

CHAPTER TWO

Old Samoa

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Population and Environment

The first attempts to estimate the population of Samoa were based upon guesses by seamen and missionaries in the early 19th century. Peter Turner, the first Methodist missionary to come to Samoa (in 1828; thought that there were about 28,000 people in all the islands of Samoa. Frazier, a European resident in Samoa for about six years in the 1830's thought there were 80,000 people. The estimate made by Rev. John Williams in 1832, that there were 40 to 50,000 people is the most widely accepted figure.

Some puzzling questions about prehistoric Samoa are why the population only reached approximately 45,000 after over 2000 years of human occupation or, if the population was greater before European contact, why did it decline? Some scholars have argued that European diseases could have been introduced to Samoa before the arrival of missionaries in 1830 which may have reduced the population and

caused the abandonment of inland settlements referred to in the last chapter.

The Samoans were described by almost all European visitors in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a tall and healthy people who enjoyed a high standard of living with abundant food. The only disease which was often mentioned was filariasis which deformed many people with swellings. In many other parts of the Pacific diseases brought by European seamen caused the deaths of thousands of people, because they had no immunity to the new germs and viruses. The Samoans did suffer a number of epidemics but there are no records of outside diseases causing de-population in the 19th century. The only evidence we have that this might have happened, is the Samoan prayer recorded by Rev. George Turner:

Stay away from our shores O sailing Gods, lest you bring disease and death

It has also been suggested that the Samoan population remained stable at below 50,000 before 1830 because of warfare. However, the accounts we have of Samoan warfare indicate that it was not normally the custom to attack villages where women, children and old people were. Armies of men fought on battle grounds *away* from villages and usually only men were killed. However, war might have indirectly caused deaths through the destruction of trees and plantations which were the source of staple foods.

There were also natural disasters such as hurricanes, tidal waves, and droughts which caused many deaths. But there is considerable evidence that the main factor in the slow population growth was that the Samoans did not have as many children in the past as they do in the present. Rev. John Williams observed that there were not very many young children in the villages he visited in 1830 and 1832, and Rev. George Turner who lived in Samoa in the 1840s said that Samoan mothers rarely had more than four children at the most. There were several likely reasons for this, one was marriage customs: chiefs of high rank married many times to link their families and villages to other important families and villages. However, the wives of chiefs did not usually stay with the husband after they had born a child or after he had taken another wife. Nor did chief's wives usually marry a second time. Chiefs wives usually had only one or two children. Because chiefs had many wives (some as many as 50) who could not easily re-marry, there were not enough women for every young man to get a wife. Therefore, some men would never have married and fathered children.

Another likely reason for low birthrates was customs which insisted that there should be at least two years between the birth of each child.

Turner also records that many new-born babies were not fed their mothers milk for several days after they were born. Weak or sick children probably died as a result of this practice.

Another reason was the probability that the Samoans understood the need to maintain a stable population size in relation to the available supply of food. Everything we know about Samoa in the early 19th century indicates that the Samoan people had achieved a very abundant comfortable way of life in which everyone was well fed and well housed. Things looked so good to European seamen in the 19th century that many of them ran away from their ships to live with the Samoans. T.H. Hood, who spent several months in Samoa in 1862, remarked: "On the whole, a happier race of people could not be found than the Samoans. A scowling and discontented face is seldom seen; want or poverty is unknown, and nature has showered upon their country her choicest gifts" (Hood, 1862).

The natural resources of Samoa were the reefs and lagoons, the warm climate, fertile soil and high rainfall. Taro, yam, bananas, bread-fruit, masoa (pula'a), coconuts, laupele, laufala and tolo were the main crops cultivated, and pigs and chickens, tamed wild birds and dogs were raised. Fish and game (pigeons and other birds, and wild pigs) were abundant and hunting and fishing were treated as ceremonies and sports as well as a source of food. Coconuts grew wild as did many other plant species which supported the Samoan diet or had other useful functions.

Although Samoan society was based upon unequal rank, this inequality was not economic - everybody had access to food and other important resources. Land was 'owned' by chiefs in the sense that they had authority over everyone who lived upon it and could say how it should be used and who should use it. But all Samoans had access to land for cultivation, for hunting, for gathering wild products, for houses and for sharing with other people.

There were three main categories of owned land:

- (a) *Settlement land*: Portions of land around the malae divided into family household lots, each with its own name and boundary markers.
- (b) *Plantation land*: an area, usually on flat or gently sloping land behind the village and on lower mountain foothills, cleared for the cultivation of crops. This land was also divided according to the titles of the matai who controlled it and subdivided accordingly to the individual families who cultivated it. Division and subdivisions were marked by natural boundaries such as rocks, stream-beds, or by trees planted as boundary markers.
- (c) *Village land*: Uncultivated land from the ridgetops of the

mountain to the reef fringing the coast formed a territory belonging to the village. it was collectively controlled by the matai, and used communally for hunting, gathering and fishing. When and was cleared it was removed from this category and became classified as plantation land under the authority of a particular matai, thus when new land was cleared the consent of the other leading matai of the village was required.

Government

There were two categories of chiefs in Samoa, as is still the case; the ali'i and the tulafale. As heads of families both categories are called matai but the status and role of each is very different. Ali'i titles are those which form links in the historical genealogies of the Samoans which go back to Tagaloa-a-lagi. In this respect ali'i titles were 'sacred' titles which carried with them the mana of the gods. The rank of ali'i titles was also determined by descent from the gods - the older the title and the closer its origin to the sacred ancestress, the greater its mana and the higher its rank. Tulafale titles did not depend upon mana or sacred ancestry, although they originated from the same ancestral origins as ali'i titles, they were 'executive' titles and carried special duties. These duties varied from family to family and village to village; some were associated with service to an ali'i, some with war or house building or carrying messages or leading fishermen, or hunting, or reciting historical knowledge and many, many other roles.

Ali'i and tulafale had different roles in the government of villages; the role of the ali'i was to make the final decisions having listened to the advice of the tulafale who spoke for and issued orders from the ali'i. All matai had authority over their 'alga, the extended families, which in groups of between 10 and 30 made up traditional Samoan villages. All Samoans belong to many 'alga through their mother, their father, their mother's parents, their father's parents and so on. Membership in an 'iga can be through adoption as well as through blood. Each person acknowledges the 'alga to which they belong through service and residence. The 'aiga controlled the matai titles with which it was associated. Thus, when an ali'i or tulafale died, the senior members of the 'aiga would meet and decide which member of the 'iga would succeed to the title. The exception were ao and papa titles which are discussed in the next section.

Each village was made up of a number of groups to which all members of the village 'alga belong, according to their age, their sex, marital status and family rank. Most important villages were divided into 'o le nu'u o tama'itai ('the village of the ladies') and 'o le nu'u o ali'i ('the village of the gentlemen') which refer to the different aspects

of life in which men and women had authority. In old Samoa women with highest authority were the sisters of the ali'i and in eve 'alga the sisters of the matai had authority in family matters. This we' because of the feagaiga, a covenant of respect between a brother and sister which gave special honour to the sister. The centre of the nu'u tama'ita'i was the aualuma, a group to which all female members of the village belonged. Women marrying into the village were excluded from the aualuma. The role of the aualuma was to provide service to the taupou and to look after the reception of guests in the village and to be responsible for the beautification and cleanliness of the village. In oi: Samoa there were constant visiting parties (malaga) travelling from village to village to arrange political and religious matters, marriages carry news, and so on. It was the aualuma's role to make sure the visiting malaga were well looked after by the village.

The centre of the nu'u o ali'i was the fono (council) of matai which made the political decisions of the village as far as the outside world was concerned, and organized the production of food. All untitled maie (taulele'a) members of village 'alga belong to a group called the 'aumaga "the strength of the village", who were the work force and defence force of the village along with their wives. The fono made the laws of the village and if these were broken, the fono would decide how law-breakers were to be punished. They could exile a wrongdoer from the village or order the 'aumaga to beat him or inflict some other punishment such as forcing him or her to sit in the sun for long periods or to chew the burning teve root.

Political Divisions

Political Divisions

The basic political unit of Samoa is termed o le nu'u. Although it is usually translated into English as 'village', the nu'u is more than simply a settlement. It is a group of extended families with a shared history which is summarised in the fa'alupega which gives the village its identity. The fa'alupega is a set of ceremonial greetings addressed to the matai names of seniority which are associated with the historical origin of each village. The fa'alupega also sets out the rank order of the main titles of each village and so acts as a 'constitution' for the village fono (council of matai). Since the 19th century the fa'alupega of every Samoan village has been recorded and published by the London-Missionary Society (now the Congregational Christian Church Samoa). It is called *O le Tusi Fa'alupega*. This book also lists the important additional titles and names of each village such as kava titles, the titles given to sons and daughters of high chiefs and the names of the chiefly house sites and malae of each village. Thus the TL

Fa'alupega is in itself a summary of both the political order and history of Samoa although only those who are very knowledgeable about Samoan culture and tradition can understand the significance of all the information in it.

Each village has its own traditions and system of political organization. Thus no two villages are the same, although in terms of history and high chiefly titles, some villages were more famous than others, before 1900. Each village was politically autonomous. Districts were formed by groups of villages agreeing to support one another in defending their territory, and before, 1830 in paying respect to particular high chiefs and gods. Districts did not seem to have been as permanent as villages, i.e. the villages that made up districts sometimes disagreed or fought one another which led to the changing of boundaries which divided Samoa into a number of political territories. The following accounts describe these political-territorial divisions as they have been for the past century or more.

The Division of Samoa

Political divisions in Samoa are the subject of numerous stories and traditions. Each district has its own origin stories and the same is true of each village.

There is a proverb which says that "E tala tau Toga ae Tala tofi Samoa" which means that Tongan stories (traditions) are those of war whereas those of Samoa are about divisions. Also tulafale (orators) usually refer to Samoa as "O Samoa ua ta'oto, a o se i'a mai moana, aua o le i'a a Samoa ua uma ona'aisa" meaning that Samoa is like a fish from the deep sea which has been divided into sections. These divisions were usually the result of mavaega (death wishes) by paramount chiefs to their families, villages or even districts for service rendered. These mavaega were strictly observed. Divisions were also brought about by wars, especially when the winning parties decided to divide lands they gained amongst themselves. The following account is one of several versions about the origin of the districts of Upolu and Savai'i.

Divisions in Upolu

Upolu was divided between Pili's children (Pili was a son of Tagaloaalagi).

- (a) Tua lived in what is now Atua - He was given a planting stick symbolising his role as planter. Boundaries ran from Luatuanu'u to 'Ili'iili in Falealili.
- (b) Saga was to live in the middle of Upolu (now known as

Tuamasaga); the fly whisk and staff (fue ma le to'oto'o) were symbols for his role of orator. Tuamasaga's boundary on the north coast runs from Tufulele to Lauli'i and from Sa'anapu to Si'umu in the south coast.

- (c) 'Ana was to live in what is now A'ana with his spear and club to symbolise his status as that of warrior. This district extends from Faleasi'u to Matautu in Lefaga.
- (d) Tolufale was to live in Manono and was supposed to do nothing (no role was allocated to her).
- (e) The fifth child, Si'umumunanitama lived between Tua and Saga so that he could mediate in Tua and Saga's arguments.

Divisions within Atua

- (a) Va'a-o-Fonoti - Faleapuna, Leanoaama'a and the whole of Fagaloa
- (b) Aleipata - Ti'avea to Lalomanu
- (c) Lepa and Lotofaga - Saleapaga to Matatufu
- (d) Falealili - Sapoe to 'Ili'ili.

Divisions within Tuamasaga

- (a) Fale-ta'ita'i - This refers to Tuisamau (Afega) and 'Auimatagi (Malie)
- (b) The three parts of Sagaga -
 - (i) Saga o le Vaimauga - from Apia to Lauli'i
 - (ii) Sasaga o le Palalaua - Si'umu
 - (iii) Sagaga o le Ailaoa - Sale'imoa
- (c) Faleata - from Puipa'a to Vaimoso
- (d) O le Gafa - The whole of Safata

Divisions in A'ana

- (a) A'ana Alofi - from Faleasi'u to Sagafili, Satuimalufilufi
- (b) 'Aiga-i-le-Tai - Manono, Apolima and Mulifanua
- (c) A'ana - from Samatau to Matautu in Lefaga

Divisions in Savai'i

There are three traditional divisions in Savai'i

1. Tauluulufau - Fa'asalele'aga and Itatane
2. Manunu - Ituotane and Ituofafine
3. Fatufa'asaga - Itufafine and Fa'asaiele'aga.

Villages included in the three divisions

1. Fa'asalele'aga - Tafua to Pu'apu'a
2. Ituotane - Palapala (Patamea) to Falelima
3. Ituoteine - Si'uvao to Fa'ala

Savai'i was also politically divided into 2 pule and itu.

The two pule were:

- (1) Letufuga - Safotulafai and Fa'asalele'aga
- (2) Le'aula - Sale'aula and Gaga'emauga

The six itu were: two pule above plus:

- (3) Palauli
- (4) Satupa'itea
- (5) Vaisigano
- (6) Ali'i o le Itu or Safotu.

At some stage the staffs of Safotulafai and Sale'aula were each broken into three which is why nowadays there are 6 pule in Savai'i instead of the traditional two pule and four itu.

The six pule:-

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Palauli | - Fa'ala to Vailoa |
| 2. Ita o Palauli | - Papa to Foalalo |
| 3. Satupa'itea | - Sagone to Tufutafoe |
| 4. Itu of Satupa'itea | Alataua i Sasa'e to |
| 5. Safotu | Manase to A'opo |
| 6. Vaisigano | Asau to Falealupo |

It is very important to remember that this account is not the only account of the division of Samoa; like all oral traditions, an account of territorial divisions can have different versions and because these divisions are still an important part of Samoan culture and political organization there can be disagreement about them. In a living culture nothing is ever fixed; small changes and adjustments are constantly taking place so that the actual situation often differs from the ideal model which people may have of society and its rules.

Samoa oral traditions and genealogical records indicate that in approximately the 16th century a new centralisation of rank and political authority was created in the western islands. Previously Manu'a had been the centre. The highest titles of Samoa then were firstly the Tuimanu'a and in the west the titles of Tuia'ana and Tuiatua. The new order in the west may have begun as a result of Tongan rule in Samoa. Samoan oral traditions describe how the brothers Tuna and Fata with the assistance of their sister's son Ulumasui, who had sacred power, drove the Tongans from the shores of Samoa. This event led to the creation of a new high title 'Malietoa'. The descendants of Malietoa,

intermarried with the sacred chiefs Tonumaipe'a, the Tuia'ana, Tuiatua and Tui Tonga and the lady Salamasina became the heir of all those chiefly descent lines. She was also given special powers through the goddess Nafanua. Today all the important chiefly genealogies (gafa) can be traced back to Salamasina. A very detailed account of these oral traditions is given in Brother Henry's *History of Samoa*, (1979) which gives the version from A'ana and Atua, and the point of view of the districts and of the Sa Tupua), and also in Augustine Kramer's *Salamasina*. Both these writers collected the original versions from Samoan experts last century in the Samoan language, originally published in German, from which they have been translated into English.

Since the time of Salamasina, four of the highest titles have been called the papa: they are Gato aitele, Tamasoalii, Tuia'ana, and Tuiatua. When all four papa are held by one person that person is called Tafa'i. The first Tafa'ifa was Salamasina. Before the birth of Salamasina's father Tamalelagi; the Tuia'ana and Tuiatua titles belonged to families. Before during Tamalelagi's lifetime the titles were taken by groups of orators (tulafale) who thereafter decided who should hold these titles. It was at this time that the famous orator groups Tumua and Pule began. Tumua is represented by tulafale from the villages of Leulumoega in A'ana who bestowed the Tuia'ana title, and Lufilufi in Atua, who bestowed the Tuiatua title. The Tamasoalii title is bestowed by Safata and Tui, Gato'aitele title by Afega, in Tuamasaga. (There are many famous fe Upolu or 'houses' of orators. The Itu'au of Faleata and Alataua Faleata were founded about a thousand years ago by Atogie father the first Malietoa.) Pule are represented in Savai'i by Palauli, (ItB . Palauli), Satupa'itea (Itu o Satupa'itea), Safotu and Sale'aula.

There are other orator groups in villages or groups of villages in many parts of Samoa who also have the right to bestow high titles called 'ao'. An ao title is one which stands at the top of a large 'family tree' genealogy as the senior title. Such titles often link villages in many parts of Samoa together historically because of the many titles and branches of families which are descended from them. However not all very famous old titles like this are ao.

These high titles and the orator groups of Samoa are like a fish net, the strings of which link together all the families, the villages and districts of Samoa. Before Christianity was brought to Samoa marriage customs of the Samoans were the mechanism by which this system of linking groups and territories together was maintained. Groups of tulafale were kept busy with fale tautu. This was the custom of sending courting parties to ask for the daughters of high chiefs as wives. High chiefs (ali'i) of importance had the right to give a special

name of one of their ancestresses to one of their daughters or sisters daughters. These taupou or sa'o tama'ita'i titles were bestowed at a saofa'i (a little conferring ceremony) in the same way as a chiefly title. The fale tautu was made up of the tulafale who served a particular high chief and who sought as many high ranking wives for him as they could find; their aim was to spread his family connections through marriage far and wide throughout Samoa so as to increase the dignity and fame of the title.

There was great competition between rival fale tautu groups to get taupou for their chiefs. Sometimes the tulafale serving the family of the taupou would take a long time to decide whom she should marry and in many villages there are still paepae (stone pavements or stone house foundations) which were built by fale tautu groups while they waited for an answer.

Economy and Society

The Samoan islands, due to isolation and lack of resources, offered only stone and wood for tools, but despite the simple technology of old Samoa there was a highly specialised economy. Although every adult Samoan knew how to perform the basic economic tasks appropriate to their sex in order to survive, there were dozens of specialisations recorded by early observers. The basic economic tasks for men were agriculture, carpentry, hunting and fishing; and for women, weaving, tapa making and oil making. The specialisations were based upon elaborate artistic refinements of these basic activities; for example fishing and pigeon hunting were technically very complex and diverse and associated with a lot of ceremony which turned them into gentle-manly sports instead of mere food-getting activities. The master fisher-man or master hunter took charge of these activities and used their specialised knowledge to organize large groups of less skilled people. The same was true of house-building, boat-building, wood-carving, tattooing and many other activities. Among women there were specialists in manufacturing the most valuable kinds of mats, tapa cloth, medicines and oils. Before the introduction of cloth and steel, the Samoans had to manufacture almost everything they needed and therefore, economic life depended upon the co-operation of men and women with their specialised economic roles and the expert direction of the tufuga (expert). Take building a house for example; the men built the paepae, cut the posts in the forest and carried them to the village, carved the beams, plaited the sinnet cord to tie them and attached the thatch. The women carried the stones or crushed coral to make the floor, wove the mats to cover it, plaited the blinds, cultivated

tolo (sugarcane) to make thatch and pinned the thatch pieces for the roof; they beat tapa cloth (siapo) from the bark of the paper mulberry to make curtains, bed sheets and mosquito nets, and printed it with 'upeti which were made by sewing coconut ribs in patterns on to pandanus leaves. The dyes and paint used to decorate the mats and tapa cloth were made by the women from bush materials.

Before the arrival of the missionaries, cooking was the work of the young untitled men (taulele'a). With no saucepans or pots, everything was prepared in the umu (ground oven) and young men were able to acquire prestige (tautua matavela) if they became skilled in cooking some of the more difficult special dishes of the Samoans such as vaisalo, taufolo, piasua, and so on.

The things made by women were essential before cloth was introduced from overseas. Mats were used as furniture, as clothing and items of exchange; the 'ie sina, worn by high-ranking women, was woven from hibiscus fibre (fau) to make a fine shaggy cloth which took many months to weave. Coconut oil scented with flowers and herbs was made by women to protect people's skin from the sun and from insects and was used by everybody before imported clothing was introduced. On special occasions lega (turmeric) was mixed with the oil to give people's skin a golden colour.

All the tools for hunting, fishing, cooking, agriculture and war were carved by men; hard work indeed in the days before steel was introduced and blades of shell and stone had to be used.

Although a large amount of work was required to achieve the high standard of living of old Samoa, the Samoans were reported to have had plenty of time for sport and ceremony. Sports included wrestling, lafoga, pigeon-snaring, certain types of fishing, club matches, spear throwing, sling-shot throwing and so on. With the constant comings and goings of malaga parties there were many ceremonies; the various kinds of chiefly kava ceremonies, ta'alolo and sua presentations, 'aiava, dancing and feasting, poula and so on.

In anticipation of large ceremonial events such as weddings, and saofa'i (title conferring ceremonies) food resources could be placed under restrictions by the chiefs to conserve them to feed large numbers of outsiders. The custom of having funeral rites separately sometime after the burial existed so that large ceremonies and exchanges of valuables could be held in the case of people of high rank. The traditional exchange of property at weddings distinguished men's goods and women's goods; the wife's side presented mats, 'ie toga.tapa and oil; this was collectively referred to as toga, according to Rev.George Turner. The husband's side gave goods which were termed

'oloa. This did not include any fine mats but consisted of food, pigs, carved bowls, canoes and even houses.

Specialists (tufuga) were rewarded for their work or leadership and high chiefs would have to accumulate large amounts of food and fine mats to present to the tufuga who built them a new house or canoe. Some tufuga were famous throughout Samoa and chiefs competed to obtain their services.

Religion

Religion, as it is generally understood, refers to a system of beliefs, the ceremonial and ritual activities that are associated with it, and the worship of a supernatural being or beings.

Hood (1862) said that the Rarotongans referred to the Samoans as 'godless' and considered the introduction of Christianity to be the first experience the Samoans had of religion. The reason they thought the Samoans 'godless' was the absence of large temples, statues or idols, special places of worship, and an institutionalised priesthood or religious specialists. This seemed strange to missionaries who had experiences of Tahiti and the Cook Islands where such outward signs of the local religion were very noticeable. Closer examination of the writings of the first Christian missionaries show that Samoan religion was rich and complex but differed in expression from many other parts of Polynesia. The Samoans were not monotheists (worshippers of one god) but polytheists (worshippers of many gods). They also believed that the powers of gods and spirits (of their ancestors) influenced human activities. Sacredness (mana and tapu) was associated with many aspects of life and gave dignity to secular actions. For example this idea is reflected in the colloquial saying even today: "Male fa'auli" - "Congratulations on your steering"; to which the proper response should be "Mato tapua'i" - "Congratulations on your spiritual encouragement".

There were 'sacred' chiefs; the ali'i and 'secular' chiefs; the tulafale. Also the very important feagaiga relationship accorded a sister 'sacred' status and her brother 'secular' status. After Christianity was accepted, the feagaiga relationship was extended to the relationship between a pastor, who held a 'sacred' status, and his congregation who had 'secular' status.

There were two main categories of gods: those gods of non-human origin, Atua, and those of human origin, Aitu. Atua, the non-human gods, were superior, and were the original gods who gave birth or created other Atua, or half-men/half-gods who were Aitu. The Atua did not participate in the everyday life of the people or take the form of

humans and other living things, or natural objects. They were not specially involved nor did they have temples or priests. They were believed to reside in Pulotu (the afterworld) or in Lagi (the heavens). Tagaloa was the supreme Atua who created the universe, earth and mankind. As Tagaroa or Ta'aroa this deity was recognised in many other Polynesian religions.

The Samoans did not believe that their dead ceased to exist at the time of their death and as a result, ancestral spirits, *aitu*, were worshipped. While they dwelt after death in the *fafa*, *sa-le-Fe'e* or Pulotu (afterworld or spirit worlds), they returned among the living to interest themselves (for good or for evil) in the doings of their descendants.

Aitu were sometimes born as the result of incest between brother and sister or a sister's daughter and brother's son. There are old stories which attribute this origin to *Saveasi'uileo*, *Nafanua*, *Tuimavave*, *Telesa* and others (Cain, 1971: 173-81). These *Aitu* came into the world as 'alu'alu toto clots of blood or abortions which then were able to take various forms including that of human beings. This belief is also found in many other Polynesian religions which attribute the origin of chiefly *mana* to the offspring of brothers and sisters.

Aitu visited their people in the form of animals, birds, humans and other natural objects. They were consulted through spirit mediums (*taulasea* or *taulaitu*) who were usually the descendants of the *aitu* whose help was being sought. Spirit mediums would sometimes go into trances or have strange fits as the *aitu* possessed them and spoke through them. *Aitu* were ranked as people were; some were nationally recognised, some belonged to villages, others to families and others to individuals who received their *aitu* by the calling out of ancestral names during an individual's birth; the name called at the moment of birth was considered to be the *aitu* of that person for life. Some *aitu* were referred to as *Tupua*, the deified spirits of dead chiefs.

The following gods (*aitu*) were invoked by the Samoans in the 1830s: *Nafanua* (a war goddess of Western Savai'i), *Saveasi'uileo* (who had the form of an eel and ruled over Pulotu), *O le Fe'e* (who had the form of an octopus and who was given special annual ceremonies every year in A'ana), *Moso*, *Le Sa*, *Aitu i Pava*, *Le Tamafaiga* (Williams noted in his journal of 1832 that the skull of *Tamafaiga* of Manono who was killed in 1829 or 1830, was thought to contain the chiefs' *aitu*), *Fanoga*, *Nifoloa* (a fanged *aitu* who bit his victims causing them to die), *Itu-gata*, *Sepo Malosi*, *Fa'aola*, *Fa'amalu*, *Fuai-Lagi*, *Gae Fefe* and *Salevao*.

The gods communicated to the people through a *taulitu*. Only a few people, both men and women, were considered to have the power of speaking for or to the gods and there were full time professional priests. The powers of a *taulaitu* were considered to be either inherited

or the result from possession by the god. For example, Tamafaiga was said to have received his powers as a result of being possessed by Nafanua. The story tells of Nafanua travelling to visit her family in Leulumoega from her home in Falealupo. When she arrived she was treated disrespectfully and so turned her canoe around to go back to Savai'i. On her way she had been given fish by the chief (Lei'ataua) of Manono, and to reward him she entered into his body giving him her supernatural power.

Some gods had special feast days or times of the year and special places that were sacred to them where offerings of food and kava were placed. Some of the gods were believed to reside in objects such as stones, shells or pieces of matting which were kept in god houses (fate aitu). Others were thought to appear in the form of certain kinds of birds, animals or fish.

The Samoans had a belief in souls or spirits and it is recorded that if somebody was lost at sea, a mat was spread out on the shore; the first thing that alighted on the mat, an insect or a leaf for example, would be considered the soul of the dead person. Afterwards the mat would be buried.

Family gods were normally addressed by the matai or his sister and offered a cup of kava at evening prayers. There was a close association between the Samoan religious system and political organization. The basis of chiefly respect was that chiefs represented the ancestral gods of the 'alga, village or district. The power of chiefs was also thought to have been given to them by their ancestral gods and as has been noted in the previous section, the highest chiefs were those whose ancestors were the first descendants of Tagaloalagi.

Religious beliefs were an important factor in social control. For example, illness was often explained as a punishment by ancestral gods for behaviour which spoilt the honour of the family. Great respect was given to the elderly for it was believed that people who died feeling anger towards their relatives would return as aitu to punish the living. The feagaiga between brother and sister was enforced by the belief that if a brother made his sister angry the family aitu would cause misfortune to befall him or his children. It was for this reason that when a chief was seriously ill, his sister would be sent for to rinse out her mouth with coconut water (pupa) in case she had spoken against him or felt anger towards him, causing his illness. Similarly at funerals, particularly those of chiefs, the mourners would cut their heads with stones so that the spirit of the dead person could see how sorry they were.

Modern Samoans are fortunate that even before the Samoans became literate, there was a great deal written about the culture, customs and traditions of the people. Foreign observers admired the

Samoans and wrote down their observations. Although they were not always objective they left a record for posterity. In particular their writing of old stories and solo is valuable for us today.



Plate 3. Traditional Samoan Fale Tele and Matai.



Plate 4. Chris Young, last contender for the Tui Manu'a title.