

CHAPTER TEN

The Independent State of Western Samoa 1962-1987

Contributors:

Malama Meleisea
Penelope Schoeffel Meleisea

The First Ten Years 1962-1972

Western Samoa became independent with two broad views of the future among her leaders. The first envisaged little change, and saw Samoa's future in terms of the continuity of the past, of Samoan traditional institutions and a "plural economy" in which a few Samoans and part-Europeans would operate plantations and stores while the majority of Samoans would live "as they had always lived". The other view envisaged growth, a gradually expanding economy which would permit increasing numbers of Samoans to become involved in commercial agriculture and other kinds of enterprise. It anticipated a growth in education and national assets such as roads, port facilities, shipping and aviation, and in foreign investment. This view assumed that Samoa possessed the economic resources to support, eventually, a modern cash-dependent type of society.

These two views of the future were labelled respectively as it "conservative" and "progressive" by many observers. The different points of view they represented formed the basis of a debate about the future among Samoan leaders during the first ten years of Western Samoan independence. In 1963 a leader who had been involved in all the stages of negotiating independence for Western Samoa, Tupua Tamasese

Mea'ole, died. in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution Malietoa Tanumafili II became sole holder of the office of Head of State for life. The Tupua title was taken by Tupua Tamasese Lealofi IV, the eldest son of Lealofi III (who had been killed during the Mau).

The first seven years were characterised by political continuity under the unchallenged prime ministership of Flame Mata'afa Faumuina Mulinu'u II. The cabinets of this period were:

1961	1964	1967
'Asiata Lagolago	Papali'i Poumau	Lesatele Rapi
G.F.D. Betham	G.D.F. Betham	G.F.D. Betham
Tuatagaloa L.T. Simaile	Tuatagaloa L.T. Simaile	Tuaopepe Tame
Tufuga Fatu	Laufili Time	Laufili Time
F.C.F. Nelson	F.C.F. Nelson	Luamanuvae Eti
'Anapu Solofa	Fa'alava'au Galu	Fa'alava'au Galu
To'omata Lilomaiava Tua	To'omata L. Tua	To'omata L. Tua

The Lands and Titles Court had been recognised in the constitution as having a major role in the new state because of the matai franchise. The court was presided over by the Chief Justice and a panel of Samoan judges. The first bench after independence included Meleisea Folitau (Deputy President), To'alepaiali'i Toeolesulusulu Pose, Savai'inaea Tuat5 Uli, Nanai Vatau, Tofa Toluono Lama and Tuli'aupupu Muli'aga. A number of very important issues confronted the Lands and Titles Court during the first decade of independence. The first concerned the rival claims to the Tupua Tamasese titles. Tufuga Efi, son of the former holder, and his cousin Leolofi, son of Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, were contesting the succession to the title; each with the support of different branches of Sa Tupua, namely Sa Fenunuivao and Sa Tuala. The Court found in favour of the older candidate Tupua Tamasese Lealofi IV. The second major case of this period came up in 1965 concerning claims to the Tuia'ana title which had been conferred upon Tufuga Efi. Of this case, the Chief Justice warned of the dangers of reviving any contest for the papa titles and reminded the Samoan people about the wars of the 19th century over these titles. The third issue developed after the elections of 1974 and concerned the creation of new matai titles for electoral purposes, as only matai may vote. These titles referred to as matai palota (ballots titles) were being created in a number of electorates by candidates who wished to expand the number of their supporters. In a few extreme cases, titles had been conferred upon children. These practices along with the increasing practice of splitting titles, threatened to undermine the matai system, because the basis of the system is leadership of the family and custodianship of their land. Titles created or split as a result of political campaigns or disagreement

in families resulted in titles being held without family and land to back them up. In 1969 about 600 new titles had been created. The Legislative Assembly passed a Lands and Titles Protection Bill which required that all new titles and title-holders be registered by the Lands and Titles Court which could challenge their validity.

By 1965 it became apparent that the vision of continuous gradual economic growth, which would produce increasing national prosperity, had faded for some people. In February that year protest marches were held to draw attention to cost of living problems among wage earners. The previous August, economic predictions had been publicised which warned that local aspirations and the pace of secondary education would create the need for tens of thousands of new jobs by the late 1980s. The same reports pointed to the fluctuating prices of Samoa's export crops and the unfavourable balance of trade between Samoa and New Zealand, and other overseas countries. In January 1965 the needs of young farmers were debated in Parliament with some members emphasising the needs for young men to become independent farmers, and questioning whether the matai system or land tenure system was holding them back. There was cause for anxiety as the bunchy-top banana disease had lost the economy thousands of dollars and cocoa exports and prices had dropped sharply. Land legislation was being debated in Parliament and it became clear that the majority of members opposed the lease of customary land to taulele'a (untitled men). Thus the conflict between those who placed greatest value upon fa'a Samoa, and those who placed greatest value upon economic growth, focused upon land tenure and universal suffrage. Unfortunately the decline in export prices offered little incentive to young men to become small-scale individual growers.

The economic situation of Western Samoa became far worse in 1966 after a hurricane destroyed crops and houses and caused the death of 10 people. The international response to this disaster was to send hundreds of tons of tinned fish and meat, dried eggs and milk, dripping, oil, flour and rice. Although well-intended, the food relief proved to have been a mixed blessing since it provided thousands of young Samoans with their first diet of imported food; it also exposed adults to the convenience of canned and packaged food at relatively low prices. At the time, the warnings of Masi'ifo Fetui Mata'afa that the distribution of food aid should be accompanied by nutrition education were not listened to by aid officials. A Pacific seminar on disaster relief (1980) recommended that in future, island foods should be brought in for such emergencies, purchased from other Pacific Islands. A few years later restrictions on imports and rising prices of

imported goods created hardships for Samoans who had become accustomed to or dependent upon imported food.

In 1966 a new concern arose over Samoan immigration to New Zealand. Over the previous two years, more than 2000 Samoans had departed for New Zealand with six months or three months visas. This was the first significant migration of Samoans overseas (excluding migration to American Samoa) and because of the Treaty of Friendship between Western Samoa and New Zealand there was no need for Samoan immigrants to register as "aliens" when they arrived. During the 1960s the New Zealand economy was able to absorb many Samoan workers and no real fuss was created over the many Samoans who overstayed their visas and remained in New Zealand to work.

Cluny McPherson's study of Samoan workers showed that they found it easy to obtain employment during the 1960s. The system was for those already in employment to find jobs in the same work-place for relatives who needed an employer's guarantee to obtain a visa. To get their bosses to employ other Samoans, Samoans worked hard and did not generally join unions. The Samoan immigrants tended to live in inner-city suburbs during the sixties and early seventies. During the first five to ten years, Samoan immigrants sent as much money as they could home and lived in crowded rented houses with relatives. But after a while, increasing numbers of Samoans began to save to buy their own houses, cars and furniture. While in many ways the Samoans lived like other working-class New Zealanders, fa'a-Samoa was continued through the churches, family networks and continuing links with Samoa. Most Samoans worked as unskilled labour. Some employers, such as hospital laundries, became very dependent upon the labour of Samoan women. During the 1970s the economy of New Zealand suffered a down-turn and jobs became scarcer. New Zealanders began to resent island migrants taking "their" jobs. Politicians responded to this by cracking down on Samoan and other islander overstayers. In some cases dogs were used to track people and houses were raided by police in the early hours of the morning. Nevertheless New Zealand has now become home to over one hundred thousand Samoans and this has strengthened the links between the two countries far more than was the case during the colonial period.

Educational aspirations began to increase during the 1960s and the introduction of school fees by the Legislative Assembly in 1964 was very much opposed by most Samoans. The problem was that the teachers, buildings, books, and teacher-training and education administration were absorbing more money each year and the Samoan economy could not provide the money needed without becoming independent upon overseas aid. This is why school fees were introduced, but in many

villages, children were being expelled for non-payment of fees and the opposition was so strong that Cabinet decided to stop the fees in the following year. Instead, it was decided to introduce age limits: 14 years for primary school and 16 years for intermediate school.

Although there was no change of leadership in Samoa during the first seven years of independence, there was plenty of debate in Parliament over democracy: in 1965 many members of the Legislative Assembly were complaining that Cabinet did not consult Parliament enough but made important decisions amongst themselves. Rama Mata'afa responded by pointing out that there was too much complaining in the country and that not all laws could be popular. He reminded Parliament that the Samoans had wanted independence and that they had to try to help the country by helping the government. Tumua and Pule had not quite accepted their exclusion from an official role in government and in 1964 a great fuss was made when Galumalemana Vainu'upo Ala'ilima, an American citizen, sought American aid for Western Samoa. It was reported that he intended to give funds to Tumua and Pule to establish an opposition to the government. The US Senate hastily assured the Western Samoan Government that Galumalemana Vainu'upo had no official standing in American Samoa or as a representative of the US Government. When Galumalemana visited Western Samoa in 1966 he was arrested as a prohibited immigrant.

When Western Samoa became independent its only international links were with New Zealand and the South Pacific Commission. There were no other independent Pacific Island countries until six years later. Nauru became independent in 1968, Fiji and Tonga in 1970, Papua New Guinea in 1975, Solomon Islands and Kiribati in 1978, Tuvalu in 1979 and Vanuatu in 1980. Because of Samoa's early independence and economic restraints there was no early interest in joining international agencies. This began to change as it became increasingly obvious that Samoa would not be economically self-reliant and needed overseas aid to assist pursuit of the goal of economic growth. In 1970 it was decided that Samoa would join the British Commonwealth of Nations and in previous years, Samoa had signed agreements with the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. Western Samoa was classified as being among the world's "least developed countries". Western Samoa's early attainment of independence also meant that there was limited interest among most leaders in other Pacific island countries and the common problems they shared. Western Samoa's orientation was to American Samoa and New Zealand because of their common history. However, there was Samoan involvement in the establishment of a Pacific regional

university; Laufo Meti was involved in planning of it as Western Samoa's representative, but there was little early interest in sending Samoans to study there.

In 1969 Samoan leaders appeared not to have changed their attitudes on suffrage. When an amendment to the Electoral Act of 1963, which would allow adult suffrage, was proposed by Letele-Taneolevao, only five of his fellow members supported the motion. One of these was Va'ai Kolone, who had consistently supported electoral reform. The political system offered little opportunity for the representation of women. Women could stand as matai but only a small minority of women held matai titles. Furthermore women matai in parliament were expected to represent their electorate which was made up of predominately male matai voters. To gain a National voice for women, a National Women's Committee had been established before independence. This became the National Council of Women a few years later, under the leadership of Masiofo Fetui Mata'afa, with the wives and sisters of the Tama-a-'aiga. The NCW managed to get a piece of land in Apia and the women's committees all over Samoa joined forces to build the Mothers Centre.

In 1970 there was a change of government. The February elections of that year were followed by the election of Tupua Tamasese. Three candidates were nominated for the office: Tupuola (Tufuga) Efi who now represented A'ana in parliament, Tupua Tamasese and Fiame Mata'afa. There were three ballots. Tupuola was eliminated in the first; the second was a tie between Mata'afa and Tamasese and the third elected Tupua Tamasese Lealofi IV as Prime Minister with a margin of five votes. Tupua Tamasese's new cabinet were referred to as "liberals" by the press in Samoa. They included two of the youngest members, Tofa Siaso (27) and Tupuola Efi (32) and Fuimaono Moasope, Fatialofa Momo'e, Tuala Paulo, Amoa Tausilia, Polata'ivao Fosi, and 'Asi Leuluaiali'i Le'avasa. Taulapapa Faima'ala was elected as Speaker, the first women member to hold this position.

The Second Decade 1972-1985

Throughout the 1960s proposals that Samoans encourage a tourist industry were debated. Opinions were divided; on one hand it was argued that tourists would bring in badly needed revenue and investment. On the other hand it was feared that tourism would bring unwanted outside influences to Samoa and bad influences upon the young. In the 1970s developments intended to promote tourism were undertaken; the road between Apia and Faleolo airport was sealed, and

the airport and its facilities were upgraded. Tourists increased from 2,200 in 1962 to 25,000 in 1971. They brought in revenue of \$1,700,000 in that year. In 1974 the Tusitala Hotel was opened: a joint investment between Samoan and New Zealand investors. Plans for a luxury resort hotel at Taumeasina were made in 1972 and land was developed, however it did not go ahead. An award winning travel film was made in 1972, called "Samoa, The Best Kept Secret". The main problem with tourism in Samoa has been Samoa isolation from international trans-Pacific aviation routes. Thus travelling to Samoa is more expensive than major tourist destinations such as Fiji, and fewer tourists come.

In 1972 the World Health Organisation conducted a survey in Samoa concerning family planning and a programme to promote family planning was commenced. Samoa has one of the highest birth-rates on earth. On the present rates of natural increase this means that Samoa will have a population of over 300,000 by the year 2000 - in 13 years from now. Official projections of 190,000 assume continued immigration and declining birth rates. Some leaders see a large population as a blessing and point to countries such as Singapore and Taiwan; small countries with huge populations. But these countries are industrialised and close to international trade and communication networks. They also developed their economies at a time when the world economy was booming, on the basis of a huge pool of factory labour which worked long hours in poor working conditions for very low wages. Other leaders have expressed concern that Samoa lacks the resources to support the present rate of population increase and that the consequences will be a gradual decline in standards of living. New restrictions on overseas migration (which are available but limited to USA, New Zealand and Australia and virtually impossible elsewhere) in recent years have made the issue of future population growth an urgent problem of Samoa's leaders.

A consequence of population growth has been environmental problems. Western Samoa has shown great wisdom in reserving areas such as the Pupa National Park. Ecologists have warned that the destruction of forests will have dangerous consequences. The upper slopes of Samoan mountain ranges are very fragile because of their volcanic origin. The forests stabilise the mountains and protect the thin, rocky soil. They give a home to some of the rarest birds on earth; these are the Manuma, the Toloa, the Vai, the Ti'otala, the Manutagi, the Tua'imea, the Fiaui, the Miti, the Tutumalili, the Ma'oma'o, the Manu ai pa'u la'au, the Segasega-mau'u, the Tolai 'ula and Sega Vao. Once the forests were full of these birds. Samoans (who then numbered less than 50,000) caught them, as a sport, with nets and tamed pet decoy birds, but they were not depleted. But clearing the forests introduced (wild)

cats and shooting with rifles has almost wiped out some of these beautiful creations of God. Even man himself is threatened by the cutting of forests. In 1980 environmental experts warned that with the deforestation around Lake Lanuto'o and some other reservoir areas, a hurricane could cause the crater and banks holding the lake and reservoirs to leak. Rivers would become dry and Samoa could be left without sufficient water.

Already the pressure on existing water supplies is very heavy and WHO officials have warned about pollution in recent years. To increase water supplies would be difficult and costly and water treatment plants would also strain the economy. The pollution of lagoons and the destruction of mangrove swamps has decreased the supply of reef fish and therefore the food resources of the large coastal villages in areas of Northern Upolu.

In 1972 the new Fale Fono (Parliament House) was completed. After the general elections the following year Mata'afa Fame Faumuina Mulinu'u II was re-elected Prime Minister over the rival candidate Tupua Tamasese Lealofi IV. The new cabinet was made up of Tupua Tamasese Lealofi IV, Lesatele Rapi, A.L. Phillip, Muagututi'a Pinati, Seiuli Taulafo, Laumea Matolu II, Tupa'i Ene, and F.P.S. Sam.

1974 saw the opening of the University of the South Pacific Extension Services Centre at Malifa. The director was Albert Wendt, the Samoan novelist and poet who had formerly lectured in English and Education at USP and been Principal of Samoa College. The USP centre allowed Samoan students to undertake part-time distance education courses at preliminary, foundation and degree levels. Alafua College became the USP School of Agriculture in 1978.

Concern continued to be expressed about the increasing number of matai titles being conferred. Some of the most important and historic titles had been split among dozens of holders. The old definition of matai as heads of families who lived in the village and looked after its affairs changed as more town residents and Samoans overseas took matai titles. The individual voters role did not grow along with the population as many individual voters took matai titles and stood or voted as general electors.

On 21 May, 1975 the Prime Minister Mata'afa Fame Faumuina Mulinu'u II died. His funeral was attended by many overseas dignitaries who came, along with the Samoan people, to pay tribute to the first and longest-serving Prime Minister of the independent State of Western Samoa. Tupua Tamasese Lealofi IV was sworn in as the new Prime Minister. In 1976 a new Prime Minister was chosen by the newly elected parliament. He was Tupuola Efi who won office by a solid majority of 15 votes. His ministers were 'Asi Eikeni, Vaovasamanaia Filipino, Tofaeone

Tile, Manb Togamau, Lilomaiava Niko, Ulualofaiga T. Niko, Letiu Tamatoa, Fuimaono Mimio.

The new government promoted an ambitious rural development programme financed from various sources by overseas aid. The programme was an attempt to involve the majority of the people, the Samoan rural dwellers, on the development of the economy. It was hoped that the programme would, through generous subsidies, give rural people the chance to engage in commercial agriculture and fishing. Projects were designed for poultry, cattle, passionfruit, vegetable, taro and pig production, and ocean fishing. The obstacle to rural development, it was argued, was that rural people lacked opportunities to obtain sufficient credit to get started as small-scale producers. It was also felt that community groups such as councils of matai, womens komiti and 'au talavou (youth groups) could co-operate to operate projects. The planners hoped that the rural development programme would increase rural prosperity, boost exports, and produce eggs, pork and taro and other crops for the local market to reduce dependence upon imports. The programme did not reach all these goals; problems were encountered with agricultural extension, with the payment of loans, with local stock-feed supplies, and village-level administration of projects. The down-turn in world commodity prices, local inflation rates and rising import prices also adversely affected the programme and the national economy.

One of the greatest benefits of the development programmes of the late 1970s was improved communications. These included the construction of rural access roads; the sealing of the main roads on 'Upolu and Savai'i; a modern automatic telephone system and improved telecommunications; development of broadcasting trans-mission; and improved wharf and airport facilities.

Major developments of the Western Samoa Trust Estates were financed by large overseas loans. The Estates have the potential to be the backbone of the economy but problems of management and administration were encountered in the 1970s and 1980s.

A cocoa rehabilitation programme was established to try to improve the production and processing of Samoa's most valuable export. Other attempts to boost the economy included the establishment of a brewery and cigarette factory, a feed mill and a coconut processing plant. The Alafua Food Processing Laboratory developed a number of excellent products for the local market and export.

Samoa's old political status quo ended when the first post-independence political party was formed, the Human Rights Protection Parry, under the leadership of Va'ai Kolone, Tofilau Eti, La'ulu

Fetauimalemau and other well-known Samoans. The party had no public "platform" but operated as a parliamentary faction after Tupuola Efi defeated Va'ai Kolone by a single vote in 1970. The Prime Ministerial contest followed elections in March. The new government ministers were Lesatele Rapi, Fuimaono Mimio, Faumuina Anapapa, Seumanu Alta Ah Wah, Vaovasamanaia Filipino, Asi Eikeni, Seuamuli Kurene, and Letiu Tamatoa.

With such a narrow majority the next three years were characterised by strong political tensions because of the delicate balance of power between government and opposition factions in parliament. The picture did not change in the elections in early 1982. During that year there were three changes of government since the balance of power could be changed by a few members changing side or as a result of a by-election. The year commenced with Va'ai Kolone as Prime Minister, who left office as a result of losing an appeal case over his election. Since the Constitution makes no provision concerning political parties, the Head of State appointed Va'ai's closest rival in the Prime Ministerial contest, Tupuola Efi, following the election, instead of the deputy leader of the Human Rights Protection Party, Tofilau Eti Alesana. When the balance of power shifted towards the HRPP, Tofilau Eti was appointed Prime Minister in place of Tupuola Efi. In January 1983, the former leader of the HRPP, Va'ai Kolone, won the by-election in Vaisigano and returned to parliament.

Prior to the 1985 election there was dissention nationally over the question of the legitimate registration of matai. Many registered matai should not have been registered according to the registrar of the Land and titles court; because the procedures which qualify a matai for registration had not been followed.

Thus the election in March 1985 began in tense circumstances. Two parties contested the election; the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) led by Tofilau Eti and the newly formed Christian Democratic Party (CDP) led by Tupuola Efi.

During 1985 the HRPP split into two factions one led by Tofilau and the other by Va'ai. At the end of the year the Tofilau government no longer had the majority of support in Parliament because the Va'ai HRPP faction joined forces with the CDP. Accordingly the head of state accepted the recommendation of leaders of the majority in Parliament that Tofilau should be replaced by Va'ai, with Tupuola as Deputy Prime Minister.

Political uncertainty was not Samoa's only trouble in the early 1980s. The world recession hit Samoa along with other small island states, and the lesser developed countries in other parts of the world, driving up inflation and prices while depressing world market prices. Samoa

became highly dependent upon foreign aid and remittances from New Zealand in the 1970s. Measures by government to tighten up expenditure in Western Samoa were restrained by the political circumstances; no doubt a result of the narrow margin by which the various governments held office - because unpopular legislation would have been necessary. Wage earners, of whom the great majority are public servants, saw the spending power of their wages growing smaller while prices rose steeply. The result was a massive strike in mid 1981, led by the Public Service Association, which virtually brought government to a standstill for three months.

Another depressing problem for the Samoan people which arose during the 1970s was the sudden increase of suicide. Statistics in the early 1980s for the period following 1975 showed that the incidence of suicide in Samoa has become, per capita, the highest recorded in any independent nation in the world. Suicides were highest among young people, another alarming fact. Various explanations of the causes were offered including the accessibility of a toxic chemical compound, and youth leaders were urged to study the causes.

Further political uncertainty was generated when the constitution of Western Samoa was challenged by a number of individual voters who had lost their rights to register as voters because a spouse or parent had taken a matai title. It was argued that the provisions of the 1963 Electoral Act, which stipulated that the family of an individual voter taking a matai title be disenfranchised, was contradicted by the clause in the Constitution which guaranteed the protection of the rights of the individual. The case brought by Mrs Georgina Moore was upheld by Chief Justice J.B. St John. An appeal was held several months later before a panel of Supreme Court Judges from New Zealand, who declared the Electoral Act to be valid. This interlude had caused several important by-elections to be postponed which added to the political uncertainty of 1982.

Conclusion

Western Samoa has been a pioneering nation. It was among the first colonies in the early 20th century to resist colonial domination and to struggle for independence. It was among the first colonies to achieve its independence. At that time there were many critics who doubted that such a small country could maintain a peaceful, orderly and a properly governed state. But on the whole, such criticism has proved unjustified. Western Samoa has faced many problems. These have included her dependence upon export crops for which world prices are highly unstable, also rapid population growth; about 61% of the population is

under 20 years old and only 17% is aged over 40 years. The youthful population of Western Samoa have developed high expectations over the 25 years since independence. This has been a result of mass education and increased contact among Samoans with conditions in developed countries such as America and New Zealand. In many other countries which have recently become independent such problems have created severe political instability, with military coups, dictator-ships, rioting, assassinations and other kinds of political breakdown. But Western Samoa has managed to survive with the principles of democratic government intact. The persistence of the matai system has been criticised by many scholars and journalists from Samoa and overseas. But the Samoans have shown that they will work out their affairs in their own way. Despite political and economic problems, Samoa has managed to avoid the acute poverty of many other Third World Countries. In 1977 Samoa became a member of the United Nations. This enabled her to join with the other countries who have been disadvantaged by the dominance of the world economy by the powerful industrialised countries. As a "bloc" in the United Nations, these countries have been able to put pressure on the great powers for a fairer share of the world's resources.

In relative terms, Samoa is quite well off among the leastdeveloped countries of the world. Although those who hoped for increasing economic growth in the Samoan economy have been disappointed, perhaps those who pointed to the value of and the security offered by traditional Samoan institutions had a good point to make. With good judgment, Samoa could have a sound future but hard work for self-reliance in food, and good care among Samoan families to choose only the wisest people to be matai, will be needed. Concern and care for rates of population increase and the environment is vital. The Western Samoans are fortunate in the beauty of their islands; a good climate, land for cultivation and sea for fishing. The motto of Western Samoa is that "Samoa is founded on God", and with duty to the nation and respect for wise teaching, Western Samoa can face the future with confidence.