (Aiono-Le Tagaloa 2009). This conflicted with the caretaker role that lies with the holders of iiga matai who make up the village council. The court became the first institution to effectively legalize traditional processes involved in the conferring of titles and regulating land transfer in Western Samoa. Instead of relying on the traditional style of consensus, the court decided what was to be done when conflict arose. Contrary to holistic notions of soalaupule and autasi, this system ensured the governor had a strong, even deciding, voice in the processes involved in matai title conferring and land transfer (Meleisea 1987; Vaai 1999). These changes continued throughout the New Zealand administration from 1914 until 1962.

Even though colonization established a centralized government which adopted a legislated approach to resource use and management and created pulenuu government officials within village councils, fa’amatatia largely influenced activities at the village level (refer to Figure 3). Studies of Sāmoan material culture conducted in the early 1900s noted the flexibility of fa’amatai, in that while it allowed for variations these would eventually be accommodated and subsequently submerged in the resilient and ongoing culture. Most activities at the village level in the 1900s (Buck 1930; Keesing, 1934) were largely similar to the situation observed during the period of initial European contact (Wilkes 1852; Turner 1884; Krämer 1901; Watters 1958).
1960s onwards: Political independence and the resurgence of fa‘amatai

Recognition of matai titles and customary ownership of land

The national framework that existed at the time of political independence in 1962, and related changes that followed thereafter, fostered greater recognition of fa‘amatai in national governance. In 1962, a Westminster-based government was established with the Head of State, executive, parliament, judiciary, finance and the public service. At the same time, the District and Village Government Board, which comprises senior chiefs from around the country, served as a mediator-advisor between the central government and village councils (Toleafoa 2006). In addition, Samoa’s electoral system accommodated the country’s traditional political districts. The Sāmoan suffrage, or the Sāmoan way of voting, means matai who are the elected representatives of all the heirs of matai titles, are the ones eligible to stand for election into government. The village council validates that the intending candidate has rendered service to and is recognized by the village. A matai with

2 “The Land and Titles Court only registers a new title after the traditional title-conferring ceremony (at which the village government plays the most important role) has taken place. It is the traditional prerogative of a village to accept (or reject) a new title-holder from being a member of its council of matai...the village council
several titles from different villages may choose the parliamentary constituency associated with the
election roll by giving the right to vote to everyone over 21 years of age (Aiono Le Tagaloa 1992: 130-131).”

3 “In 1990 Tofilau Eti’s government decided to change the qualification of the voter on the electoral roll by

The Sāmoan Constitution, which became the basis of national law, acknowledges the
importance of the Sāmoan custom, matai titles and the customary ownership of land. The preamble
and Article 11 of the Constitution refers to custom as a source of law. Article 100 under part IX of the
Constitution, refers to matai titles, while Article 102 prohibits the alienation of customary land
(Government of Samoa, 1960). Article 102 states, ‘No alienation of customary land. However, should
there be a move to alienate, then two thirds of the people whose names appear on the Sāmoan
electoral roll (i.e two thirds of the matai) must vote to pass such an alienation (Aiono Le Tagaloa 1992)’. Matters relating to matai titles and authority of matai titles over customary land are dealt
with at the Lands and Titles Court. Matai titles, customary lands and related disputes are registered
at the court. The inseparable connection between chiefly titles and land and communal ownership
of resources, whereby an individual cannot claim ownership of the chiefly title and related lands,
had restricted further alienation of land. While commercialism and centralization established the
notion of individual ownership and subsequently led to the alienation of some land in the 1800s,
about 80 percent of the land still remains under customary authority.

Fa’amatai within the national governance framework

Significant efforts towards integrating fa’amatai into the national governance framework were
made in the 1990s with the enactment of the Village Fono Act 1990 (Village Council Act). The Village
Fono Act provided for the exercise of chiefly authority in accordance with Sāmoan custom and to
recognize the primacy of village rights. The act recognizes and empowers village councils to develop and enforce village rules regarding the development and use of village resources such as lands, sea
and water sources and the maintenance of hygiene in the village. In addition, to direct any person or
persons to do any work (as defined under the Act) required for the village. The act also empowers
village councils to impose punishments when village rules are breached. Punishments normally
include fines paid in money, fine mats, live animals or food, and imposition of orders for an offender
to undertake work on village land. The punishment is levied against the matai of the family of an
offender, who is held responsible for the conduct of his ‘āiga in the village. In most cases, all
members of the family would assist, by giving whatever they can afford to the offender in paying the
fine. It is also common practice to exclude from participation in village governance a matai who does
not abide by village rules. The legislative powers of the village council are limited because everyone
in Samoa is bound by national criminal and civil laws. Disputes over matters of customary law are
normally taken to the Samoa Lands and Titles Court. In extreme cases, village councils may order an
offender to leave the village, but if taken to court the civil courts will usually over-rule such orders
on the grounds of individual or human rights under the Constitution (Meleisea et al. 2015: 23).

may deny the new titleholder entry to the village council by refusing to participate in the title- conferring
ceremony (Soo 2012: 134).”

3 “In 1990 Tofilau Eti’s government decided to change the qualification of the voter on the electoral roll by
giving the right to vote to everyone over 21 years of age (Aiono Le Tagaloa 1992: 130-131).”

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In 1995, the Internal Affairs Act was passed which aligned local village government to central government via the establishment of the Division of Internal Affairs (refer to Figure 4). Mediators mainly the sui o le nuu [village council representative] and sui o le malo [women’s group representative] report to government and vice versa through this Division. A representative for young people also exists. Holders of these positions are nominated by members of the council and women’s committee. They are paid an allowance and report to the Division of Internal Affairs (Latai 2008; Tauaa 2014; Meleisea et al 2015).

Both the Village Fono Amendment Bill 2015 and registration of village by-laws signal an opportunity for Sāmoan individuals and communities to re-invigorate fa’amatai and its principles of soalaupule at the ‘āiga and village levels. Moreover, to empower individuals to take ownership and responsibility of resources within their jurisdiction and participate in related decision-making processes regarding their use or protection. The proposed amendments to the Village Fono Amendment Bill 2015 would give legal recognition to the authority of the village council to protect Sāmoan customs and traditions, and to safeguard village traditions, norms and protocols. These will also strengthen the definitions of village authority in relation to defining faiga faavae [village council policy and procedures] to be followed in making iugafono [village council decisions]. Village by-laws are being prepared under the Good Governance Project of the Internal Affairs Division of the MWSCD. An important part of this process is that village councils are receiving assistance in enhancing understanding of their roles and responsibilities according to the constitution and the current legal system. For instance, they were advised that only the sections of the by-laws which are compliant with the constitution would have the full power of the law. The finalized by-laws must be approved, with signatures, by the main social groupings in the village (Meleisea et al 2015).
Figure 4: National and local governance framework (Source: Latai Niusulu 2017).
Figure 5: Resurgence of fa’amatai where multiple and multi-layered connections are evident between village and nation-wide institutions (Latai Niusulu 2017).
Contemporary fa’amatai and climate change resilience in Samoa

Fa’amatai and resilient activities at the national level

Changes which have occurred in the past centuries have seen the resurgence of fa’amatai characterized by a merging of centralized national institutions and fa’amatai at the local level (refer to Figure 5). This was crucial to the development of responses to future climate change. Since the 1990s, climate change has been high on the national agenda and there have been many efforts by the government towards environmental management and disaster preparedness. This commitment is evident in not only national reporting and ratification of various global and regional conventions relating to climate change, but incorporating these principles into national planning frameworks (Romilly et al 2013). A National Climate Change Country Team (NCCCT) and National Task Team (NTT) were established and helped prepare Samoa’s first communication to the UNFCCC in 1999 (Government of Samoa: Department of Lands, Surveys and Environment (DLSE) 1999).

In the 2000s, the availability of external funding enabled the government to develop a framework of strategies, plans and governance structures to develop and coordinate climate change adaptation and mitigation activities. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) through UNDP funded the preparation of Samoa’s National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) in 2005. The NAPA provided an overview of climate change impacts and vulnerabilities, identifies adaptation strategies and outlines the process used to select and prioritise specific adaptation projects for priority sectors. The areas that were prioritised included securing community water resources, reforestation, rehabilitation and community forestry fire prevention, climate health cooperation programme, climate early warning system, agriculture and food security sustainability, zoning and strategic management planning, CIM-Plans for highly vulnerable districts, conservation programmes in highly vulnerable marine and terrestrial areas of communities, sustainable tourism adaptation. GEF funded the implementation of adaptation projects in key economic sectors, including agriculture, health, forestry, tourism and coastal communities. These projects provide a mix of policy advice, capacity building, early warning systems, community demonstration activities and knowledge management (Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Meteorology (MNREM) 2005).

In 2007, the National Policy of Combating Climate Change was developed and provided a national framework for climate change adaptation and mitigation of Samoa’s contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. The policy was drafted to implement Samoa’s international obligations under the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol. The National Policy Statement on Climate Change (2007) and NAPA (2005) are implemented by the climate services and climate change sections under the Meteorology Division of MNRE. The Ministry serves as the secretariat for the National Climate Change Country Team (NCCCT). The NCCCT, the key members of which are the CEOs of relevant government ministries, is the key coordination mechanism for Samoa’s response to climate change (MNRE: Government of Samoa 2010; 2013; Romilly et al 2013). The Ministry of Finance has been recently designated as the National Implementing Entity for the Adaptation Fund. Environment has become one of the priority areas in the 2012–2016 SDS. The key outcomes of this priority area are environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction. The Strategy highlights the importance of integrating climate change and disaster risk management into national and sector plans to ensure that appropriate response mechanisms become part of the national development framework (Ministry of Finance (MOF) 2012).
The shift to a management framework that includes local villages was evident in the development of the Coastal Infrastructural Management Strategy (CIMS) 2001 and district CIM Plans, 2001–2007. The Samoa Coastal Infrastructure Management Strategy (2001 updated in 2007) defines national and local priorities for coastal management and sets policies and implementation methods for disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation measures. CIM-plans exist for each of the 41 districts (283 villages) in the country which state community concerns most of which relate to climate change and some proposed adaptation methods (Latai 2008; Daly et al 2010). In 2011, the CIM Strategy was reviewed and revised again to include the whole reef-ridge area.

Many reports have noted the growth of government initiatives to enhance community adaptability to climate change in recent decades. Strategies undertaken by MNRE as part of the CIMS project included the building of seawalls, upgrading of roads, development of coastal hazard maps and replanting of mangrove areas (Latai 2008; Daly et al 2010; Williams and Faasau 2015). In the past few years, the ‘Climate Resilience Investment Project (CRIP)’ funded by the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) and the World Bank (WB) has been proposed. A major part of this project is the construction of a 30 kilometre road along the inland parts of northern Upolu to connect Apia and Faleolo airport. The project would also implement strategies proposed in the CIM plans of 16 selected districts. In 2015 the East Coast inland route was completed. This 5.2 kilometre road runs from Samusu to Lalomanu, connecting the inland parts of villages on the southeast coast of the island and facilitating movement of those that had shifted inland due to the 2009 tsunami (Romilly et al 2013).

Efforts towards disaster management include activities by the Disaster Management Office such as tsunami evacuation drills, identification of evacuation routes for coastal villages, installation of warning sirens and first aid training. The government through the MNRE and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAFF) also helped establish village fish reserves (King and Faasili 1999), Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), mangrove and wetland conservation areas, forest reserves (both on village and government lands), turtle conservations and tilapia farms in a range of villages.

Furthermore, there have been a range of government programmes to develop livelihoods. These include weaving programmes and annual faalelegapepe [public display of fine mats] conducted by the MWSCD for village women. MAFF has helped develop food supplies by providing assistance to some villages to develop vegetable gardens, plantations and farming and fishing activities. These activities culminate with the ‘Agriculture and Fisheries Shows’ for farmers which are held twice a year on both Upolu and Savaii. Taro breeding programmes, developed in partnership with regional agencies, have produced significant results since the taro blight. New varieties of taro were introduced in 1994 and subsequent years (Taylor and Iosefa 2013).

**Fa’amatai and resilient activities at the village level**

Most contemporary studies of Samoa indicated that despite changes which have occurred fa’amatai remains largely intact with village councils operating autonomously. An emerging trend is that more Sāmoan women have taken up matai titles. A growing number of Sāmoan women hold Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive Positions in the public and private sector and the majority of them have matai titles. It is not a pre-requisite for the job, but it is an indicator of their status (heir) in the Sāmoan social organization (Aiono Le Tagaloa 1986; Latai 2015; Meleisea et al 2015).
Extended families, the village councils, untitled men’s groups, women’s committees and churches are still central aspects of Sāmoan village life. Aiono Le Tagaloa (1992: 132) stated;

“But in the heartland of fa’amatai, i.e. the fono a le nuu and the social groupings of the tamaaitai, aumaga, and faletua ma tausi, confidence in the ability of the fa’amatai to cope, to survive and continue to maintain peace within each village, district, and island, remains strong and persistent”.

Fauolo (1993) and Paulson (1993) stated the important roles these groups played during and after the 1990s cyclones in directing replanting and expansion of food crops, rebuilding of houses and village clean-up. The strength of these networks was also demonstrated by the quick and proactive response to the 2009 tsunami. The structure of land ownership and customary land rights enabled families to relocate to family land and many were able to start rebuilding immediately after the tsunami (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC and RCS) 2011).

Many religious denominations have developed structures according to the village model. For example, most churches have women’s committees, church committees, youth groups and Sunday schools. Most members of the villages are part of these groups and participate in their daily and weekly activities.

Today, the majority of Sāmoans still tautua [serve] their family. Remittances from immediate and extended relatives living on freehold land and abroad connect villages to the outside world. These relationships are cultivated through caring, giving, reciprocating and participating in every social-cultural obligation such as funerals, bestowal of matai titles, weddings, dedication of church buildings, and fund raising activities. Sāmoan pride and loyalty to family, church and village are demonstrated whenever there is a village fund-raising call for the building and dedication of a new church, church hall, and pastor’s residence, or any major village project. Anecdotal evidence suggests numerous malaga sue tupe village fund-raising travels to New Zealand after cyclone Heta (2008) and Evans (2012) for various village projects ranging from new church buildings to schools and a fautasi [long boat] for the Teuila and Independence boat race. The large Sāmoan diaspora overseas has contributed significant changes to people’s consumption patterns, social expectations and taste for modern goods (Macpherson 1985; Macpherson 1988; ILO 2006; Macpherson and Macpherson 2009; Tauaa 2014).

Studies of Samoa’s material culture reported that despite widespread changes in techniques and materials, people still operate within the framework of fa’amatai and enduring traditions. According to Neich (1985: 6) “…most Sāmoans still work with a strong mental concept of the traditional artefact...often with a resurgence in the popularity of older forms...he is able to select and generate a ‘performance’ best suited to changing external circumstances”. Some old techniques are being forgotten, but in many cases people are aware and knowledgeable about the old techniques, while making the conscious choice to employ more modern and more convenient, streamlined techniques. Sāmoans have proved repeatedly that they are able to appreciate and capitalize on the advantages of new crop species, technologies, and market opportunities. Some villages have adopted new crops and techniques and have achieved very high levels of agricultural production, which suggests that there is nothing inherent in their organization that leads to an inevitable resistance to innovation (Macpherson 1988; Macpherson and Macpherson 2009). Lefale (2010), in his study of traditional Sāmoan knowledge regarding weather and climate, concluded that Sāmoans
have an extensive knowledge of cosmology, which they use extensively to predict environmental changes, including changes in climate and weather.

**Conceptualizing the resilience of Sāmoan individuals and communities to future climatic changes within the multiple and multi-layered system of fa’amatai**

**A holistic and multi-layered conceptual framework**

The previous section has demonstrated that contemporary Sāmoan society is characterized by the multi-layered arrangement of extended families, villages and churches, as well as government and external agencies (refer to Figure 5). Therefore, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the resilience of Sāmoans to climate change, one must conceptualize them within the context of these social layers which I propose ‘buffers’ the individual during environmental challenges. This approach as illustrated by Figure 6 situates the Sāmoan, and his or her perceptions and actions, within the context of his or her extended family, villages, church and nation. The approach is informed by the Sāmoan concept *gafatia* [endure], which speaks of a person’s or a community’s ability to deal with and endure challenges. *gafatia* provides a more in-depth understanding of non-equilibrist nature of Sāmoan beliefs associated with one’s capacity to cope with challenges. The term can be split into two terms *gafa* [lineage] and *tia* [hunting ground or ancestral burial place] which hint at the Sāmoan association of endurance with lineage and means of survival. Moreover, it is grounded on previous socio-cultural studies (Aiono Le Tagaloa 1997; Liki 2015; Lilomaiava-Doktor 2015) which have highlighted the holistic and evolving nature of Sāmoan society and interdependent ‘kinship networks’ “…within which the individual is nurtured or cocooned” (Liki 2015: 130).

**Figure 6: The ‘individual within fa’amatai’. Social connections ‘buffer’ the individual from external challenges (Latai Niusulu 2017).**
Figure 6 is an expression of a traditional structure whereby the individual is at the centre of a set of complex social connections. The system is not hierarchical and highly flexible and there are complex interactions within the circles and between the circles. A resilient system is where all of these layers are present and are working harmoniously. Once born, a Sāmoan becomes heir to family chiefly titles and has automatic access to lands on both his or her mother’s and father’s side. At different stages of the individual’s life, he or she would gain membership to village groupings such as the untitled men’s group or women’s committee. Once the individual takes on a chiefly title, they would become a member of the village council and may run as a parliamentarian for the district. Any individual may develop more connections and links by participation in the related activities of whichever groupings they are a part of. These sorts of people are family elders, youth leaders, church ministers, parliamentarians, government representatives, government officers, chiefs and school principals. As illustrated by the concentric rings (refer to Figure 6) these connections buffer the individual from any challenges that may arise. There is a choice for the individual to maintain or sever these connections should they wish.

Those who may leave the sites of their families will always have the same rights and responsibilities as the ‘individual’ located at the heart of the system. “One is born as kin and remains as kin regardless of one’s changing circumstances in life... kin... defines belonging and underpins rights and access to support and resources within the kinship network. The relationship also guarantees economic and social security...in difficult times, as in e malu ia te oe ‘āiga, e malu foi oe i ‘āiga [you carry ‘āiga and ‘āiga carries you]” (Liki 2015: 130). However, in leaving, there is a possibility of getting detached and losing connection to the centre, to family, identity, belonging and place. Therefore, as discussed in the previous section, evidence shows a continuous effort by many to maintain these connections.

Conclusion

The article has demonstrated that Samoa is a highly dynamic place. Samoa’s physical landscape had not only evolved due to biophysical but also human related changes. All of these had continuously posed challenges to the residents in the past 200 years. In response, Sāmoan society and its institution of fa’amatai demonstrated resilience in the face of these changes. The system had adapted connections to external influences such as Christianity and the German and New Zealand colonial administrations, while at the same time retaining its original structures of the extended family and village council. As indicated in the previous section, these structural changes, as well as exposure to environmental challenges, would be crucial to the development of resilience to climate change. Evidence shows there have been government efforts to develop a coherent national framework where climate change is integrated in all its sectors. Furthermore, there is evidence of commitment towards implementing a range of activities to minimize environmental risks as well as ensure sustainable livelihoods. A holistic approach to assess the resilience of Sāmoans to climate change is proposed and is described at the end of the article, considering the structural changes that have occurred to fa’amatai in the past two centuries.
References


The 1918 Influenza Epidemic in Sāmoa and the Sāmoa Church (LMS)

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Abstract

Under the leadership of New Zealand, nearly twenty percent of the population of Sāmoans living in Western Samoa died from the influenza epidemic of 1918. According to the Sāmoan Epidemic Commission report, New Zealand failed in their leadership role to protect the island population. As an infectious disease, the influenza could have easily spread throughout Upolu and Savai‘i by mere contact with the infected. In early November, the LMS was engaged in its monthly collection or taulaga. As John McLane describes the events, “Leaving Apia several days after the arrival of the influenza, London Missionary Society (LMS) ministers worked their way sixty miles west to Mulifanua, gathering funds and likely spreading illness in their wake” (McLane 2013: 187). The same traveling party (malaga) was going on in other districts at around this time. Without putting the blame on the Sāmoan Church (LMS), this paper looks at the possible role of the Church in the rapid spread of the disease due to the financial offering (taulaga), and examines the terrible impact of the epidemic on the leadership of both the government (malō) and Sāmoan Church (LMS) at that time.

Keywords: influenza, Sāmoan Church, London Missionary Society, taulaga, New Zealand

Introduction

The German Empire in the Pacific collapsed at the beginning of the First World War. Rather than relying on British or African colonial troops to take over German territories, as in Africa, in the Pacific, British Crown’s settler colonies achieved the confiscations (Hempenstall 1978). South Africa took over South West Africa, while Australia and New Zealand occupied German colonies in the South Pacific (Henderson 1993). New Zealand seized Apia, Western Samoa on 30 August 1914, and on the first of September, the Union Jack replaced the German flag. In addition to Samoa, the Allies occupied the region’s coaling stations and telegraph installations. The Western Sāmoan Islands slowly experienced a new era of control by a new colonial power different from the previous power in leadership, language, tactics, and laws. The different administrations had one leadership quality in common, both governed the Sāmoan people autocratically.

The island’s takeover occurred with no previous treaty or formal discussions. The islands’ occupation revealed a new era of control, and the former German “pearl of the south seas” became an official mandate of New Zealand in 1919, five years after the start of the Great War. As patriotic subjects of the British Empire, New Zealanders successfully hoisted the Empire’s flag in Western Samoa without bloodshed. On August 1914, the German Governor Dr. Erich Schultz greeted Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Logan of New Zealand, and the peaceful handing over of power became the first time the Empire sent a British Dominion overseas to capture a foreign territory (Smith 1924). Rather than drastically changing the governing tactics right away, Logan maintained German Governor Solf’s strategy and “guided” Sāmoans by relying on chiefly (matai) authority to uphold the existing government. The new administration occupied the Sāmoan Islands as a jurisdiction on a “caretaker basis” before the League of Nations’ official mandate system in 1919.

The First World War ended in 1918, and no bloodshed occurred in Samoa. However, the reality of death came in another form. Four days before the Armistice, on 7 November 1918, the SS Talune docked in Apia harbor from Auckland, via Suva and carried passengers that suffered from the worldwide influenza epidemic. The so-called ‘Spanish’ Flu swept the globe during the Great War’s end, across Africa, Europe, America to China and eventually reached Australia and New Zealand and
killed millions of people worldwide. The epidemic became a transformative period for Samoa that would later fuel a unified dissent toward New Zealand (Samoa Times 1919).

On 31 October 1918, the Talune had received a “clean bill of health” and then set sail from Auckland to Suva, Levuka, and Apia carrying passengers infected with influenza to Fiji, Western Samoa, Tonga and Nauru with the following death tolls: five percent of the Fiji population, six percent of the Tongan population, and 16 percent of Nauru’s population. Based on the Sāmoan Epidemic Commission report (Elliot et al. 1919), at the time when the Talune docked in Apia, at least six of the passengers had influenza with certain members of the crew as “unwell” and Fijian laborers were “sick.” There were three passengers labeled as “seriously affected.”

The entrance of the Talune into the waters of Western Samoa would prove a drastic act of negligence on the part of New Zealand. Sandra Tomkins (1992: 187) claims that Logan learned of the disease when “he read the newspapers brought by the ship.” There was no doubt that New Zealand had suffered from the epidemic, and unfortunately, New Zealand failed to inform Samoa with some form of a radio or telegraph wire. Also, the Public Health Department and the Defense Department “failed in its duty in ignoring the fact that New Zealand was . . . responsible for the welfare of the inhabitants of these islands, both European and Native” (Elliot et al. 1919: 7). No medical precautions were taken, and the New Zealand Administration in Samoa was not informed of the infected ship headed towards the Pacific Islands. On the 6th of November 1918, New Zealand had declared the influenza as a “notifiable disease by Proclamation,” (Elliot et al. 1919: 6). This was one day before the arrival of the ship to the shores of Samoa.

American Samoa successfully escaped the influenza epidemic because the U.S. Naval Commander, John M. Poyer, informed of the risk by telegraph, issued a strict maritime quarantine to the islands of American Samoa (McLane 2013). Leading matai of American Samoa received orders from Poyer to not accept any boats from Upolu and to undertake a careful medical examination of incoming ships. Habitual family interactions between the two islands ceased for some years until the epidemic came under control. A patrol system comprised of American Sāmoans together with the few American soldiers on the island with the cooperation of the local leaders “was so unstinting that the governor recommended to President Wilson that three of them be presented with medals” (Crosby 1989: 238).

At one point, Poyer offered medical assistance to Logan with multiple attempts to contact the New Zealand Administration. Unfortunately, Logan ordered “the radio station to break off all radio communications with American Samoa immediately” (Hiery 1995: 174). Logan expressed aggravation toward Poyer when a boat sent to American Samoa to retrieve mail was denied access until “after five days of absolute quarantine”(Crosby 1989: 237). Crosby claims, “Presumably it was this return of the mail boat that so aggravated Logan that he temporarily broke the radio link with Pago Pago” (Crosby 1989: 237). J. W. Davidson supports the previous claim and writes, “The telegram had been shown to Logan; but he had taken no action and had said later that he had thought the offer of assistance was to the consul’s sick wife and not to the country” (Davidson 1967: 95).

The epidemic took a heavy toll on Western Samoa. Its population on the 30th of September 1918 was approximately 38,302, an increase of 5,487 since 1902. The December 1918 census, after the influenza, recorded the Sāmoan population at 30,738, revealing a decrease of 2,077, or a total loss of almost 20 percent of the Western Samoa population (Elliot et al. 1919: 4). As a result of the
horrific deaths in Samoa, the New Zealand Government established the Epidemic Commission to investigate the cause of Sāmoan deaths. The commission concluded that the New Zealand Government failed to notify Logan about the worldwide epidemic, and the overall handling of the situation in Samoa resulted in a “general administrative failure.” Furthermore, the 1919 Sāmoan Epidemic Commission concluded the following:

In our opinion, there is no doubt whatever that epidemic pneumonic influenza was introduced into Western Samoa by the SS “Talune” on the 7\textsuperscript{th} November, 1918, Samoa time (8\textsuperscript{th} November, New Zealand time) (Elliot et al. 1919: 4).

The effect of the epidemic on Sāmoan society and its hierarchical leadership resulted in immediate, drastic changes in fa’asamoa and the government (malō). Within the Sāmoan malō, out of the thirty Fono a Faipule (House of Representatives), only six survived, nearly 45 percent of matai or titled members of an average Sāmoan family (‘aiga) died. On Savai’i, at the beginning of 1919, only 755 of 1,486 matai survived. The leadership of families devolved to young and inexperienced men, and as Herman Hiery puts it, “At a stroke, a new generation moved into position of responsibility” (Hiery 1995: 174). Furthermore, the government witnessed a new breed of leaders forced to take control of the family, government, and church responsibilities. The process of choosing new leadership took time and matai titles remained vacant because the process of talatalaga or family deliberation with different heirs (suli) to titles took time, especially the resources needed for a grand ceremony (Meleisea 1987). The epidemiological induced event caused drastic changes in Sāmoan leadership within the families and churches.

The LMS suffered a significant loss of pastors and elders during the influenza epidemic. As specified by Rev. Normal Goodall, “out of 220 pastors in active service, 103 died. Twenty-nine out of thirty members of the ‘Au Toeaina or Council of Elders—all experienced leaders of the Church—were amongst the causalities” (Goodall 1954: 361–362). Interestingly, the “elite” experienced a higher percentage of casualties than the general public. Samoa witnessed changes on all fronts of its civil society, and the new leadership received power and position without proper tautua (service).

As reported by Rev. Paul Cane, “I have heard that in the sub-district of Savai’i all pastors are dead [so] I am going to go all around the island to fix up things as best I can.” (Cane to Lenwood 1918). The epidemic’s effects caused significant loss to the theological college at Malua. Rev. Hough recorded a total of seventeen students or future pastors, along with a couple of tutors, who lost their lives to the illness. One student “went mad and tried to drown himself,” Rev. Hough stated in a report to the Foreign Secretary of the LMS (Hough to Lenwood 1918). The following year Rev. Faletose, Secretary of the LMS General Assembly, listed the actual numbers of deceased teachers and pastors of the LMS totaling 747 (Faletose to ‘Au Matutua 1919). Unfortunately, mass graves up to 500 people each became normal in Samoa at the time (Faletose to ‘Au Matutua 1919). Similarly, to the situation with government Faipule leaders and fa’asamoa with the lack of leaders, the LMS European leadership feared a rise of inexperienced Sāmoan pastors to lead the Church. The LMS Report of 1919 addressed this issue and stated, “But the problem which concerns us is whether we have faith in the young people, for it is the young and untried who will immediately be forced to take in hand the guidance of the Church” (Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Report 1919). The Secretary of the Sāmoan District Church, Rev. Hough looked to the LMS high school Leulumoega to take up new leadership roles in families and the church (Hough to Lenwood 1919). The LMS feared that all aspects of the missionary work would suffer, from missionaries in the field to a dearth of potential candidates to carry on the work of the Gospel.
The three institutional pillars of Samoa, government, church, and faʻasamoa, experienced an unfortunate setback and disappointment that left Sāmoans ambivalent about the future. In the biography of Samoa’s famed part-Sāmoan hotelier Aggie Grey, the author writes, “A generation of chiefs, orators, and grandmothers rich in oral lore had been wiped out before they could transmit their treasures” (Alailima 1988: 153). Despite the traumatic shock of the event, the Sāmoan population proved resilient and proactive with more vocal resentment toward New Zealand. The Sāmoan people wanted answers and “laid their complaints before the Governor” (Hough to Hawkins 1919). In the opinion of Rev. Hough, the resentment was so high that Sāmoans wished “either to be governed as a crown colony or to be handed over to the United States of America” (Hough to Hawkins 1919).

Who was to blame?

Without a doubt, Sāmoans were victims to this cruel disease that killed thousands. The Sāmoan Epidemic Commission placed the entire blame on New Zealand Administrators for failing to properly medically clear the SS Talune. The source of the influenza is uncertain, however, there are multiple likely theories of how the disease quickly spread throughout Western Samoa.

As the statistics show, the impact of the “foreign” epidemic was immense. Without doubt, the Sāmoans on the ship contracted the disease and when they were met on arrival by their relatives, they returned to their villages and taking the infection with them. Rev. Hough describes in his letter that passengers from the infected ship scattered throughout the islands and “in a week the whole population of Western Samoa was prostrate with the disease” (Hough to Lenwood 1919). John McLane (2013) mentioned that when people became ill, it was customary for family and friends to visit the sick. That generosity based on family relationships might have played another role in the spread of the disease. Even the design of the traditional Sāmoan fale (house) with the lowered woven walls were blamed because of the poor ventilation (McLane 2013). The Sāmoan Epidemic Commission Report concluded that in seven days after the arrival of the infected ship the disease “spread with amazing rapidity throughout Upolu, and later throughout Savai‘i. By the end of two months approximately 7,542 persons died (Elliot et al. 1919). Faʻasamoa (Sāmoan chiefly systems, traditions, and way of life) was not to be blamed, nor was the lifestyles of the people, rather, the close relationships and practices of the culture could have played a role in the spread of the influenza. Despite efforts to contain this disease, there is no guaranteed success to quarantine.

Another possible agency in the transmission of infection that that has been given little attention so far by historians, was the role of the LMS Church during their collection of taulaga (offering). This paper is not a critique of the LMS but rather an historical analysis of how the influenza in Samoa spread so rapidly, given the very limited means of communication at the time. There were few roads; travel outside the main plantation areas of Northwest Upolu was by pathways on foot or on horseback, or by sea, in long boats. The role of the LMS requires contextualization in the history of the LMS Church since 1915 to show how the LMS might have unknowingly assisted the spread of the 1918 influenza epidemic in Western Samoa. This possibility was first mentioned by Newton Rowe, author of Samoa Under the Sailing Gods. As specified by Rowe, the LMS continued with their annual donation cycle of taulaga during the month of November. Traveling from Apia to Mulinu‘u, it is likely that the process of meeting the financial goals of the church may have led to the spreading of the disease. McLane supports this theory by stating,
In early November, the LMS was engaged in its annual donation cycle, where individuals and villages would compete to donate the greatest amount to the church. Leaving Apia several days after the arrival of the influenza, LMS ministers worked their way sixty miles west to Mulifanua, gathering funds and likely spreading illness in their wake (McLane 2013: 187–188).

This claim is not mentioned in any of the reports given by the Sāmoan Epidemic Commission, New Zealand Government, nor London Missionary Society. Inquiry and interviews into the epidemic by Sāmoan representatives or Europeans make no mention of this claim. However, Rowe based his assertion on “[his] claims to have heard from several sources after his arrival in Western Samoa” (McLane 2013: 187). Was this mere hearsay and idle talk against the LMS, or did it actually occur? It is important to historically examine LMS archival material during this period to see whether there are any correlations.

In a 10 July 1919 issue of the Marlborough Express, the LMS missionary Rev. Paul Cane, was on the SS Talune and was infected with the influenza. Logan blamed Cane for not informing the medical officer about his illness, and as a result, “Sāmoans travelling on the ship from Fiji contracted the disease from the Rev. Mr. Cane or some other infected passenger or member of the crew” (Marlborough Express 1919). Consequently, Cane was thoroughly interviewed by the Sāmoan Epidemic Commission. The records indicate that by the time the Commission started their investigation, a lot of blame was going around and various people in charge were defending their reputations.

Possible Role of the London Missionary Society

During the colonial power transition, the London Missionary Society Church maintained dominance in the Sāmoan islands, but other denominations, namely Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Latter-Day Saints also gained followers. Naturally, the LMS rejoiced under the New Zealand flag, that country being an outpost of the British empire. Logan praised the LMS for the work conducted in Samoa and recognized the Christian influence on the lives of the people. The institution of the church, specifically the LMS, evolved with the changes that occurred in the government and fa’a Samoa. When New Zealand occupied Samoa in 1914 the LMS had forty-two native pastors in Savai’i, seventy-six native pastors in Upolu, and forty-six native pastors in Tutuila and Manu’a (One Hundredth and Twentieth Report 1915). The Church was vibrant and active in all areas, including at the high school level. Perhaps the strongest division of the LMS church at the time of New Zealand occupation arose within the Native Advisory Council (NAC) of the LMS, called the Board of Elders or ‘Au Toeaina (Goodall 1954). The ‘Au Toeaina served under European missionary leaders as a Church Congress with legislative powers.

In 1915, the LMS had agreed during a Deputation from the Directors that the Native Church would shoulder the “responsibility of paying for everything” (Chronicle 1926). In addition to paying for European staff, the Native Church would need to share the costs for the John Williams ship and contribute to foreign missionary work. Apart from salaries and church buildings, the taulaga would pay off debts to the LMS in London, contribute at least ten percent to the Home Mission Funds, donate funds to LMS missions in other lands, and cover the salaries of the European missionaries (Half Yearly Meeting Samoa 1917). This would mean covering the entire costs of both Church and Mission. Part of this transition was due to the financial impact of the First World War on the London Missionary Society in England.
At first, Sāmoan church leaders were hesitant to take on such a financially demanding task. The Sāmoan Church wanted to maintain the “old order” and referred to the LMS as the “Mother” Church, and themselves at its “Child” (Chronicle 1926). The secretary of the LMS Board of Elders, Rev. Imo, argues in his letter to the General Assembly, “Ua matou matua taofi e lei oo i ona po ua tatau ai ona tuua taotasi le Ekalesia i Samoa; aua e lei masani ma le faatauaina tonu o itu eseese e pei ona faatonuina ai e Alii ole Au Faatonu” (Imo to Fono Tele 1916). A translated version of that exact letter highlights the point made by Imo, “We are strongly of [the] opinion that the time has not yet come when it is advisable to leave itself the Church in Samoa because they are not accustomed to the correct administrations of many problems in the same way as they are administered by the LMS Missionaries.” In May 1916, where this topic was discussed, the Sāmoan delegates at this annual meeting “were unanimous in their rejection of any and every scheme of self-control” (Minutes Samoa District Comm. 1916). Imo pressed upon the fact that this task was extremely new to the Samoan clergymen and they may not be ready to shoulder the major costs of the Church. This scheme was known as the “five years testing period” (Smart to Colleagues 1928). If the LMS Samoa Church proved themselves capable of this financial burden, they would be able for self-support and “absolute control” of their finances.

Although the Native Church feared this responsibility, they agreed to make the mission self-supporting by raising £5,000 each year for the next five years. Sāmoan clergymen saw this as a test of whether they were capable of achieving the task of becoming self-supporting (Sulu 1930). The challenge of being a “warrior for God’s work” or toa i le galuega ale Atua plays a major role in Sāmoan heritage, reflective of the commitment to God by the Sāmoan people.

The decision was made to begin to raise funds in 1915. The LMS Sāmoan District Committee meeting of 14-17 December 1915 passed the resolution that a new formed Joint Committee comprised of European LMS missionaries and representatives chosen from each of the seven districts of Samoa would “formulate methods” to raise the proposed sum of £5,000 for self-support (Minutes SDC 1915). This financial offering (taulaga) became an outward expression of Christian commitment to God within the ministry in Samoa and in the mission fields. The word taulaga basically refers to an offering or a sacrifice (Milner 1966). In the Christian Bible taulaga can mean a living sacrifice, for example Abraham’s offering of his son Isaac, or the giving of tithes. As in all religious societies, the offering of gifts to gods and spirits is normal and is manifested differently. Sāmoans too offered gifts to their spiritual ancestors and gods in different forms. The arrival of the missionaries transformed the attitude of giving or the act of tithing. The “old” ways were not necessarily removed, rather, the LMS introduced another method of giving. With these financial offerings were expected personal, family, and village blessings. More importantly, it was an outward confirmation of commitment to family, village, congregation, and especially to God. The LMS’s taulaga was taken on by the Sāmoan clergymen and leaders, despite their initial reservations. As previously stated, the Sāmoans wanted the Europeans to continue their “pule” or total control in all affairs of the Church, including finances.

During the Annual Meeting at Malua in May of 1916, the “new scheme” was approved by the Fono Tele (General Assembly). The Fono Tele had hoped that members of the Church would bring in half, and “adherents” or followers of LMS would bring in the rest. Every registered member was required to subscribe at least 6 seleni (shillings) a year to the central funds of the Church. In addition, each church congregation were required to put in 6 pene (pence) each. The Sulu magazine of the LMS had the following statement,
The Fono Tele agreed that “monthly collections be taken up, every 2nd Sunday morning of the month (Minutes SDC 1916). This new scheme would begin immediately in January 1917. Also, these funds would supplement the offerings at the Annual collection or taulaga every May. If this collection schedule is correct, there is a likely possibility that the push by the LMS Church to meet the £5000 yearly might have in fact played a role in the quick spread of the influenza.

The SS Talune docked in Apia Harbor on Thursday, the 7th of November. Based on the information gathered on the timeline of the periodic monthly taulaga, the second Sunday of November is the 10th. It is very likely that members of the Joint Committee responsible for collecting the taulaga who had contracted the flu spread the disease during this monthly event. As mentioned in the Samoa Epidemic Commission report, the Medical Department and the public, including Logan, “had no particular knowledge of the ravages of this scourge” and that it was only when the mail arrived by the Talune that “recipients of letters and papers were made aware of the state of affairs in New Zealand and the outside world” (Elliot et al. 1919: 8). The information about the influenza was contained sealed in an “unopened mail” aboard the Talune (Field 1991). If Logan did not know of the influenza, most likely the LMS were also unaware that passengers were infected with the disease. The second Sunday of November was only four days after the arrival of the Talune. By the time the collection of the taulaga commenced the spread of infection would have begun. The commitment of the LMS to achieve their financial goals of £5000 yearly was the main objective; unfortunately, it was likely that as parties of clergy and church leaders began to travel to parishes throughout the islands to collect the taulaga, the disease spread with them, albeit without their knowledge. It is important to note that at the time approximately nearly seventy percent of the total population belonged to the LMS. Population on Upolu was approximately 22,587 with 15,289 LMS followers, 4,228 Roman Catholic, 2,606 Methodist, and nearly 500 as other religions. In Savai‘i, population was approximately 13,818 with 8,497 as LMS followers, 1,607 Roman Catholic, 3,547 Methodist, and 167 as others. Manono and Apolima was approximately 751 with 383 LMS followers, 271 Roman Catholic, 81 Methodist, and 16 as other (O le Faaopopo n.d.).

The Native Church met their goals for the first few years. In 1917, the church raised £9784, well above their target. This followed by £8207 in 1918 (SDC Fono 1919). There was great pressure upon the Sāmoan Church to collect these contributions to keep the operations of the LMS running. The Hundred and Twenty-Third Report of the LMS (1918) confirms that the Church had “A system of special collections for a United Fund was set on foot.” This emphasis on the need for special collections to support self-government by the Native Church appears to have played a devastating role during one of Samoa’s most trying periods. The executives of LMS Church were very concerned about the spread of the influenza, however the Secretary of the Sāmoan District Church, Rev. Hough, seemed unsatisfied when the taulaga dropped in 1920, two years after the flu. Rev. Hough wrote: “This is just what we had expected. During the first four years we had been clearing away all sorts of difficulties. If you think that after you have explained a thing to a Sāmoan and he says he understands perfectly, you are finished with the subject, you will be sadly disappointed” (Chronicle
1926). Without clarifying what he meant, it seems that Hough did not take into consideration that despite the loss of nearly 20 percent of the population, Sāmoan clergymen continued their efforts to keep the operations of the LMS going. At the time, following the worse days of the epidemic and its impact on church leadership, Sāmoan society saw a transition by a younger generation to the helm of chiefly power and pastoral leadership. Despite the tribulation that the epidemic forced upon the church, the LMS still wanted to maintain their financial obligations. As the LMS Report, reported,

> Those finance [sic] is not the most important aspect of our work, it is a significant proof of the Church’s vitality that even after the disaster they have still been able to pay to the full their obligations for the support of the Mission (Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Report 1919).

Within five years, the Sāmoan Church had built its confidence as a result of their efforts, and later received full financial control of LMS Samoa Church (Goodall 1954). At the General Assembly meeting (Fono Tele) in May 1922, the LMS Sāmoan Church gave the financial responsibility to the Sāmoan Native Church to “pay for everything it uses for the work of God” (Smart to Colleagues 1928). This would include caring for white missionaries, supporting LMS schools and programs, mission ship, and for general costs of the ministry.

**Conclusion**

New Zealand was accused by a group of surviving Faipule (House of Representatives) who wanted an “official inquiry” into the devastation on the people of Western Samoa. Logan arrogantly dismissed the Sāmoan leaders with the result that he “embittered rather than silenced them” (Hiery 1995: 176). As J. W. Davidson recorded, “Logan’s administration was brought to an end by the epidemic” (Davidson 1967: 96). Not long after, Logan departed Samoa for home leave. His superiors, deciding to replace him, “felt that he was becoming mentally unbalanced” and thereafter appointed Colonel Robert Tate in January 1919 (Tomkins 1992).

History has few sources to describe how the Sāmoans felt about the New Zealand’s role, however Sāmoan chiefs accused New Zealand of negligence and recorded their memories in song. In 1966, three senior men from Sale’a’aumua village recorded a song which had been written about the 1918 epidemic. The actual date of when the song was written is uncertain, but it reflects the horrific experience during the epidemic. The survivors of the terrible illness that claimed thousands of lives, Taua Fatu, Paipa So’o, and Matila Lagona expressed their preference for the departed German administrators Solf and Schultz, as opposed to the New Zealand Governor, Logan. The pese (song) defined the feelings of hundreds of Sāmoans toward Robert Logan and the dissent from matai of the Faipule. Moyle (1990) documented and translated the following pese:

**Fuaiupu 1**

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Lopati e, le Kovana e  
Se ‘e tausia nei Samoa e 
Fai mai ‘ua ‘e sola ‘i Niu Sila e 
Ina ‘ua tupu ‘o le mala e 
‘Ua o’o mai nei ia Samoa e.
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**Verse 1**

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Governor Robert, 
You, who were looking after Samoa, 
They say you fled to New Zealand 
At the outset of the disaster, 
Which arrived here in Samoa.
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**Fuaiupu 2**

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Talu lava ‘oe Lopati 
Tainane ‘o le ali’i fomai’i 
Fai mai na ‘e alu e asi’ 
E leai se fa’ama’i?
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**Verse 2**

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It was all because of you, Robert 
Who knows whether the doctor did, 
As you said, go and inspect 
And that there was no epidemic?
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Verse 3
In my longings, I have not forgotten
The former government
And the governor with whom we were familiar
Was not the care shown by their doctors good,
Not to mention that of the numerous German officials?

Chorus
I grieve, I grieve,
[Such is] my love for Samoa;
Caught by disaster,
Whole families were wiped out, and are at Vaimea
I wish I could have heard the meeting of chiefs
And the fine words of your speech, Toelupe
Saying that the governor was the one who had done wrong
And that the American [Samoa] Government should have taken care of us.

The final report issued by the Samoa Epidemic Commission concluded that a total of 7,542 persons died because of the influenza epidemic. A thorough investigation with interviews and site visits concluded: “that in seven days after its [Tulane] arrival, pneumonic influenza was epidemic in Upolu; that it spread with amazing rapidity throughout Upolu, and later throughout Savaii” (Samoa Times 1919). The devastation from influenza pressured New Zealand and challenged their role in the islands. Without doubt, the New Zealand holds responsibility for the influenza, however, this article considers how, on two isolated islands, the disease spread so far and so quickly. In addition to communal practices of faʻasamoa, this paper suggests that based on the timeline of the monthly tāulaga, McLane and Rowe could be correct in their speculations that it was the unfortunate coincidence of the arrival of the Talune and the planning and commencement of the Samoa-wide tāulaga.

This article does not place blame on the London Missionary Society or the faʻa-samoa as guilty institutions, accepting the verdict of history that the blame falls on New Zealand. As it happened, the LMS had continued to serve God by conducting their fundraising to support greater indigenous authority and responsibility and very likely inadvertently spread the influenza in the process. Neither LMS records nor government records verify the suggestions by McLane or Rowe, but given the timeline of events, there is a high possibility that the push to collect the tāulaga may have caused the rapid spread of the disease. Sāmoan nationalism was not confined to the church either, as the epidemic had political consequences. Within a decade Sāmoan leaders began to challenge New Zealand rule through the Mau movement under O.F. Nelson and Tupua Tamasese and the chiefs of many of the leading districts of Samoa. This is testament of the Sāmoan saying, pau se toa ae tulaʻi se toa or when one warrior falls, another will rise.
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Sulu, 1930.
Family tradition, curriculum and voices – Road to success.

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Abstract

This paper elaborates on the significance of family tradition on the students’ successful achievement in education. This factor was highlighted as one of the indicators for the students’ educational success in Lipine’s (2010) research and recommended as an important area to be exploited for cultural and educational development. In New Zealand, changes are being made to assist education of Pasifika students and those were significant to success of some students. However, the failure rate of Pasifika students is still higher than that of the other ethnic groups, and the need to investigate resolutions for this trend is seriously considered. The literature indicates the need for educational systems to be responsive to the multiple worlds of minority students. Thirty six Samoan students from high schools were interviewed and their views were analysed to verify factors that are important for academic success. Thematic analysis identified three themes; First, the passion to achieve. Second, the capacity to deal with inconsistencies. Third, the importance of a holistic orientation. Each of these rests upon a strong family orientation as being important. Recommendations arising from the study are outlined.

KEY WORDS: Family, Tradition, Culture, Learning, Samoa

INTRODUCTION

High failure rate of ethnic minority students in education is a concern for education authorities in many communities. Indians in Great Britain and Canada (British Educational Research Association [BETA] 2014), Latinos and the Afro-Americans in the US (Sparks 2011), Aborigines of Australia (Schwab 1998) and of course the Pasifika students in New Zealand have been dominantly occupying the lower end of the scale (from fail to average grades), a trend according to Lipine (2010), it has been evident for decades. Although research (Fortuny and Henderson 2009) in this area have prompted numerous recommendations, the problem remains un-resolved. Some improvements in examination results and tertiary entry (Fox and Ramani 2010) have indicated that progress has been made but this has been considerably slow compared to results by other students. In New Zealand, almost half the number of secondary students who failed year 12 and 13 examinations in the past five years are those with Pasifika orientation, and more than 50 percent of these students are Sāmoans (New Zealand Education Review 2012). A similar trend has also been experienced in other ethnic communities. For example, the Afro-American and Latinos of the US (Sparks 2011) have shown significant improvement in educational performances but relatively lower than those of caucasian or palagi (also known as white/European) orientation. Researchers (e.g. Villegas et al. 2012) pointed at cultural mismatch as a potential cause for the increasing failure in education for these people, but Lipine’s (2010) findings reveal that Sāmoan students have their own views of their culture’s, that can be utilized to enhance their education. He added that these views are influenced by family values which are driven by circumstances. According to the students, they have their own perspectives of fa’asāmoa that are different from that of their village and church communities. This article discusses the influence of student’s perceptions of their culture on learning.
Literature review

Methodology
The research is primarily based on the voices of the students. It is essential that the views of the individuals are heard because no-one else understands them (Hunkin 2015). A group of 36 Sāmoan high achieving students were selected for the task, nominated by their school principals and senior teachers. The schools were selected from the various communities in the North Island of New Zealand. These schools were carefully considered for a fair representation of the various areas of New Zealand. Two sets of interviews were used, group and focus group. Thematic analysis procedure was used for the data analysis—all data was transcribed and sorted into codes and then themes. Three themes, the passion to achieve, capacity to deal with inconsistencies, and the importance of a holistic orientation, each resting upon a strong family orientation were recognized. The themes were further analyzed to determine a mega-theme—this theme entails diversity and individuality within culture and viewed as an entity of truth.

Theory

Culture
A number of relevant theories supported the findings for this research. These theories provided a detailed explanation of the factors impacting students’ perceptions of their culture, and successful achievement in education. The cultural, socio-economical, religious, family and political influences will be exploited to inform the various approaches to achieve success.

Theorists (e.g., Brown 1998; Enayati and Sayyadi 2012; Bowels 1998; Sodowsky et al. 1998; Frey 1998; Osborne 2001) have conceptualised culture as a way of life conceived of multiple/diverse concepts. Formally, the same notion was conceptualised by Bronfenbrenner (1994), indicating culture as a system shaped by various ecological forces—his concept provides insight of why people sometimes have diverse perceptions of their cultures. Other theories (Strawson 1989; Schatschneider et al. 1999 and Villegas 1999) indicate that diverse perception of culture can be caused by reason steered by intention which derives meaning, thus people’s perceptions are shaped accordingly. So, diversity in perceptions of culture depends on people’s intention. The cultural difference and mismatch theories (Stephens et al. 2012) support that appropriate approaches are necessary to enhance learning, but they add that educators can assume other peoples’ cultures wrongly, particularly when they do not fully understand the impact of change on individuals. These theories have been used to describe academic and socio-cultural issues within the schools, particularly those with diverse cultures in them, but, education systems have not acknowledged diversity within the cultures and school teachers themselves have continued to assume students’ learning needs.

It could be argued that failure to understand student’s cultures can lead to cultural mismatch. In New Zealand, cultural mismatch has led to many students failing education (Lipine 2010). Assuming that all Sāmoan students have the same concept of fa’asāmoa is wrong, and Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese’s (1999) theory, ‘fue lavelave’ has provided a relevant explanation of that. In fact, he cautioned that fa’asāmoa is more complex than just a culture with rules and traditions. Tupua Tamasese added that fa’asāmoa is construed of the various forces such as religion, politics,
economic, education, cultural etc., that change from time to time (1999)—and he argued that all these factors will impact on Sāmoan’s mentality. He also pointed at the pattern of development of fa’asāmoa in the past and said that, changes have and will always be accepted as part of fa’asāmoa as many Sāmoans see it as a positive aspect of life for them. Turner (1983) has indicated in his research that the Sāmoans have formulated rules and traditions to adapt to change which means that traditional thoughts will be changed. Emulating Bronfenbrenner, Tamasese and Rolff (1978) believe that Sāmoans would surrender their traditional fa’asāmoa and adapt to changes as circumstances continue to change.

Change in fa’asāmoa cannot be viewed as subsidiary, in fact, this should be known as part of cultural-evolution as emphasized by Hofstede (1980) and Sailiata (2014): They referenced Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher who researched culture and argued that it will transform as people continue to interact with the ever-changing forces such as politics, education, religion, family, religion and community. These interactions could be understood by Piaget’s schemata theory which he proposed that, stimulus is determined by a combination of senses and innate forces such as visual, brain, nerves and mind—these forces interact to process information that are aligned with desire. Meanwhile reaction to what we want is being characterized as instinct, a process described in Bruner’s (1991) physicalistic human development theory. Apparently, Bruner supports cultural evolution and he was not alone. In Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) framework, he outlined the reasons why people are diverse in their views—he indicated that cultural change is motivated by fluctuating circumstances and people would have to adapt to those changes or face difficulty in life, adaption therefore depends on situation and purposes of the individual.

Piaget (1958) and Bruner (1957) have also described in their theories the causes for cultural diversity, stating the various forces such as family, food, health condition, economic, peers, media, technology etc., as prompting stimulation. They added that creativity is part of human development - people create ideas through borrowing, adaptation, assimilation and observation. These ideas vary from time to time depending on the individual (Rutherford 1990). However, some people align perception with traditions/values of the culture they are exposed to. The theories discussed have indicated that, people’s perceptions of their cultures are entirely dependent on interaction with environment.

Cultural variation

Cultural variation is one of the issues arising from Lipine’s (2010) research. He found that, students have diverse views of their culture because they are in conformity with family traditions. In Kagan et al. 1984 research they found that people have diverse views of their cultures because of interactions with other cultures—again, they supported that interaction with environment influences belief/perception, and they believed that this process is fundamental to cultural understanding. These commentators are evolutionists but, they are more flexible in concepts of culture, they believe change can happen any time depending on need and circumstances, meaning that they do not observe patterns to verify a point after a significant period of time like the typical Darwinian’s (1859) evolutionary idea of human life. Other researchers (Karagiorgi and Symeou 2005; Piaget 1958) believe diversity in people’s views/perceptions of their cultures is a result of people being stimulated by intention. This process is dependent on the state of consciousness the individual has, which also means that not everyone has the same view of things. For example, some people deviate from their culture because of the need to adjust to change, and while environment continues to
evolve, people will be more creative in their views/ideas of their cultures (Gassmann et al. 2010). Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological theory system has provided a detailed explanation of the basis of this creativity, indicating that innate stimulation is influenced by initiation, exploration and creativity. According to Bronfenbrenner, humans make changes to their ideas when they encounter unfamiliar circumstance/systems. Humans will continue to vary their cultures as they continue to encounter change (Bronfenbrenner 1994). All these researchers unveil an important area to be considered for educational development. That is, interaction with environment causes cultural perceptions. For education, what is being advocated is that students will be successful if they are left to construct their learning and be self-regulated. Teachers therefore must understand and be able to provide adequate assistance to motivate students (Reeves 2006). In the context of this study, being able to utilize student’s perceptions of their family traditions in classroom learning will ensure students approach learning more readily. For didactic and clinical experience, learners are active constructors of knowledge and the locus of knowledge is based on social interaction within their families (Prawat 1996).

Cognition

For cognition, people manipulate environment to suit them, and form the learning strategies to make sure new discoveries are catered for. One of those strategies Hofstede (1980), Fryer and Jackson (2008) and Jones (2002) is being demonstrated in classroom setting—these commentators believe that innovation is the result of an individual understanding of information, meaning that we are more creative when we are familiar with information and in facilitating this need, it requires familiarity, comfortability and self-reliance. The underlying philosophy underpinning these theories is that cognition depends on who we are. The implication is that teachers’ thorough understanding of the students is paramount (Hattie 2003; Partington 1998; Pasikale 1996; Pasikale et al. 1998).

The advantage of such an approach is that it enables creative thinking and positive learning behaviours (Strauss et al. 1998). As indicated by Jonassen and Grabowski (1993), students prefer their own learning methods, and are more creative when they are given the opportunity to create learning for themselves—teachers can assist by allowing students to use their preferred learning methods. In Piaget’s concept known as schemata, he outlined a cognitive process involving assimilation, adaptation and accommodation—these processes involve learner’s discovery of new ideas through immediacy, creativity and transliteration. They (Jonassen and Grabowski 1993 ) argue that creative learning can only be successful when learners understand what they are doing. Piaget’s theory is being used as the basis for student centered learning approach for it supports creative learning/thinking as well as teacher-centered cognition.

However, a teacher centered learning method, which emphasizes rote-learning can be as effective as independent learning. Lipine (2010) has found that teachers stimulate interest if they are creative, friendly and caring, which means that learners sometimes copy what they see or hear if the methods of teaching appeals to them. In the context of Sāmoan students in New Zealand, some participants adjust to changes through instantaneous copying/adoption while the others maintain their traditions to assist their schooling, both students have successfully achieved the result. Theorists and many others have agreed that being flexible and considerate of modern conditions broadens the learner’s concepts of his/her culture and ideas which is important for enhancing learning.
Result and discussion

In the context for this study, the influence of Sāmoan students’ family traditions has impacted on their learning. Like any other culture (where change has resulted in people being creative and or selective in ideas), the respondents have chosen to abide by family traditions which made them successful learners. The data has shown that not all the families practice the traditional fa’asāmoa as such. Many families form their traditions by blending some Sāmoan traditions with the New Zealand cultural traditions to adapt to the conditions of New Zealand. Others however, sustain the traditional fa’asāmoa as tradition. Ironically, despite variation in traditions, all the families maintained Sāmoan values (respect and love) which according to them are the basis for successful achievements in education. The following factors (from this study) are the key to the subjects’ family practices which are the indicators of the participant’s concept of fa’asāmoa and the Sāmoan values. They include communication, the church, traditional fa’asāmoa, community, discipline and cultural pride. Several of these indicators will now be discussed in detail.

Communication

In the traditional fa’asāmoa, respect and love are reflected upon leadership, direction and decision-making which are the responsibilities of matai (also known as chiefs), parents, pastors and the elderly (Aiono 1986). Family members would only have to listen and do what they are told meaning that, decision-making within Sāmoan families/community is the responsibility of particular people. Meanwhile, some participants for the study have indicated that communication within their families is different from that of the traditional fa’asāmoa. For example, their families share ideas and the parents are flexible/considerate in decision making. They stated that:

- It is good to have a balance and parents just have to understand the things their children had to do.... Like, if they have school work then they do not have to go to church.
- I do not participate in the church and community activities that my parents are involved in, but they encourage me to do well in school, like telling me stories about the struggles they went through.
- I reckon that there are some things that you are not allowed to do, that you should do, like for example, if I disobey my mother, it’s like disrespecting the culture, but in the long run what I am doing , I know is helping me becoming what I want to be.

Basically, the stuff you do at home can relate to school. For example, I questioned things (i.e. my parents’ instructions) if I did not understand them. Sometimes I disagree with my parents say with regard to things such as family policies, and I have always suggested what I believe in. My parents respect me and they listen to me when I voice my opinions.

Being considerate has resulted in a better understanding between all family members. The students and their families through mutual understanding worked cooperatively to achieve tasks—the parents and students listened, acknowledged, respected and were considerate of one another’s needs. This form of communication is not foreign to them because it has always been the way these students communicate in their families. Catherine et al. (2008: 3–22), have earlier noted that it is natural for people to be influenced by the communication style of their society. And, for the successful Sāmoan students in New Zealand, the majority of them are New Zealand born and they practice open communication and share ideas like many papālagi families. Although some participants were born in Samoa, they lived in Apia where the fa’asāmoa is slightly different from that in the villages—communication between parents and children are open, meaning everyone has a say in family matters. Communication within these students’ families is understood by the tradition of their society (Apia), a reflection of Vygotsky’s (1962) concept of human development. It
is ironic though that when some of these students immigrated to New Zealand, they did not need to readapt to the new condition. Their traditional communication style (as they did in Samoa) was still valid in New Zealand and they preferred to sustain it because they believe it made them successful.

It is apparent that both students have adopted a Western style to enhance their learning and at the same time, preserve their values, but more significantly, engage in the preservation of Sāmoan values.

Jonassen (2012) and Piaget (1958) have conceptualized how information is processed in the mind, and while these theorists have studied two different people/cultures, they both agree that people shape perceptions based on intention. The intention, as discussed earlier in the literature review is stimulated and triggered by desire which could be attributed to practice/culture. The students for the research have clarified their true intention which is to utilize the fa‘apapālagi (also known as the European style) to convey the Sāmoan values which is truly, their family culture/culture.

Apparently, the rapid development of other ethnic cultures in New Zealand could be another reason why many Sāmoan students (such as these students) held onto their traditional values under a different culture (Lipine 2010). The Ministry of Education has included in the curriculum cultural studies. Many secondary and even university institutions have established various related activities to encourage ethnic students’ participation (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2011) and Samoa is an active participant of that. In Axelrod’s (1997) concept of culture, he pointed out that people’s cultures/perceptions are formed via cultural infusion, the process he believed involves culture as agent, meaning that we use our culture as a means to convert new ideas prior to being accepted. Although he was a bit vague about the definition of culture, his concept fits in the context of this study. That is, the students were aware about the values of the fa‘asāmoa as demonstrated through their family traditions, and they perceived/behaved accordingly. Many Sāmoans believe that, allowing foreign traditions in fa‘asāmoa would distort the Sāmoan values, but, for these students, adopting foreign ideas/traditions in New Zealand encourages them to keep the Sāmoan values, a notion supporting Jonassen and Grabowski (2012) findings. Moreover, Piaget indicates that humans have instincts that are further developed throughout our journey in life, which means that we tend to change from time to time as we continue adapt to the modern world. But according to Tamasese (1999), Sāmoans are proud of fa‘asāmoa and that they would apply exotic ideas to enhance their values as they did in the past, and he referenced the events leading to the Mau and forming some Sāmoan traditions such as tatau (also known as traditional tattoo) and ava ceremony. There is no doubt that the students for the research were being nurtured the way their families believe would make them successful in New Zealand. The students themselves confirmed that, and stated how important it is to their educational development. Obviously, they have always communicated with their families in the more Western style but the intention is to maintain the Sāmoan values. The key to all their success however, are the parents being considerate and having a better understanding of their children. In fa‘asāmoa, there is proverbial saying that; A a’oa’o le tama e tusa ma ona ala e le toe te’a ese ai lava—if a child is nurtured according to the culture, he/she won’t deviate from it. It means that no matter what changes we make in life we will always remember our values.

In education, the cultural difference theories have showcased effective communication to foster success for multicultural orientation learners. Many New Zealand schools now require the local knowledge (in the form of locals such as teacher aides, parental help, community leaders and
stake holders) to assist with students’ academic development. These people can provide teachers with insight into the students’ mindset. The students themselves stated that their parents have been considerate of their needs, and that motivated them to do well in school. The teachers therefore must show tolerance and respect to their Pasifika students by listening to them. This approach is significant for both the students and teachers’ development particularly in complex situations such as that involving these students.

Meanwhile, the other respondents have indicated the importance of the traditional communication practices of fa’asāmoa to them. They said that:

*The traditional fa’asamo gives you the respect that will lead you to better things.*

*We are taught to listen to our parents, matai, the elderly and pastor, because they have the wisdom and better understanding of life. I believe listening to their ideas will assists in terms of direction and understanding of the world.*

*I guess I was quite fortunate that my parents have always advised me about the importance of education.*

The findings have illustrated how communication is being carried out within some Sāmoan families. It could be argued that modern ideas determine cultural direction (Axelrod 1997) but, the respondents have indicated the opposite of that. Apparently, these students have been conservative with fa’asāmoa and that reflected their preferred communication style, quite the opposite of Meleisea (1987); Mageo (1990); Pasikale (1999), Openshaw et al. (1993), Pasikale et al. (1998) who believe in cultural evolution. The assumption underpinning these commentators’ concept is that all cultures must be subject to change or face extinction (Inglehart and Wolzel 2005). Some students for this study however, pointed out that communication within their families has always been one dimensional—their role is to listen to parents and matai and do what they are told, and through that they became successful learners. An important indicator from this section is that traditional communicational methods in fa’asāmoa are more effective to some students because they are being practiced in their families, the notion that was conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) microsystem concept. The unfolding possibility from these findings is that students will be successful as long as they accept and appreciate communication within their families. The New Zealand Ministry of Education has considered the importance of students understanding of teacher and vice versa and thus decided to include teacher aides in the payroll. The aim is for these helpers to assist with class programmes, those with language difficulty and cultural misunderstanding. Schools counselors have also been part of the school programmes to counter the various problems relating to student learning which has helped improve communication links between students and their families.

**Discipline**

Some are aware that some Sāmoan traditions are not recommended by the New Zealand authorities but they still believe these are appropriate to them. The Sāmoan traditional disciplinary methods such as spanking or verbal abuse are not recommended by the New Zealand authorities but these are still practiced in some families. The students believe that these are appropriate to them.

*My parents spank me because they want me to become a good person. They do not hit to hurt me physically but to make me realize there are consequences for unaccepted behaviors. I also feel that it is love why I sometimes get spanked, so why not.*
According to the faʻasāmoa you get the strap from your parents if you misbehave repeatedly, like you get the hidings from your parents because they want you to live a better life. When you get older you will learn more about respecting other people.

Whenever my dad gives me a hiding he tells me that the reason why he does that is because he cares about me. This makes me realize that it is important to listen to parents.

Sometimes I get told off for misbehaving. My parents often raise their voices and used some harsh words and I understand that they do that because they want me to be good.

The traditional faʻasāmoa gives you the respect that will lead you to better things.

We are taught to listen to our parents, matai, the elderly and pastor, because they have the wisdom and better understanding of life. I believe listening to their ideas will assist you in terms of direction and understanding of the world.

These students are Sāmoan born and they lived in the village areas of Samoa where traditional disciplinary methods are practiced and perceived as the only means toward a better and successful life—‘spanking’ and ‘telling off’ are some of these methods. It is common knowledge in Samoa that many Sāmoan students in New Zealand have failed in school and ended up being unemployed or imprisoned because they opted to live the faʻapālagi that they do not fully understand. And so, these students’ families have decided to stay with the traditional faʻasāmoa rather than the New Zealand culture, an exploration discussed by Prawat (1996) in his concept of knowledge. An important consideration from this finding is that sasa or spanking combines with counseling enable these participants to accept their parents’ reasoning and the advantage for this approach to them being that they are being punished twice (physically and mentally) making them aware of the consequences of unacceptable behaviors, whether this is recommended in the New Zealand law is something to be considered for the future.

Furthermore, these students believe that senior people are leaders because they are knowledgeable and wise and they would accept whatever they are endorsed to do. In faʻasāmoa, Sāmoans are taught about the ways to obtain knowledge and for those who are exposed to the culture, they would have the first-hand experience of those teachings and not questioning their relevance. In Piaget’s (1958) concept of perception, he indicated that perception is the result of ideas being restored and processed in the mind, and he used the three processes (assimilation adaptation and accommodation) to illumina his concept. For the Sāmoans in the research they were literally being disciplined in the Sāmoan traditional methods and they have experienced the advantages of these approaches to them. There is no secret that, these students also understand that some secondary schools in Samoa (after the continuous violence in the streets of Apia) have reinstated sasa to discipline Sāmoan students because there is a belief that the faʻapapālagi approaches are not effective anymore and because of the increase in fights amongst some schools. For some Sāmoans, the culture of New Zealand has created issues for them and hence they had to do what would benefit them, which is staying with the culture. The participants said, it is their family traditional discipline methods that made them who they are.

Cooperative Effort

Another significant tradition to the students schooling success is cooperative effort. This approach can be linked to faʻasāmoa. That is, it is traditional for Sāmoans to work in units (Tupouola 2004). And, there is proverbial expression in faʻasāmoa to confirm this; a limalima faatasi ua mama se avega meaning that; more hands make a task easier to achieve (ibid). Apparently, the cooperative tradition
of fa’asāmoa reflects the traditions of some families. The participants from these families stated that:

Sometimes my uncles gave me money for my schoolwork

My dad checks my work from time to time. He keeps a record of my test results. He’s concerned when my results are down.

We are not rich of course and we are also not poor like the people in the remote areas of Africa and China. But, my parents made sure that I have all that I need for school. I understand that they want us to have a better future so I studied hard and aimed for higher things.

We are proud of our families, and we would like to do our best in our schooling to give our families better names.

I come from American Samoa and the expectation of my family and the community is pretty high on me. I mean that when they see me leaving the country for education they expect much higher things when I return, and if I return a failure the word goes out very quick, and that would give my family and I a very bad name. It’s like an embarrassment to you and your whole family especially your parents.

I need to have better education to score a better paid job to help out my parents. They have been struggling to provide for my education, so I need to help out.

The participants have indicated the importance of family supportive roles to their schooling. Their families have contributed by giving moral and material support. Cooperative effort is viewed by these Sāmoans in New Zealand as a way to promote family which is different from that of the many Sāmoans in Samoa. Success in education is a step forward in life and that is achieved through working cooperatively to support the educational needs of the young Sāmoans. Piaget’s (1958) scaffolding idea is relevant to describe this approach by the Sāmoans. He believed that the support by more experienced people would encourage/motivate learners. But that is not all; Sāmoans are proud people, and they would support education for they believe that success would give them a good name as well. The students however, stated the importance of nuclear family to them and indicated an awareness of some extended family members’ agenda. That is, not everyone is as generous as the parents. For these students, loyalty is attributed to those who assist with love and they pointed at their parents and nuclear families. So, being loyal and caring for their parents, these students made sure they do well in schools.

Fa’asāmoa (culture)

Fa’asāmoa has rules and protocols like any other culture. The words, traditions, sounds, expressions, intonation and symbols convey meanings that only the Sāmoans are familiar with (Hunkin 2015 ). In the New Zealand context, the fa’asāmoa may not be as effective as it is in Samoa because of the of the host country’s culture. But, some participants pointed out how they managed to weave their way through using the language.

I suppose I pick up different traits from different cultures, I mean if it is not gonna help me do better in life then there is no point picking it up you know it’s kind like pick and mix.

I think if Sāmoan students do as I am doing they will be much better than the palagi students. I am saying this because I also apply my knowledge of fa’asāmoa in my English expression, which has been a big advantage I have over my palagi peers.

Many senior Sāmoans are opposed to the idea of language/cultural adoption. They believe that many young people have adopted the ideas, words and other cultural aspects from fa’apālagi to express meaning in fa’asāmoa but, these do not possess the true meaning of traditions and expressions. These seniors believe that it is imperative that the formal culture and language must be
used at all times otherwise the culture will disappear (Lipine 2010). Research (Tui Atua 1999; Pasikale et al. 1998), however indicates that, change has always been part of fa’asāmoa, from its beginning until now. In support for this claim, certain words, practices and artifacts are referred to as being borrowed from the other cultures, which Sāmoans claim as theirs. Notably during the pre-colonization/colonization eras (John Williams...), major changes occurred to the culture and these were masterminded by both the foreigners and senior Sāmoans (Moyle 1984). The transitions were smooth as the Sāmoans blended to the changes undisrupted (Tupuola 2004). Now, Sāmoans are encountering many challenges in life and influences of other cultures were part of that, notably for the young generation. Like the past, many foreign ideas, words, traditions and traits were adopted (Pasikale 1996) and many of these changes have not been utilized properly unlike what the forefathers did. This behavior pattern continues through many generations as the Sāmoans continue to encounter new ideas/changes.

The literature has indicated that changes can be incorporated into culture as long as they are being utilized properly. In the past, it took the senior members (who are wise and knowledgeable) careful consideration to mastermind the transitions and the people fully appreciated it because they were done with good intention. Like Jonassen (1991) pointed out that we borrow ideas because we intend to use them. It is more or less what is happening to many Sāmoans today. New ideas are being borrowed and while some have resulted in people being successful, some have landed others in unpleasant destinations and that justifies the concern of the senior Sāmoans. However, where survival is vital we need to accept change. The participants themselves have indicated how they weaved their way around to adapt to the conditions of New Zealand meaning that they altered some Sāmoan traditions through borrowing/adoption. To these students, their practices not only made them successful in their schooling, they also made them proud Sāmoans.

These students have stated the significance of fa’asāmoa on their success so far in education despite being exposed to New Zealand culture. To weave their way through the two worlds, they altered some traditions which are not often accepted by their elders. But one cannot say that we do not react to change—it is natural instinct to react to stimuli (Buper 1992; Inhelder and Piaget 1958; Vygotsky 1962). One reaction of interest is cross-bordering (Chatterjee et al. 1992), this has been the tactic the students’ families used which involves interaction and consideration. The students had to adapt to the culture of New Zealand because it is far superior in New Zealand than the fa’asāmoa (Lipine 2010), otherwise they hold on to their culture and risk losing it. How these students reacted to change is a complex issue—apparently they adjusted via an understanding of space, mobility and other forces accumulating the New Zealand culture and they effectively used these forces to consolidate the Sāmoan values by their families. Researchers (Ryba et al. 2016) have theorized this type of movement saying that there are forces concerning cultural transition and these are crucial to immigrants’ lives. These people will assimilate to the new culture because they interact with them all the time. What is more unique about the students for this study is that they assimilate the New Zealand culture but still live the Sāmoan values. The study has revealed the importance of understanding—that is, when students, parents and educators understand each other, students will not fail examinations meaning that families and authority must cooperate with the students to make them successful learners. It needs to be highlighted that in many Sāmoan families/communities misunderstanding has resulted in many students failing school examinations. But, these communities have shown significant improvements due to educators, community leaders and parents being responsive to the needs of their young people’s educational needs. Some
improvements in the areas such as NZEA examination results, university and polytechnics enrolment for Pasifika are shown (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2011), but still, the success rate of Pasifika is relatively lower than other groups which is a concern for educators and government leaders. Many end up playing rugby hoping that this would provide a better future for them. It could be argued that many Sāmoans are successful in rugby because of family/community support. In fact, rugby is part of ‘āiga, church, community, work and everywhere else for these people meaning that it is traditional for many students. Like the saying; not every player is a good player and unfortunately only a few make it to the professional level.

This finding will make parents and decision-makers aware about the significance of family traditions to students’ learning. They will also be encouraged to listen and acknowledge the views of their young people to really understand these young people’s learning needs. Moreover, it adds to the literature of existing education theories.

Conclusion

The varying nature of the Sāmoans students in New Zealand is an indication of the growing diversity of cognitive learning even amongst those of the same culture. What is being indicated from these findings is the importance of family culture, developing related literature to cognition. And, even more so, the need for constructivist teachers (Bandura et al. 1996 and Vygosky 1978), those who understand the composition of students’ mind set. The key to effective teaching/learning therefore rests solely on the teachers’ understanding of social/cultural influences pertaining to students’ perceptions (Jonassen 1991).

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Authority of the Matai Sa’o in Contemporary Sāmoa: At Home and Abroad

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Abstract

This paper reviews the enquiries of the government of Sāmoa through its Law Reform Commission into the status of matai sa’o. Traditionally a matai sa’o was the sole head of an extended family owning common property, possessing authority over its members including holders of other matai titles belonging to that family. It suggests that the government’s interest is very likely to be related to legislation passed subsequent to the Land Titles Registration Act 2008, such as the Customary Land Advisory Commission Act (CLACA) 2013, which make it easier for customary lands to be leased. A matai sa’o may authorise a lease on a portion of customary land appurtenant to his title on behalf of his extended family. The paper discusses the complicated current situation where by multiple holders of senior titles that have the status of matai sa’o are living in the village to which the title is associated, or in other places in Sāmoa, or overseas, and the issues in defining Sāmoan custom.

In July 2012 the Sāmoa Law Reform Commission (SLRC) circulated a discussion paper “Pule a le Matai Sa’o” (authority of the principal chief) for public consultations. The paper was based on research on Sāmoan custom and usage, summarising which had been written by scholars on the subject, as well as records of the Land and Titles court. The issue of authority has become increasingly significant since legislation was passed which allows the leasing of customary land for commercial purposes.

The discussion paper presented nine questions about the authority of the matai sa’o, regarding his or her duties and authority, the criteria for appointment of a matai sa’o, the issue of authority when there are multiple holders of the matai title, the authority of the village council of matai in relation to the authority of a matai sa’o, the kind of disputes that arise between a matai sa’o and the suli (heirs) to the title her or she holds, and the service due to a matai sa’o by his ‘āiga. The paper also sets out the legislative and practice background of the Sāmoa Land and Titles Court (Land and Titles Act 1981).

After public consultation in October and November 2016, the SLRC produced a final report in February 2017. It made ten recommendations on the minimum qualifications of a person to be recognised as matai sa’o, suggesting that these might be set out in law, or at least to influence the policy and practices of government agencies in dealings with Sāmoan customary matters. Of particular relevance to the focus of this conference, is the proposal for a legal residential requirement in appointing a matai sa’o; that he or she should have resided in Sāmoa for at least a year prior to appointment, and thereafter reside in Sāmoa for at least one-third of the year. The majority of the 700 people who participated in the consultations agreed that residence in Sāmoa was an important responsibility of a matai sa’o.

It was generally agreed that a matai sa’o must base decisions on consultation with the extended family. Consultation is more difficult today than in the past because of the multi-national characteristics of Sāmoan ‘āiga (extended family or clan). However most considered that on any matter involving family property and titles, the duty of the matai sa’o to consult and to take account of family opinions should be set out in law. It was acknowledged, however, that the process of getting a large extended family to agree on leasing land or bestowing titles could be very time consuming. If the consultation requirements were made law, one dissenting voice could prevent a decision being made. Accordingly there may be a need to allow the matai sa’o to make a decision if
the majority of the family supported it. Another issue discussed was the disposition of rents received from leases of customary land. Some thought it should be honestly and fairly shared, while other proposed it should be held in a family trust account. The *matai sa'o* should be regarded as a trustee of family property, not its owner.

Two issues are common. The first concerns relations between related higher ranking and lower ranking titles. In the past there was no need to declare which *matai* was the *sa'o*, because highest ranking titles were undivided until fairly recent times (See Meleisea 1987, 1995). The highest titles were justified in the *fa'alupega* of villages and had the right to allocate land and bestow titles on lower ranking genealogically connected or *tautua* titles. But nowadays, with most high ranking titles divided among two or more, sometimes many holders, the question of which of them has the traditional authority can be very complicated. In this situation, lesser ranked titles associated with a high *sa'o* title may assert their independence of it, and reject the traditional obligation to seek approval or consult with the higher ranking *sa'o*, claim their own rights to land and titles—often backed by decisions made in the Land and Titles Court.

For example, consider an actual case: a high ranking *ali'i* title, the senior title above four other ancestrally related titles, was divided among two holders in the 1980s, but the two sets of people claiming to be *suli* (heirs) did not consider themselves to be related, regardless of the Land and Titles Court’s ruling that they were one family. Accordingly there was no agreement as to which of them would have authority over land appurtenant to the title or the lower ranked titles that traditionally were their *tautua* (those serving the title). The older of the two *matai sa'o* made decisions without consulting the younger, and with such division, the holders of these lesser *tautua* titles, which have also now been divided among many holders, are now acting independently; they are bestowing titles without consultation with either of the two *sa'o*, and claiming the land that they are using belongs exclusively to their own titles, over which (they claim) neither of the *matai sa'o* has authority. They are even claiming the right to appoint their own *matai sa'o* title holder. In situations like these the traditional rights and duties among families in villages become confused and contentious. It is made worse by the fact that the breaking of old rules against marriage within the same village undermines the *vā fealoaloa'i* (respectful social distance) between the various ranks of *matai* and their families.

The second effect is when high titles are not only divided among many holders, but are held by people living in different countries. As the transnational *matai* research team has shown, the responsibility of the holder of a *matai sa'o* living overseas has less to do with the village it belongs to, and more to do with leadership in overseas church communities and with organising and binding together members of the ‘āiga. However when a major issue concerning the land, titles or traditional status of the family arises, all the *sa'o* are expected to look after the interests of their various branches of the ‘āiga. As the consultations on the authority of the *matai sa'o* have demonstrated, this often results in no agreement being reached, land becoming in effect ‘no man’s land’ as the right to use it cannot be agreed upon, and also the conferral of titles without approval of all concerned. Further, decisions by the Land and Titles Court are often arbitrary when the evidence before them is contradictory. This results in at least one branch of a family being aggrieved, with further negative consequences.

The recommendations of the SLRC (2017) on the consultations on the authority of the *matai sa'o* are likely to lead to customary principles being made law. The next step will likely be a Bill before parliament on the recommendations. These 30 recommendations include specification of the
criteria for the eligibility for appointment as a matai and matai sa’o, the duties of a sa’o, the removal of a matai or matai sa’o, and the issue of multiple sa’o—whether to legally limit the number of appointments that may be made, or not to, along with the specifications for each option. In addition the Commission recommended that government ministries “provide awareness and education on the roles and responsibilities of matai sa’o, for guidelines on the duties of consultation between matai sa’o and their sulis.”

One of the recommendations has particular relevance for matai sa’o and sulis living overseas. It is proposed that it will become law that, in future, a proposed matai sa’o must have resided in Sāmoa for a stated period of time, and that in future, a matai sa’o must live in Sāmoa for at least one third of each year while he or she holds that office. This is because among the seven duties of a matai sa’o proposed to be defined in law, is the duty to oversee family properties as a trustee. There are some very important implications from the consultations on the authority of matai sa’o if the Commission’s recommendations become law. The minimum qualifications of a person to be recognised as matai sa’o may reduce the extent of title-splitting and mass conferrals and strengthen the integrity of fa’amatai

As Sāmoans, we often speak of the pride we have in our culture; yet it is quite difficult, as the consultations I have referred to demonstrate, for people to agree what the principles of our culture are. The fa’amatai of today has evolved for more than a century into something our ancestors would not recognise. This is its strength, culture must evolve to survive. But there are threats. Today in many villages church congregations are far stronger, more united and more organised than villages councils. The fono (village councils of matai) are often made weak by the issues I have described here.

Where are these trends leading us? It is not impossible that in fifty years’ time our villages and their fa’amatai governance systems will have faded away, to become like suburbs and small towns with locally elected councillors under central government control (which is the way in which local government operates in most modern democracies). If, in the distant future matai titles become de-linked from the nu’u (traditional villages) and itumalo (traditional districts) as is the current trend (evidenced by the bestowal of titles upon people who do not live in the nu’u or have any presence there), matai titles may come to be regarded of equal rank, held by all their adult members. Although this may seem improbable today, we have only to look at the evolution of Scottish and Irish clans (which were once like ’āiga) as examples. In ancient times names prefaced by Mac or Mc (as in MacDonald/McDonald) identified men as suli and tautua of the Donald clan. The ‘Donald’ was their chief. Now they are family surnames, (or hamburgers, or even, and I’m joking here, Presidents of the USA).

Today some Sāmoans, especially those overseas, have adopted the practice of reciting their fa’asinamaga (traditional identity) like a Maori fakapapa, for example: “I am from Pou’atai, Leulumoega, Salani and ...” In the Sāmoa I grew up in, we identified ourselves by one village only, the one where we lived and served, although of course we acknowledged our family connections in other villages. However, in those days nobody could properly serve two masters. But today, think of this, only a small minority of our people live in traditional villages, about 60 percent of the population of Sāmoa, with many thousands more in town, in new settlement areas or overseas. Perhaps, when bestowing titles, there is not enough thought for how these choices will affect the villages to which these titles belong. We also need to give thought to how this affects customary
land. Families and their matai titles will grow in number, but not the land. Technically about 80 percent of land is under customary tenure, but that includes mountain tops, steep slopes and lava fields. Only about 40 percent of customary land is good for agriculture.

In the Sāmoa I grew up in it was also very unusual for a person to hold more than one matai sa’o title. This is because there were many responsibilities for holding a title of any rank, and only superman could do what was expected for his titles in two, or four or eight different villages. Our first Prime Minister held the three very high titles Mata’afa, Faumuina and Fiame and after he died when the succession matters were taken to the Land and Titles court, the then Chief Justice ruled that they should not in future all be held by one person. While I don’t agree with the Judge’s opinion in this case, we should reflect on the reasons for bestowing matai titles. Many titles are bestowed as honorifics or to demonstrate a genealogical right—but in such cases the holder is not expected to exercise political authority and service in a village. Typically their role is to serve his or her extended family in the event of fa’alavelave (ceremonial obligations). Mass bestowals of titles might even be seen as “cheapening” the status of a title, although I am told the saofa’i (ceremonies to bestow matai titles) can be very expensive for the new matai.

I myself hold two titles. The first was bestowed on me during the time I lived overseas. I was working with Sāmoan communities in New Zealand and having a matai title smoothed the path for me on formal occasions. For that title, I contributed to village and family matters when they arose, but there was no expectation that I would have a role in the government of the village. But now I hold a second title, and this is one that has been passed to me from father to son, and brother to brother, for seven or eight generations, over the past two hundred years or longer; it belongs to the village where I grew up and which I never left until I went to university overseas. In my circumstances it carries far heavier responsibilities in village government and family duties than my first title did.

For the reasons I have discussed here, I believe that the time has come to legislate on the selection, appointment and authority of Matai Sa’o. I recognise that the reason why the government is pushing this is because they have legislation allowing the leasing of customary land. But the danger to Sāmoans, whether at home or abroad, is whether those who have rights to customary land are being consulted, which happens when there are many matai sa’o, or matai sa’o who fail to consult their families.

References

Commentary: Labour Migration in and out of Sāmoa

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Why do people migrate? Experts tend to look for economic or political reasons to ascertain what pushes people to migrate and pulls them to particular places. Other less measurable factors include expanded opportunities, further education and the search for ‘the good life’. The world today has approximately 150.3 million labour migrants who move aboard for employment (ILO 2015a). While Sāmoa is no exception to this global trend, the contemporary flows of labour migration, especially into Sāmoa has yet to be comprehensively mapped.

Annually, approximately 2,000 Sāmoans are emigrating overseas through several avenues. In total, as of 2017, Sāmoans comprise 117,500 of migrants throughout the world (UN DESA 2017). While they have various reasons for migrating, the key driver of Sāmoans moving abroad is ‘having a better job to send money home’. In this regard, the majority of Sāmoans of working age who migrated overseas are considered international labour migrants. On a global scale the number of Sāmoan labour migrants is small; yet, the significance of their contributions to the national as well as household economies especially in the form of remittance is considerable. According to the report by Central Bank of Sāmoa (CBS 2017), Sāmoa receives about SAT$35–40 million of private remittances per month, which is about USD$164–187 million per year. In fact, private remittances accounted 17.3 percent of GDP in 2016 (The World Bank 2017).

While some studies predicted a decline in Sāmoa’s migration-based remittances (Ahlburg 1991; Campbell 1992; Connell 1991), there is no evidence to suggest this is the case. The emigration of Sāmoans for short-term employment seems to have been growing continuously with the establishment of government-organized labour schemes that employ workers from Sāmoa. For example, from 2007 to 2012, about 6,400 Sāmoan citizens have taken a job in New Zealand in horticulture and viticulture industries under the Recognized Seasonal Employer scheme of New Zealand (ILO 2017). In July 2018, Australian government will commence the new labour scheme called the Pacific Labour Scheme that invites the citizen of Forum states to take up low and semi-skilled workers for up to three years. It will start with Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu, and will be extended to include Sāmoa in the second phase (Australian Government 2018). This scheme will help fulfill Australia’s labour shortage in areas like elderly care while it will definitely enhance the opportunity of labour emigration for Sāmoans.

The destination of Sāmoan emigration has primarily been New Zealand, Australia, and the United States with New Zealand accounting for 50 percent (ILO 2017, p106). This pattern is unlikely to change any time soon. The pattern of inward labour migration to Sāmoa, on the other hand, seems to have been changing gradually. As of 2013, Sāmoa has a stock of about 5,600 migrants in the country (UN 2014). According to a study by ILO (2017, p. 120), the majority of them are the citizens from American Sāmoa (35.3 percent), New Zealand (33.2 percent), the United States (8.2 percent), and Australia (7.4 percent). These “foreigners” include overseas born Sāmoans who returned to their genealogical homeland. However, these numbers do not necessarily reflect the diversity of foreigners working in Sāmoa today. The data based on the issuance of employment permit by Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Labour (MCIL) indicates much diverse population of labour migrants in Sāmoa in terms of their country of origin (see Figure 1 below).
According to MCIL (2017), employment permits are considered for non-Sāmoan citizens to work in specific industries, professions, and roles that have high demand due to shortages in the local labour market. The Ministry issues roughly 450 to 500 employment permits per year since this role was transferred from Immigration Office in 2013 (MCIL 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017). Since Figure 1 is based on the number of employment permit issued only from June 2017 to March 2018, this data probably differs from the actual number of labour migrant per country of origin. However, it does suggest a clear pattern that People’s Republic of China (China), Fiji, and Philippines have become key source countries of labour migration to Sāmoa, sending far more labourers than the traditional partners of New Zealand and Australia.

This pattern mirrors immigration trends in other Pacific states. The recent ILO statistics (2017: 121) indicate that people from China account around 10 percent of the entire immigrant population in Solomon Islands, Palau, Marshall Islands, and Tonga. Filipinos occupy 60 percent of immigrant population in Palau, 20 percent in Marshall Islands, and about five percent in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Fijians account over 40 percent of migrants in Tonga and Tuvalu, 20 percent in Kiribati, 10 percent in Vanuatu, and 4.5 percent in Cook Islands. Figure 1 also indicates that Sāmoa now attracts labourers from the countries that have had weak diplomatic and historical ties such as Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Thailand, and Malaysia. It can be inferred that the migration of Pakistanis and Indians were flowed through Fiji where Pakistanis (15.2 percent) and Indians (10.8 percent) have relatively large ratios to the entire immigration population in Fiji (ILO 2017: 121).

Figure 2 below shows the number of foreign labourers in Sāmoa based on the industry they work. Construction has the highest number of foreign labourers, followed by tourism and hospitality, and domestic works. These figures may not reflect actual numbers of labour migrants in each industry as the data used is limited to the holders of work permit issued between June 2017 and March 2018. Nevertheless, it provides valuable information, together with Figure 1, to grasp a picture of who these foreign workers are.
From the two figures, it can be inferred that a large portion of Chinese labourers (out of 250 employment permit holders) are construction workers who are in Sāmoa as part of China’s tied-aid projects that build large infrastructures. Chinese business owners are not necessarily included in the Figure 1 since they enter the country on different types of permit than employment permits while some of them are likely to be naturalized citizens of Sāmoa. According to volunteer teachers from China working in Sāmoa (personal communication, 4 May 2018), the majority of the Chinese immigrants in Sāmoa are originally from Guangdong and Fujian provinces that have a long history of international emigration (Ling and Morooka 2004). These two Chinese provinces have established strong diplomatic relationships with Sāmoa not only through migration but also through various forms of direct aid including sending medical teams, providing medical equipment, and scholarships (MPMC 2017, 2018).

Labourers from Fiji, on the other hand, can be divided into two groups of iTaukei (indigenous Fijian) and Indo-Fijians. Anecdotal evidence suggests that quite a few iTaukei women work in Sāmoa as domestic workers such as live-in housemaids and nannies. Interestingly, there are fewer Filipino housemaids seen in town now as they seem to have been replaced by iTaukei women. Indo-Fijian men, on the other hand, are often found in the field of ICT, taking relatively high positions like the new CEO of Digicel Sāmoa. Filipino labourers are visible in industries including domestic workers, sewing, ICT, health, and restaurant businesses. In addition to labour migrants from China, Fiji, and Philippines, there are Indian automobile business owners, Pakistani restaurant owners, Indonesian Catholic bishops, to name a few.

Accordingly, as the presence of foreign workers in Sāmoa has increased and become more visible, labour migration is likely to soon be a rising policy priority of the country. In fact, the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (MPMC) has finalized a policy for labour migration in 2015 (ILO 2017) and signed an agreement with MCIL to work together to strengthen the monitoring of employment permit holders (MCIL 2017). At the same time, the influx of foreign labourers has begun
to draw more attention from the public who question the rapid growth of foreign-owned businesses which some see as a threat to local businesses (Sanerivi 2018). A recent case before the court, some Fijian domestic workers claimed mistreatment by their Sāmoan employer has signaled that Sāmoa may need to tighten up the regulations on labour migration, in order to protect both the country and the rights of foreign workers (Feagaimaali’i-Luamanu 2018).

There are few, if any, studies of issues surrounding contemporary labour migrants in Sāmoa, so many questions remain. Where are they from? Why did they migrate to Sāmoa? What do they do? Where do they work? What are their plans? Why did Sāmoan employers hire them over locals? Have they brought any benefits to Sāmoa? To answer some of these questions, Associate Professor Safua Akeli Amaama, Director of Centre for Sāmoan Studies, and I have started a project with our colleagues from National University of Sāmoa (NUS), mapping the recent flow of labour migration into Sāmoa. Our project, funded by NUS, aims to identify their characteristics and patterns of movements, and ultimately develop an original definition that describes labour migrants in Sāmoa. We are hoping to report some interesting findings by 2019.

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Collecting Memories

Leua Latai, National University of Samoa

(This is dedicated to Emma Kruse-Vaai for encouraging me to write my story).

Fai mai o lalo lava o le talie
I talane o le falemai e
Na punonou ai o Alii o le komisi
Ua taua o le papa o misi

Pepese ia i le pese
Faafetai i le lagi
Ua aofia mai le ekalesia
I le vaa o le tusi paia

Gasolosolo mai o isi lotu
Faaali o le mau taofi
A ua mautu le faavae o le upu moni
Ua toilalo ai seoli

Song composed by my grandfather Rev Tuuu Kenape Faletoese on the arrival of Christianity to Samoa. He was a translator in the courts before becoming a church minister and was one of the lead translators of the Samoan Bible. He spoke both German and English.

On December 7, 1959 a young woman Olivia Faletoese Latai at the age of twenty left Samoa with her husband Fekusone Latai on the steamer Tofua, on their way to Papua New Guinea to work as missionaries. She grew up at Malua Seminary where her father taught and where her family lived. She had been teaching for several years at Papauta Girls College, a boarding school established by the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1892 to groom young Samoan women to become wives of pastors at the Malua Seminary. It was here that she heard tales of missionaries returning from Papua New Guinea that inspired her to become a missionary. Upon meeting a young graduate of Malua Theological College who had the same aspirations they married and left Samoa the following day both excited to embark on their first missionary venture. The young couple were my parents. This was their story and the beginning of mine.
My early childhood memories consist of vivid recollections of growing up on the winding river banks of the Kikori River, and the rolling hills of Aird Hill and Dopima in the Delta and Gulf of Papua New Guinea, together with my mother’s stories of us growing up reiterated over time especially during our birthday’s. These accounts consisted of specific people, time of our births, the doctor who delivered us, how much we weighed, who the nurses were, the local women who tended to us and my mother, our nannies and our father. The people she encountered were significant to her as they played an important role in her life and particularly ours. Acknowledgement of their generosity and kindness in being part of our lives was important to her. The way mother told the same story was always special and she made sure that we knew how much we meant the world to her. She stopped telling these stories when she became ill but still made certain that she would wish and sing happy birthday wherever we happened to be at the time.

Our family lived and moved around, from what I remember we lived in Karaulti, Kikori, Samoa(a village named after the Samoan missionaries who worked in these areas) and Dopima where Charles Chalmers a London Missionary was killed and eaten including his shoes in 1901. Dopima was where my parents were first stationed and began their work and finally Aird Hill, our last home before we moved to Samoa in 1973 never to return to Papua New Guinea.

Figure 3: Detailed map of the areas where we lived in the Gulf of Papua New Guinea, the villages include Aird Hill, Samoa, Ero, Dopima, Karaulti and Kapuna Hospital where my brothers and I were delivered by Dr Peter Calvert and Dr Lin Calvert

Aird Hill is where my memories as a child are most memorable and vivid till today. The two storey wooden home we lived in at Aird Hill was built by an English missionary Benjamin T. Butcher in the early 1920’s. It nestled on top of a hill aligned with mountains overlooking the winding river of Kikori. The river is located in southern Papua New Guinea. It is about 320 kilometers (200 miles) long and flows southeast into the Gulf of Papua, with its delta at the head of the gulf. The settlement of Kikori lies on the delta.
Three rivers make up the large Delta of the Gulf of Papua New Guinea, the Purari, Era and Kikori rivers. These rivers wind in and out of bush clad mud sediment islands too many to count, let alone name. Finding your way through the labyrinth is a nightmare, even for the Papuans themselves, especially because the rivers keep changing shape. Growing up in these rivers was an adventure in itself as they were beautiful, untamed and wild but also abundant with mosquitoes, snakes and crocodile infested. In Karaulti one of my playmates was eaten by a crocodile, I remember the villagers sending out search parties and my parents assisting in the search. She was found a few days later on the riverbank inside the jaws of a crocodile.

**Figure 4: The Kikori River aerial view** my memory of my early years of growing up in Papua New Guinea, my father would travel up and down these rivers on his way to Kapuna Hospital where we were delivered as babies by the two Calvert mission doctor’s. Photo: Photographer and source unknown

Dancing was an obsession with the Karaulti people and recall the entire village immersed in these strange activities. In preparation they would paint themselves with red clay and soot from the ambers of the fire, caking their bodies in mud their faces and hair plastered with sludge, all you were able to see were the whites of their eyes and teeth. The sight was quite comical and enthralling as they moved swaying rhythmically in a trance to the beat of chanting and the thumping of bare feet on the ground. The dancing would carry on into the wee hours of the morning until a high pitched shrieking would thrust everyone clamoring into the river to be cleansed at the first light of dawn. The next day the village would be quiet as everyone would be sleeping exhausted from the night’s commotion.

During springtime the whole hillside of Aird Hill would turn violet blue spotted with white blooming Forget-me-nots’. Lined adjacent to our house were rows of the flaming golden cassia fistula tree that led down to the jetty where boats of all sizes would anchor alongside buildings used as boarding schools. In the still of the night it would release a beautiful pungent fragrance that would envelop the entire hillside. In full bloom the trees would droop drenched and filled with bunches of yellow pom pom shaped flowers that I would pick and play with. To a child of four the river a live snakelike form was the only link to the outside world, teeming full of life as every now and then visitors would turn up at our doorstep full of stories from beyond the flow of the river. Airplanes would fly in several times through the years when there was an emergency and cargo ships would appear bringing news that excited everyone especially my parents. We would receive letters from our grandparents and relatives from Samoa and packages with strange contents that tickled my curiosity.
Bedtime stories were of a faraway place, of an island surrounded by an ocean with palm trees that grew from a legend of a beautiful girl and a pet eel were told longingly yet all unfamiliar to a child who grew up with the river as her front yard and backyard.

The ocean to me at the time was foreign, unfathomable and would pester my parents to tell me more. I grew up fantasizing about the ocean. Later in the late sixties at the age of five we returned home on holiday and I fell in love with Samoa. My parents took us around the entire island of Upolu and I remember being mesmerized by the waves, thrusting my head out of the taxi window feeling the sea breeze on my face breathing in gulps of fresh salty air as we were whisked around the island. Both my parents loved telling this story of me enthralled with the white capped waves as they crashed on the rocks and sandy beaches spewing out sprays of hazy mist.

I was born at Kapuna Hospital and was delivered by Dr Peter Calvert and his wife Dr Lin Calvert who were missionary doctors from New Zealand. Kapuna Hospital is a mission hospital built around the same time my parents arrived during the late 1950’s by the London Missionary Society LMS (*the mission branch of the Congregational Christian Church of England*). It is located halfway on neutral ground between two villages; the Kairimai which is up-river and Ara’ava located down river. It is the only hospital in the dense jungle of the Wame River. Kapuna Hospital, together with Kikori serves over 30,000 people in the Gulf Province of Papua New Guinea. It is a faith-based ministry that encompasses medical care, training, leadership and community development.
The Calverts ran the Kapuna Hospital where my mother delivered my three brothers and me. I weighed seven pounds and was the lightest of my mother’s children at birth. My father at the time was travelling up the Kikori River in a dugout canoe powered by an outboard motor with my eldest brother. She had gone ahead when her time was near. According to her, my birth was the easiest of all her children and the local nurses at the hospital were in awe of my straight black soft silky hair. The staff at the time included an English ward sister, a handful of local girls and two Samoan sisters known as Pamata and Olioli. We were asleep when my father arrived exhausted; they had travelled up from Kikori to Kapuna for days stopping on the way to rest at nightfall.

The same story was retold when my younger brother was born. I was added to the equation as we travelled up the Kikori River with my father stopping to rest under the protection of old mangled trees that hung over the swampy river banks. He had to prepare our mosquito net and our old kerosene lantern to ward off unwanted friends as we settled in for the night whilst the river became over run and swarming with mosquitoes. It is one of my fondest memories spent with my father sitting in a tiny dugout canoe on the wild untamed Kikori River, surrounded by dense tropical forest with inland swamps, watching the sun slowly fade away behind the mangrove trees and the dark shadows creeping in listening to the jungle come alive with strange sounds un imaginable to the ears. The three of us huddled together cocooned, safe with only a thin layer of fabric between the bustling untamed wild world outside and the warmth of our mosquito net gazing at the stars slowly waking up as sleep finally took over us.

My brothers and I were home schooled by my mother who also ran her own boarding school for the local people of Papua and assisted with some of the Australian and New Zealand missionary children who happened to be working with my parents in the area. She had been trained as a teacher at the Samoa Teachers Training College at Malifa in the early 1950’s and was known as a strict teacher and disciplinarian.
Our daily lessons consisted of quiet mornings reading for an hour, writing, studying mathematics, science, social science, playing in our tree house and at times sneaking off to my secret spot. Usually our lessons were interrupted by my mother’s baking. She had an old wood fire stove that she took pride in and between our lessons she would disappear followed by her mouth-watering baking wafting through our kitchen door. This would interrupt our lessons and we would all end up sitting on our kitchen table licking the remnants of a chocolate cake sauce off the bowls. Later we would have chocolate cake and homemade ice cream her specialty which she served when we had guests stop by.

Our lessons were organized through the Australian International Correspondence School (AICS). Reading was a favorite past time in our family growing up in Aird Hill and Samoa maybe because we didn’t have a television in the remote areas where we lived. Leisure times were spent reading or playing in the woods and watching my parents play ping pong and tennis in our backyard. I grew up mostly gifted with books for Christmas and birthdays as special treats from my parents in my early years. One of my prized possessions growing up was my Hans Christian Andersen Poetry and Fairytale Book. My favorite books of all time included the Hobbit, by J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis’s, Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe and Carroll Lewis’s Alice in Wonderland. In the seventies when we moved back to Samoa I would patiently wait till my parents were asleep and would sneak off with our old radio in the middle of the night. Hiding it under my pillow and I would lie very still listening to the Mystery Theatre program that would come on at midnight broadcasted by the American Samoa Radio Station, the WVUV.

Both my parents managed a small shop at Aird Hill that traded goods with the villagers. There was no cash exchanged but the people would trade and barter in return for goods such as sugar and salt. My parents received sago and sometimes firewood. Father taught the men how to plant manioc, bananas and taro in exchange for assisting him in cutting our lawn or fixing the roof and helping with odd jobs around the house. In the evenings I would accompany him downhill to where our old generator stood and watched while he would wind the old jenny up till you would hear it
sputtering to life and fully roar into action. I would then turn to see the lights of our home light up one by one until it was fully lit, then walk uphill with him to see what my mother had in store for supper.

On Sundays my parents, my older brother and I would walk downhill towards the valley where the people of Aird Hill lived, dressed in our Sunday best. The villager’s huts were built on wooden stilts as the surrounding area would flood when it rained. We didn’t have a normal church our church building was eight to twelve feet long open with a thatch roof that stood on skinny wooden legs. There were no windows or chairs and the services were led by my father in motu the generic local tongue with my mother leading in the singing of hymns. The congregation included my family, which totaled four and at times joined by a handful of three to six Papuans who were brave enough and cared to join us sitting cross legged on the floor. The rest about a dozen or so would stand outside surrounding the hut leaning in, curious as to what we were doing, their bodily odor potently hard to stomach at times. Till today I still find the whole scene quite amusing and remember my mother one Sunday bursting into giggles and laughter as she found the whole situation quite humorous and was readily joined by my father who couldn’t keep a straight face. The Papuans joined in the laughter thinking that it was part of my father’s sermon. Our Sunday service finished early that day.

During the week in between lessons and chores I would sneak off, I had a secret place where I would spend quiet moments playing in a brook adjacent to our house. I would lie there for hours on the cool smooth boulders mesmerized with the water trickling downwards feeding the Kikori River abundant with all kinds of creatures. I recall those quiet moments playing by myself lying flat on the huge dark round boulders, still like lizard soaking up the sun embracing its warmth and smell on my skin. Now and then I would breathe in a lungful of air drenched in the heady scent of the surrounding natural flora and fauna of Aird Hill, then roll over and dip my toes in the freezing cold water making its way down hill. I would lie there for hours dozing, drifting off immersing myself with my surroundings. It was a wild, mysterious, peaceful and vibrant world full of colors and sounds, scents and feelings of abandoned freedom which as a child I was allowed to venture into and
explore, that encouraged a sense of adventure at a very young age. This also had a major impact on my creative self together with my parent’s love of the natural world and sense of conviction to be of use to people and the simplest things in life that have made me part of who I am.

Perceptions of Papua New Guinea at the time and even today are often associated with that of the dark and the unknown, unchartered waters within and people not yet in tune with western civilization. My parent’s mission was to preach the word of God and present a new life with new beliefs. Yet from what we remember as a family there was much peace and goodwill already there within the people of Papua. Being born into this place and being part of the life of both my parents and their work as missionaries I have been blessed as I have inherited their love of adventure, sense of conviction and passion in the hope of living a meaningful existence and offering service to people of all walks of life in some way or another. In the words of my mother in her memoirs of her life in Papua New Guinea she wrote;

“As we were about to leave and in seeing the people standing there waving goodbye, I was truly humbled and thought to myself whether I had been useful to them. But I also felt that there was nothing more I could do. I told myself, “You have done your best, and offered yourself completely. Then I thought to myself that my work was done there are other people who can carry it on and continue the work of the Lord.” Olivia Latai, 1971 (date)

In hind sight I have come away reliving these rare memories and people who have touched my life and I am truly humbled, enriched, and proud of where I was born and lived for a short time in one of most beautiful places in the world.

Figure 15: Aird Hill Mission Station our last home in Papua New Guinea before leaving for Samoa in 1973 never to return. View from the cargo ship leaving our home in 1972 Family private collection c. 1972 Photographer unknown
This beautifully presented book is the first history and social analysis of the Sāmoa tatau. Early accounts by foreign seafarers from 1722 onwards suggest that in the past all Sāmoan men were tattooed, as a rite of passage to manhood. The word ‘tattoo’ itself is probably derived from the Sāmoan word tatau or a cognate term in another Polynesian language, popularised by seafarers in the 18th and 19th century. Sāmoans refer to the masculine tatau as pe’a which, because it densely covers a man’s buttocks and thighs, was mistaken by some 17th century seafarers, peering through their spyglasses, as a pair of breeches or painting. The lighter, feminine version is termed ‘malu’ and covers a woman’s thigh and the back of her knee.

Tattooing was practiced throughout Polynesia in different forms and designs but appears to have had the strongest continuity in Sāmoa, despite the disapproval of Christian missionaries who regard the custom as ‘heathen’ and punished those who had themselves tattooed by, at least temporarily, expelling them from the church communion. It seems that Catholic missionaries were less united in their disapproval. When the writer of this review first came to Sāmoa in the early 1970s I know of only one well-known family of practitioners, the ‘āiga Sulu’ape of Matafà’a in Lefaga; they were Catholics and were kept busy by the relatively few men willing to brave both religious disapproval and the ordeal of the procedure, as well as Peace Corps volunteers and other palagi, like this writer, wanting taulima (tattooed wrist bands) as souvenirs of their time in Sāmoa. I recall a family member, before taking up a place he had won in theological college, had his pe’a in some secrecy. I myself was forbidden by my Sāmoan mother-in-law from having a taulima but had it anyway, while observing the tufuga tā tatau (expert tatau practitioner) Sulu’ape Paolo I at work on a group of men having pe’a.

Now the tatau, the pe’a and malu have made a mighty comeback in Sāmoa, among the Sāmoan diaspora and among tattoo aficionados around the world. Moreover, traditional tatau motifs are now applied to with modern tattooing needles in tattoos on shoulders and arms, and also appear on textiles and in a variety of graphic art. Is this appropriation or an admiring tribute to Sāmoan culture? Read this book for answers.

Chapter One, ‘Ancient Traces’, discusses the various versions of the legend of the origin of tatau. This tells of conjoined twin spirit-women, Taemā and Tilafaigā who carried the instruments for tattooing by swimming from ‘Fiti’ to Sāmoa, with the message that the tatau was intended for women. But, distracted, the ladies arrive in Sāmoa with the message that the tatau is for men. The chapter also suggests the practice of tatau came to Sāmoa 3000 years ago with the archaeologically defined ‘Lapita’ ancestors of the Polynesian peoples. It includes short essays by Benoit Robitaille on the Austronesian context, Adrienne Kaeppler on the connection to Tongan royalty, Nina Tonga on Tonga tatau practice and Sebastian Galliot’s interview on Sāmoan tattooing with Tui Ātua Tupua Tamasese Tā’isi.
Chapter Two provides an historical overview of foreign observations of tatau 1700–1900. It contains an extensive and very interesting selection of quotations from a wide range of 18th and 19th century sources. It includes short illustrated essays on the hidden history of tattooing by Sean Mallon, and three essays by Sebastian Galliot on Sāmoan songs of tatau, iconography of the malu, and on the disasters that befell Sāmoan warrior performers who toured Germany and America in 1889–91.

Chapter Three ‘Persistence and Change 1900–2000’ traces tatau practices in the colonial and post-colonial periods, representations in ethnography, film and photography, and examples of adaptations of design and practice, including the use of tattoo needles versus the traditional autā tools used by tufuga tā tatau (tattoo experts). It includes short essays by Mauaivao Albert Wendt on tatau and meanings, on tattooing tools by co-author Sebastian Galliot, interviews with tufuga ta tatau Su’a Sulu’ape Alaiva’a Petelo and Su’a Sulu’ape Paulo II by co-author Sean Mallon.

Chapter Four ‘Tatau as a ritual institution 2000–2010 discusses knowledge rights, rites of practice, and the technology of tatau. Traditionally there were families specialising as tufuga ta tatau such as the ‘āiga sa Tulouēna and ‘āiga sa Su’ā who practiced and transmitted the art; today heirs of these families are still among the community of practice in Sāmoa and among the Sāmoan diaspora. This chapter includes a sympathetic essay by Maria Carolina Vesce on the controversy over whether fa’afāfine (transgendered men) should have a malu—which many Sāmoan believe is sacred to women. Sebastian Galliot contributes an interview with an apprentice tufuga tā tatau, with clergy who had tatau, and a discussion on the iconography of tatau. Le’ausalilo Lupematasila Fata ‘Au’a Sadat Muaiava contributes his reflections on the connection of lineage and practice.

Chapter Five, ‘Tatau and its globalisations 2000–2017’, reviews contemporary practices, the community of practice, and references in film, art and literature. A case study on the bestowal of the Suluape title on non-Sāmoans relates associated conversations about indigenous rights and appropriations as tatau-based designs and allusions are applied in commercial tattoos, teeshirts, and graphics. The chapter includes short illustrated essays on tatau and health by Sean Mallon, on malu by Tupe Lualua, on soga’imiti (the tattooed man) and masculinity by Reverend Tavita Maliko, on choices to tatau or not in the Sāmoan diaspora by Selina Tusitala Marsh, tatau in popular culture by Rachel Yates, fashion, tatau and appropriation by Sonya Withers, tattoos in contemporary art by Nina Tonga, and on genealogical bodies and tatau by Leai’ifano Albert Refiti.

Chapters Two to Four are bracketed by three portfolios of stunning photographs by Mark Adams, Greg Semu, and John Aggcaoili. The book is a work of art in itself, beautifully illustrated and designed; the only criticism that could be made is that the readability of the written content and is at time sacrificed to art, with small fonts on large pages and almost illegible captions in red on the black photographic pages. But overall it is a treasure, a measina for the Sāmoan people and their culture.
Tony Brunt’s book *To Walk Under Palm Trees, The Germans in Sāmoa: Snapshots from Albums—Part one’* (2017) is a rare collection of historical photographs showcasing German settlers in Sāmoa. Prior to its publication, the images were part of an online photographic exhibition of the same name for the Museum of Sāmoa in 2013 and 2014. Brunt has now transferred the exhibition beyond the digital portal to include a tangible text for the public. Funded by the Sāmoa Historical and Cultural Trust, the photographic quality of images is impressive, as is the restoration work which has enabled public viewing of these private collections.

The images detail the colonial society and their families, and the global events which affected them such as the First and Second World Wars. Key figures are represented in the photographs including Imperial German Governor Erich Schultz (1870–1935), and Brunt documents Schultz’ friendship with Sāmoan Fatu Frost (d. 1956). In Samoa, colonial German interests centered on the plantation economy. However, these images provide a rare glimpse of society life and important insight into Sāmoa, Germany and New Zealand’s past. Brunt has compiled a vast collection of images from descendants and friends. Thus, access to these rich collections brings into view never before seen images of our recent past.
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