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### Introduction

This paper examines the issue of cultural maintenance and change in Sāmoa, the reasons for these and the lessons we will have learnt to consciously formulate an appropriate cultural policy in terms of sustainable livelihoods for Sāmoans in the future. Moreover, such a policy should, among other things, actively pursue the goals sought in the United Nations Human Development Report, 2004. These are the achievement of cultural freedom and multiple and complementary identities as well as efforts to fight against so-called cultural exclusion.

IN FORMULATING A CULTURAL POLICY FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT in this new millennium, there are two important considerations that need particular attention. Firstly, Sāmoan culture is unique in the sense that it is the embodiment of thousands of years of language and cultural development having its origins in the Mongoloid homeland south of China at least 7,000 years ago (cf Bellwood 1978b; Kirch 1984). It represents a solid core of knowledge and practice, which has been largely responsible for the survival of the Sāmoan people into this third millennium. Therefore it is a treasure to be preserved and jealously guarded.

Secondly, Sāmoan culture is changing and decisions have to be made as to what aspects of the culture need changing and what needs to be retained in relation to livelihood options. These are not easy decisions to make and undoubtedly there will be much disagreement even among Sāmoans themselves. But most probably the tendency for most people is to continue with their old values, beliefs and practices unless change is forced on them. And this is probably a better alternative than merely changing for change's sake or for the sake of some utopian future wellbeing promised by certain ideologies.

Whilst there have been notable criticisms of the *fa'aSāmoa* (Sāmoan way of life), principally from colonial and Marxist perspectives, what we see today in Sāmoa is a re-invigorated cultural system, proof that despite the inroads in education and other social, political, economic and reli-

gious changes, Sāmoan society is essentially conservative.

Decades of colonial enterprise in Sāmoa, beginning with the arrival of missionaries of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1830, have seen numerous attempts by the colonial administrations, whether American, German or New Zealand to induce Sāmoans by various means, some transparent, some not so transparent, to think and act like their masters. All things *pālagi* (European) were praised and worthy of being mimicked by the "natives"; all things Sāmoan were denigrated and worthy to be thrown away. This was the conventional wisdom of the colonial administrations both in theory and fact.

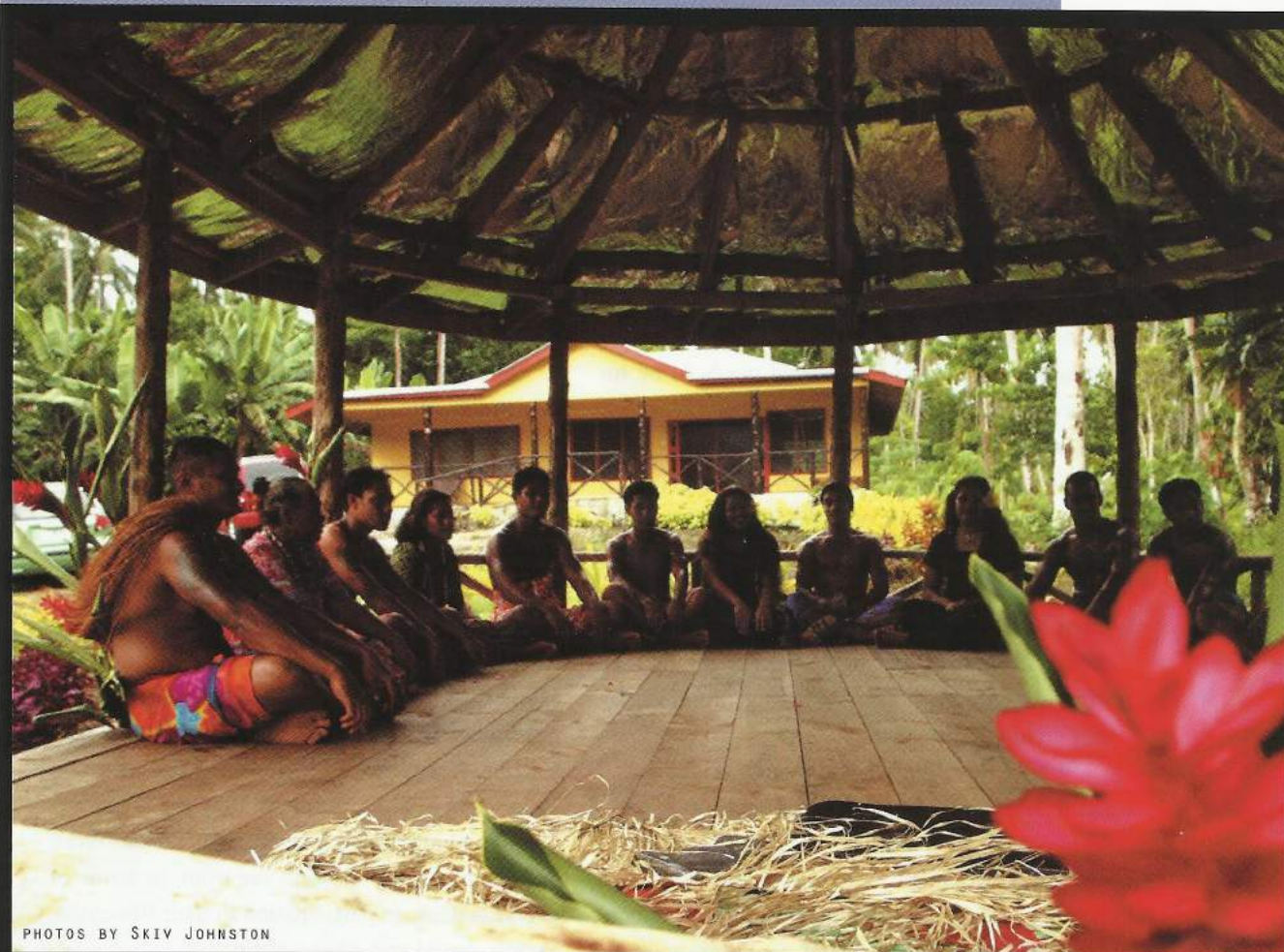
But the Sāmoan opposition to the colonial administrations, mainly in the form of the Mau movements (see Davidson 1967), indicates a cultural conservatism that was crying out for preservation and continuation. Every colonial attempt to undermine the determination of the Sāmoan people to practise their culture has failed, from 1830 to the present. And in the migrant context, Sāmoan communities are noted for their success in replicating their village settings and activities, such as gift-giving, in the host countries such as New Zealand and Australia (cf Pitt and Macpherson 1974; Va'a 2001). The comment that the overseas Sāmoan communities are more Sāmoan than those in Sāmoa is fairly close to the truth, in terms of overseas Sāmoan participation in their life-cycle, church, social and other activities.

Both the diachronic and synchronic evidence pertaining to the cultural life of the Sāmoan people, therefore, is unmistakably one of a cultural conservatism. It is one characterized by attachment to the traditional lands of their *aiga* (family groups) and villages; to their churches and pastors; to their *matai* (chiefs) and *aiga*; to their language; to their wide array of ceremonials. True, there is always the odd individual who plays the role of “heretic”, who disagrees with everything that the *fa’aSāmoa* stands for. But such an individual is the exception rather than the rule. And if such an individual should try to live in a Sāmoan community, he or she would eventually find himself or herself in all sorts of predicaments, simply because they would not be able to fit into the cultural life of their community. In Sāmoa, there are many examples of such people trying to undermine the system usually ending unsuccessfully and often tragically.

This paper is not concerned with the very few who disagree with the *fa’aSāmoa*. It is dedicated to the vast majority of Sāmoans who believe in the *fa’aSāmoa*, indeed are proud of their culture as a “God-given” gift. These same Sāmoans also recognize that change is inevitable and are ready for it. Thus, whatever they decide represents the best compromise between the need to retain the culture and the need to change. The result is the Sāmoan culture of today, one that is often described by Sāmoans as: *E tele faiga ae tasi le faavae*. This means there is only one foundation but many ways of expressing it. Another way of putting it is cultural expression is varied but the spirit of this expression is one and unchanging.

Finally, this paper attempts to present a holistic view of the cultural life of the Sāmoan people, focussing on some of the main issues of today, such as language use. Because the topic is a broad

#### CULTURAL CONSERVATION



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one, the cultural life of the Sāmoan people, its treatment must necessarily be general. Particular issues such as crime in Sāmoan communities is not touched on mainly because crime is not a cultural activity but more a form of deviancy, even in Sāmoan cultural terms. Also, crime is a form of behaviour committed by only a minute percentage of the Sāmoan population, it does not characterize the population as a whole.

### The Sāmoan Islands

In the 1930s when asked by the famous Maori anthropologist, Sir Peter Buck, who was doing research on Sāmoan material culture, as to where they think they came from, his Sāmoan informants in Manu'a told him all other peoples came from some other country. But as for Sāmoans, they have always been here.

The pre-Christian Sāmoans believed they were created by their high god, Tagaloalagi (the being who is free in the sky) and that Tagaloalagi was not only the creator of their bodies and souls, he was also the founder of their culture and chiefly system (*fa'amatai*). These ideas are to be found in the epic poem called *Solo o le Va o le Foafoaga o le Lalolagi* (see Kramer 1994,1:539ff). One might refer to this account as the mythological origin of Sāmoa and the Sāmoans. But scientifically speaking, especially in the last 30 years or so, Sāmoan origins are no longer in doubt.

Linguistically and culturally, Sāmoans are Polynesian who in turn are a sub-group of a much larger linguistic and cultural family called the Austronesians (see for instance, Bellwood 1978 and 1985; Davidson 1979; Green 1979; Irwin 1992; Jennings 1979; Kirch 1984). The Austronesians' home land is said to be Taiwan where from 5,000 to 3,000 B.C., the Austronesians developed a distinctive language and culture and from which many of the languages and cultures of South East Asia and Oceania are derived.

An outstanding feature of Austronesian culture was the development of a deep-sea voyaging technology which enabled Austronesians to colonize the huge land masses of Asia and the remote islands of Oceania. In addition to this, they also developed fishing and horticultural skills which enabled them to settle and survive on the newly

discovered lands.

By 2000 B.C. Austronesian settlers had reached the islands north of Papua New Guinea, such as those in the Bismarck Archipelago. Here they formed a distinct civilization (distinct from the neighbouring Melanesian ones) which has come to be known as "Oceania". Here further modifications of the original Austronesian language took place and the prototypic cultures of Micronesia and Polynesia were developed. Most important was the development of lapita pottery which has served as a valuable clue to the origins of the Polynesians.

Lapita pottery is not unique as pottery because Austronesians have always made pottery. What was different was the development of new designs used on the pots, many of which were made with comb-shaped instruments, similar to those used in tattooing. Remnants of these pots have been found all the way from New Britain, north of Papua New Guinea, through the Solomons, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji, Tonga and Sāmoa, an indication that the settlers of Polynesia originally came from the general area of the Bismarck Archipelago.

Sāmoa is the last place in Polynesia, in the south-west Pacific, where lapita pottery fragments have been found. These were discovered by a Polynesian Airlines engineer who was looking for sea shells along the beach at the Mulifanua inter-island wharf in 1973. The fragments were dredged, during operations to deepen the inter-island wharf, from a part of the sea bed one hundred yards from shore. It appears that this was a part of an ancient village now covered by the sea to at least a distance of six feet at low tide.

The discovery of lapita pottery in Sāmoa has contributed a lot to an understanding of the origins of the Sāmoan people. Reinforced by the analyses of linguists and research by biologists on the genetic structure of the Polynesian population, scholars have reached the conclusion that Polynesians, and therefore Sāmoans, originated in South East Asia and came to these islands as a result of the migrations of their remote ancestors, who probably settled Fiji, Tonga and Sāmoa by 1,000 B.C. There is thus a close affinity between the physical make-ups, languages and cultures of these three island groups.



## Agents of Social Change

Traditional Sāmoan notions about their culture are contained in this rather romantic popular song of yesteryears. And it goes like this:

Ua tofia e le Atua Sāmoa	God appointed Sāmoa
Ina ia pulea e matai	To be ruled by chiefs
Aua o lona suafa ua vaclua i ai	Because He has given His Name to it
Tau nana fua le tetea	You can try to hide the albino
Ae manino lava mata o le vai	But it is clear as water
O le a'ano moni ua le toe i ai ni matai.	The truth is there are no more chiefs
Tali	Chorus
Sāmoa e, le ta fa'avae lena	Sāmoa, that is our constitution
E le o le tino, a'o le agaga	It is not the body but the spirit
Afai e tumau i le tagavai lena	If you remain under that flag
O le a tumau le manuia mo Samoa.	Sāmoa's blessings will remain forever.
Fai mai ua sese ona filifili	It is said the members of the Council
Sui o le Fono Sili	Were wrongly chosen
Ua manumalo o le le iloa Igilisi	Some did not understand English
O isi fo'i ua popoto i le Igilisi	Whilst others did
Ae leai o se faautauta	But they lacked wisdom
Pe le o Tafaigata ea lona i'uga.	And will probably end up in prison.

The song is a light-hearted ditty but one which encapsulates basic Samoan ideas about the function of the *fa'amatai*, or chiefly system, as a system which is God-given and that because of its divine origin, Samoa must be like God in its observance of truth and justice. Just as it is impossible to hide an albino (*tetea*) from view, the song says, so it is impossible to hide the obvious. And, if people persist in sin, then that is also the end of the chiefly system because the divine code of truth is no longer adhered to.

In the second verse, it is said that members of the Council were not appointed on the basis of qualifications and morality.<sup>1</sup> For some were appointed even though they understood no English (the language of the New Zealand Administrator, 1914-1961) and those appointed who did understand English were nonetheless persons of ill repute, therefore, likely to end up at Tāfa'igata Prison. Either way, the choice was a bad one. The truth is presumably somewhere between these two positions: people who both understood English and were of good character. Samoans thus also entertained a sense of fair play.

The chorus reminds people that the constitution of the *fa'amatai* is God's laws, truth, justice and equity. It is not material wealth (*e le o le tino*) that counts but truth as manifested in spirit (*ae o le agaga*). Remain in that, and Sāmoa will be blessed forever. There is hope for the future.

Of course, it is easier said than done. The song gives the impression of an unchanging social system ruled by chiefs and based on Christian morality but the facts are otherwise. The influence of Western cultures, beginning with Dutchman Roggeveen's visit in 1722, the influx of shipwrecked sailors and runaway convicts in the late 1820s and the introduction of Christianity in the 1830s helped launch Sāmoa onto the stage of cultural change that has continued to this day (cf Gilson 1970; Davidson 1967; Masterman 1934; Keesing 1934 & 1956).

But this was not all. For the coming of the white men and women also saw the introduction of a new economic system based on trade and capitalism and mediated by the cash economy. The kinship-based economy which relied on gift-giving, exchange, sharing and re-distribution did not suc-

cumb completely to the cash economy but had to co-exist with it in a somewhat uneasy relationship. And if it were not for the fact that over 80 per cent of the Sāmoan lands are held as customary land, even the kinship-based economy might have ceased to exist a long time ago.

The colonial regimes of the Germans, 1900 to 1914<sup>2</sup>, and the New Zealanders, 1914 to 1961, exacerbated Sāmoan dependence on the cash economy because of the colonial insistence on the pursuit of economic policies based on so-called human rationality (as if other human systems, including traditional ones, were not rational at all). Thus New Zealand insistence on the sub-division of Sāmoan lands among able-bodied Sāmoan males in the 1920s (and which was one of the causes of the political resistance movement against New Zealand, the *Mau*) even though this struck at the heart of the *matai* system, namely, the authority of the *matai* (Davidson 1967). This was perhaps the main reason why it was rejected by the majority of Sāmoans.

Defeated in this and other reforms which, while well meaning, were nonetheless contrary to Sāmoan custom, the New Zealand Administrators

subsequently attempted to sell the idea of education to Sāmoans as a means of upward mobility. This proved to be more effective, especially with the dispatch of the first group of Sāmoan students for higher training in New Zealand in 1945. This marked the beginning of the so-called Scholarship Scheme, which has continued to this day, and which has proved to be one of New Zealand's most successful foreign aid programmes in Sāmoa, it being responsible for the education of many of the government and business elites.

Another catalyst for change has been the Second World War, when thousands of U.S. marines, soldiers, airmen and sailors came to Sāmoa to help defend it against an expected invasion by the Japanese in 1941. The U.S. military helped boost the level of the cash economy to heights unknown in Sāmoa and elsewhere in the Pacific through its public works projects such as the construction of roads, airports, hospitals and gun emplacements, and hiring of locals as servants, entertainers and launderers. Many local businesses also got started this way, by providing goods and services for the marines<sup>3</sup> (Va'a 2001).

The Second World War had a pervasive effect



on Sāmoans because contact with American soldiers made them aware of a much wider world with an almost unlimited quantity of consumer goods. The question was how to access these goods. The answer was not long in coming: migration. In American Sāmoa, this was made possible initially when the U.S. Navy took members of its Guard (*Fita'fita*) and their dependents to Hawai'i in 1951, after the administrative takeover by the Interior Department. In Sāmoa, the quota system initiated in the early 1970s ensured a steady stream of Sāmoan migrants to New Zealand every year (Va'a 2001:57-66).

Today, Sāmoan society is no longer located in a single place, for it is a dispersed, cosmopolitan society, with members in the Sāmoan islands, but also in Hawai'i, US Mainland, New Zealand and Australia. The Sāmoan family is typically a small residential unit but becomes an international corporation when its migrant networks are taken into account. As a small unit, it is weak economically, as an international corporation, it is extremely powerful, socially, economically and politically. Today, there are perhaps just as many Sāmoans living overseas as in both American and Independ-

ent Sāmoa, a fact which has led to consequential results in the economies, societies and politics of both Sāmoas.

### Overview of Sāmoan Culture

Culture is not something that was made in a day; it is eminently something that has a beginning, duration and an end. That is, it has a history. It is learned (not inherited like genes), shared and transmitted from one generation to another (at least until a culture dies out through genocide, for instance, as in the case of many tribal peoples in Australia and the Amazon basin). And it is relative: people have different cultures, different values, beliefs, practices and so on. It is this difference between peoples which makes them stand out.

Sāmoan culture took thousands of years to develop after the lapita migrants settled in these islands by about 1,000 B.C. or perhaps even earlier, as the archaeological record attests. But Sāmoan culture itself is the offspring of earlier cultures, such as the Oceanic one referred to earlier, based in the Bismarck Archipelago circa 2,000 B.C., the proto-Austronesian one based in Taiwan circa 3,000 B.C. and the Mongoloid culture of





Southern China circa 5,000 B.C., according to the reconstruction of historical events by eminent pre-historians such as Bellwood (1978) and others.

So-called Sāmoan skills in tattooing, together with the implements; pottery-making during the early period of settlement of the Sāmoan islands; and the practice of mediumship in religious practice, comparable to shamanism, are probably practices which originated in the Mongoloid homeland. Language, horticulture and deep-sea voyaging technology came from the Sāmoans' Austronesian ancestors. So that by the time these arrived in Sāmoa circa 1,000 B.C., they already had in their possession a set of beliefs, practices and material culture which differed very little from what Sāmoans have today.

But, of course, there is more to it. What the lapita settlers of 1,000 B.C. (see Jennings 1979) brought with them was a distinct culture complex, sometimes called the lapita culture complex, but which over the centuries they added to and refined. It was not so much the improvement of the material culture that the Sāmoans were noted for. This was to be effected by Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with their introduction of guns, steel knives and axes, to name a few of their goods.

What the Sāmoans became famous for was the development of an aristocratic system of government, which culminated in the establishment of the *fa'amatai*, or chiefly system, that is the hallmark of Sāmoan society today. In addition, they also perfected a social system centred in a series of closely connected kinship groups, from the smallest to the largest, and for which they have different names. These kinship groups, generically referred to as *aiga*, interact in mutually supporting roles for the economic and political advancement of their members. The smooth functioning of these roles contributes to peace and harmony in the group. When this does not happen, a group is seriously handicapped in its relationships, often of a competitive sort with other similar groups.

Finally, Sāmoans developed certain customs which served to promote law and order in their villages, districts and islands. An example of this is the *ifoga*, or the public apology made by one family to another to atone for a wrong, such as adultery or murder. A system of justice was also

instituted in the villages through means of fines, whether of food, fine mats or other goods; expulsions from the village (wherein a person or persons are banned from living or visiting a village for some offence); and the extreme, the burning of the houses, plantations and all property of a "criminal". The Sāmoan social order then, before the arrival of white persons, was an effective one.

But the changes do not end there because there is a third component to social and cultural change in Sāmoa, and that is the changes brought about as a result of interaction between Sāmoans and the *papālagi*. These changes again are of a major sort and some of them have already been referred to. Most important was the introduction of Christianity. Here, it is important to note that what is new is not the concept of religion, because the Sāmoans always understood this and were rigorous religious practitioners, but the name of the religion. Previously, they were animists, to use a term coined by the father of English anthropology, Edward Tylor. But with the coming of the Evangelical missionaries, John Williams and Charles Barff, in 1830, and their colleagues in 1836, Samoans changed from animism to Christianity. Still, many aspects of the old religion, such as evening devotions, remained intact.

The other major change brought about by contact with Europeans and Americans was the introduction of a capitalist economy. This type of economy, which focuses on profit-making only, was an imposed one and Sāmoans, in order to survive, had to adapt. Certainly, it meant hardship in some areas, for instance, in the loss of population to the cities and changes in post-marital residence, as husbands drifted to live with their wives' relatives because of surplus plantation land needed to grow cash crops for sale. But, at the same time, it meant blessings, in the form of the acquisition of much-needed *pālagi* goods, such as steel knives and axes, biscuits and *pīsupo*. Sāmoans tended then, as now, to have ambivalent feelings towards the new economy.

What then is Sāmoan culture? Without going into specifics at this stage, it may be said that Sāmoan culture is a composite of both historical and contemporary influences which have helped to shape the way Sāmoans view their world, live

and act in it. Samoan culture is thus a complex one, idealistic yet practical, profane yet sacred, simple yet fraught with meaning, transparent yet opaque, earthly yet so transcendental, ancient yet so new, and so on.

### Cultural Characteristics

Despite the complexity of Sāmoan culture or *aganu'u Sāmoa*, it is pertinent here to try to provide an outline of some basic Sāmoan beliefs and practices if only to serve as a guideline in the task of determining the role of culture to sustain livelihoods in the changing environment of Sāmoa.

In order to simplify this analysis Sāmoa's social system will be looked at according to four main classifications as follows: social, economic, political, religious. While these do represent disparate elements in a social system, yet the fact remains they are closely linked.

The term "social", refers to the rules and expectations which govern social relationships between Sāmoans. The Sāmoan terms for these rules and expectations are: *va* and *faiā*. In Sāmoan society, every person has a place (role) and a status attached to it. Nobody is of no account (*e leai se tagata e noa*). The catch, however, is that it is also

an extremely hierarchical one. Chiefs (*matai*), for instance, are ranked from the top as follows: *tafa'ifa* (emperor), *tupu* (king, leader of government, head of state cum prime minister), *sa'o, ali'i, tulafale*. Below the chiefs are the other untitled persons with children at the bottom of the ladder.

In gender relations, Sāmoan society was and is heavily biased towards males. Even though siblings were technically equal, as far as authority (*pule*) over land and titles was concerned, yet customary rules favoured males in terms of authority over land and succession to a family's chiefly titles. The rationale was that, on the one hand, the males brought their wives from outside the village, as a rule, and stayed on the land; therefore, they should be the managers of the land.

On the other, females married out, went to live with their husbands' relatives and spent most of their time with them. Thus, they should not accede to the same rights as the males. But, in compensation, they were entitled to the *taupou* title of the family. As *taupou*, they were accorded the highest form of respect by male relatives and the village. This relationship between brother and sister and their descendants is often called the *feagaiga*.



The principles of primogeniture and seniority also applied. Thus, when a title holder dies, the eldest-born is entitled to succeed him/her (primogeniture). But the brother of the dead titleholder has seniority in the family and his claim to the title is a stronger one than that of the eldest. However, these rules are not binding in an absolute sense. If, for instance, the eldest brother is corrupt, gives the family a bad name, and so on, then the family will be quite justified in choosing a younger brother to take over a family title. Similarly, if an uncle is proven to be unreliable, dishonest and so on, the family may give the title to a nephew. And so on with other rules. They may be changed, but only for good cause. The rules governing precedence in the inheritance of titles in Sāmoa are, therefore, flexible.

**Economically** speaking, the traditional economy, as in most pre-industrial societies, was kin-based, meaning it was organized around kin-

ship relations, and its primary purpose was subsistence, with a little of the production left over to meet social obligations. There was no cash involved, and wealth was gained in the form of social exchange, usually between relatives, but can also include outsiders.

These social obligations are commonly referred to among Sāmoans as *fa'alavelave* and includes important life cycle events such as births, deaths, marriages, title bestowals (*saofa'i*), house dedications (*umusaga*), church openings (*fa'aulufalega*) and so on. Presentations are normally in the form of fine mats or *toga*, the product of female labour, and/or goods or *oloa*, the product of male labour. *Toga* also includes sleeping mats, sitting mats, house blinds, fans and coconut oil, while *oloa* also includes Western goods, cash, weapons, houses and lands.

This constant economic reciprocity between relatives forms the basis of a wider economic net-



work among Sāmoans not limited to the geographical boundaries of the Sāmoan archipelago, but also extends to relatives living in the United States, New Zealand and Australia, the three main host nations where Sāmoan migrants have formed ethnic enclaves.

Another significant aspect of the pre-Christian economy was the *malaga*, a custom which permitted members of one village to visit another village or group of villages for either short or long-term visits to exchange goods. In times of famine, for instance, a village which is suffering the effects of the famine will undertake a journey to another village with a surplus of food and remain there for a time. In return, it will give its hosts a gift of fine mats. The hosts, in turn, will be expected to make a return visit later on when its own food resources run out.

Again, the question of reciprocity emerges. Unfortunately, this custom may be abused by some villages, and therefore the *malaga* was not always a popular custom. It has practically disappeared today, being considered an anachronism. Yet newer forms of the custom have emerged, such as group visits to overseas countries to raise funds for church or village developmental projects in Sāmoa, such as the construction of a new church or of a new school for the village. Money is obtained through donations at the performance of traditional dances (*siva*) and *tusiga igoa* or written pledges to contribute specific amounts. Visitors again usually donate fine mats to show their appreciation.

**Politically**, power in pre-Christian Sāmoa was vested in the chiefs. With a few exceptions, this is still true today. Sāmoa before the coming of the *papalagi* was largely a decentralized political system. Although there was a central government in the form of a *mālo* headed by its leader, usually called the *tupu*, each village was responsible for its own internal affairs, made its own laws, judged any issues that came before it and enforced its own judgments through the agency of the village *matai* council, supported by subsidiary groups such as the *aumaga* and *auluma*.

The ancient polity was essentially the village which only united with other villages in the event of war. The village, through its district, may be a

part of the governing faction, the *mālo*, or it may be a part of the *vaivai*, the defeated party (in war). If part of the *mālo*, it had the right to a part of the spoils of war; if part of the *vaivai*, then it probably had to pay some form of tribute to the victors. Apart from this tribute, the *mālo* largely left the *vaivai* alone provided it did not again try to destabilize the government (Gilson 1970).

Competition among the chiefs was largely for the acquisition of ever higher titles which also meant influence over a larger number of families and a bigger territory. In the hierarchy of titles, most chiefs are either *ali'i* (sacred chiefs) or *tulāfale* (spokespersons for the chiefs). Thus *ali'i* are generally of a higher status than the *tulāfale*. Above these are the *ao* titles, those belonging to the paramount chiefs of the districts. Most of the *ao* titles belong to the island of Savai'i and include: *Liloma'iava*, *Le Tagaloa*, *Tonuma'ipe'a*.

Above the *ao* titles were the *pāpā* titles, the highest of all titles save one. These were: *Tui A'ana*, *Tui Atua*, *Gato'aitele*, and *Tamasoali'i*. All pertain to political districts in Upolu Island. Some have argued that the *Tui Manu'a* title of Manu'a islands, American Sāmoa, is also a *papa* title (as well as the Le Tagaloa title of Savai'i). The leader who held all these four *pāpā* titles in Upolu became the *tafa'ifa*. In Sāmoan history, only a very few political leaders held the *tafa'ifa* title, which may be compared to that of emperor or king of kings.

In the area of **religion**, Sāmoans worshipped spirits who lived in fishes, animals, birds, insects, sun and moon, natural phenomena like lightning, and in inanimate objects, such as certain types of rocks. The creatures and objects possessed by these spirit deities were called pictures or *ata* of the gods or *aitu* (cf Turner 1884).<sup>4</sup>

As a rule, Sāmoans worshipped many gods. At the time of birth, each Sāmoan was given a tutelary deity. Each family, village, district also had a god. Each had its own name and its own *ata* or physical representation. Some gods were also considered national gods, because they were universally respected, such as Tagaloalagi, the creator god of the Sāmoans.

To these gods, Sāmoans prayed in their daily evening services when fires were lit, an event

A very significant aspect of social change has been the change in population movements. Every year, hundreds of Samoans migrate to overseas countries particularly New Zealand. This and exposure through other media have affected Samoan culture in both song and dance, with the hip hop revolution being particularly strong among the young people. The basic principles of Samoan society, such as the *fa'agalo*, seniority, primogeniture and so on continue to be respected but the interpretation of the rules have been liberalized in order to satisfy the needs of an increased population.

PHOTO SHOWS A PERFORMANCE BY THE 'YOUTH OF WELLINGTON' AT THE MALUA FOMOTELE 20 MAY 2006.  
PHOTO BY SKIV JOHNSTON



known as *fana afi o fa'amalama*. The gods were accorded the deepest respect and even had their feast days, sometimes lasting two weeks, when games and other forms of celebration were held in their honour.

The wishes of the gods were meticulously observed and when a person became sick, it was considered he/she had done something which displeased the god. Cure lay in atonement for the wrong done and in doing what the god wanted in the first place, as revealed through the mediumship of the ancient pagan priest, the *taulä'itu*.

Offerings of food were also done in the gods' name. These were called the *mätini* and consisted of various kinds of cooked food which were placed near the beaches to await the arrival of the gods. True, the gods did not eat the physical food: they ate only the spiritual counterpart of the food.

When the Evangelical missionaries arrived in the 1830s, therefore, the Sāmoans already had a deep understanding of the concept of religion. That was why it took only several decades to convert the vast majority of Sāmoans to Christianity (Va'a 1986).

## Social Change

Having explained some of the basic characteristics of Sāmoan culture and the agents for social change (i.e. culture change, Christianity, cash economy, colonialism, modernization, and so on), it is now pertinent to point out in more specific terms some of the cultural changes that have come about.

While it can be argued that cultural norms pertaining to social relationships are universally accepted in principle, the fact is these are being modified in practice as a result of contact with other cultures, particularly, European and American cultures, and more recently Asian cultures.

Instant communication brought about by radio, television, telephone, internet, and so on, has affected Sāmoan culture and the way Sāmoans look at the world. Not only that, every year the government sends hundreds of Sāmoan students, public servants and business people overseas for training and education purposes, thus exposing them to other kinds of cultures and world ideologies. Most important, hundreds of Sāmoans leave

the homeland every year to reside overseas permanently.

In other words, the demands of modernization and globalization have exposed Sāmoan culture to influences from a plethora of other sources and have resulted in pressures for social and cultural change, both good and bad.

At the material level, change has been profound, with European influence dominant everywhere. This is evident in the almost universal use of European-style houses, motor vehicles, radio, television, European food and clothes, and so on. Sāmoans themselves do not consider these European goods detrimental to their interests because they serve the Sāmoan communities well, especially in terms of the wealth needed for gift-exchanging and redistribution.

The items used for *sua* (gifts of food to a visitor) have also undergone change. Instead of a green coconut (*vailolo*) a can of soft drink has been substituted; Western cloth has replaced the *siapo* (tapa cloth); bread or a packet of SAO has replaced the *tā'isi* (steamed taro); a can of corned beef or chicken has replaced the cooked fowl (*taālepaepae*). Sāmoans generally agree that these changes to the composition of the *sua* are unavoidable, given the difficulty experienced by migrants of obtaining the genuine items. The problem is Sāmoans in Sāmoa are also doing likewise. While many "conservative" Sāmoans view the "modern" form of the *sua* as being a "corrupt" form, it is already a standard practice, despite the fact that the original items that go into the composition of the *sua* (for example, green coconuts and *siapo*) are plentiful in Sāmoa.

European influences have also affected Sāmoan culture in both song and dance, with the hip hop revolution being particularly strong among the young people. Sāmoans generally are acquainted not only with a variety of European songs and dances, but also with many kinds of sports introduced by Europeans, such as boxing, athletics, volleyball, basketball, soccer and especially rugby.

The basic principles of Sāmoan society, such as the *feagaiga*, seniority, primogeniture and so on continue to be respected but the interpretation of the rules have been liberalized in order to sat-

isfy the needs of an increased population. This is manifested in the splitting of Sāmoan *matai* titles in order to please the various branches of a family and the switching of statuses from *tama fafine* to *tama tane* so that the *feagaiga* can get a *matai* title.

A very significant aspect of social change has been the change in population movements. Every year, hundreds of Sāmoans migrate to overseas countries particularly New Zealand, a movement that started in earnest about 40 years ago. In his migrant study of 1992, for instance, Va'a (2001) showed that from 1961 to 1991, 38,832 Sāmoans had migrated to New Zealand. This does not include overstayers and those who migrated directly from here to Australia and the United States. This situation is further exacerbated by the movement of people from rural areas to the urbanized ones of Asau and Salelologa in Savai'i, and especially Apia in Upolu.

According to the Preliminary Census Report for 2001, the Apia Urban Area had 38,557 residents, compared with 35,489 in 1991 but North West Upolu, comprising most of the villages on the northwest coast between Apia and Faleolo International Airport, had a population of 52,412, compared with 39,046 ten years earlier. Savai'i experienced a drop of 3,222 for the same period while Rest of Upolu also decreased in population by 368. The big increase in the North West Upolu population is not a fortuitous one. It is due to the residency of rural relatives who want to be close to Apia for the education of their children or for jobs.

This movement, which has intensified since independence in 1962, has been due largely to educational and economic reasons. And there is no end in sight. Government has responded to this trend by developing and expanding urban centres, such as the new one at Salelologa, for the people of Savai'i.

What this means is that the population in the villages tends to be that of the young and the old, because most of the young adults have migrated either to overseas countries or to the urban areas. This in turn means a reduction in the rural labour force with consequential results on the economic

development of the villages. This has proved to be one of the negative effects of migration, as Shankman (1976) and others have pointed out.

To offset this disadvantage, rural Sāmoans are regularly recipients of remittances from their migrant relatives and this source of income has enabled many to survive in a highly competitive cash-oriented environment and to meet their social obligations in the village and elsewhere. But what happens when these sources of income cease to exist?

This is the question posed by Shankman (1976, 1978), who views migration as problematic in the long term. Other migration studies, however, show that firstly remittances continue to flow to village relatives until these either die or migrate in their turn and that secondly remittances continue to flow into receiving countries as long as the phenomenon of migration continues (Va'a 2001).

The Sāmoan social structure at the visible level appears to be largely intact. The customary village committees responsible for social order, such as the council of chiefs, the organization of untitled men and unmarried women, and that of the wives of the chiefs and young children, continue to function in an effective manner in Sāmoa (see Le Tagaloa 1996:26).

But this hides the fact that changes of social mores, beliefs and practices continue unabated. These changes are often not obvious, except when their negative effects surface and cause grievous problems for the villages, some examples of which are provided below.

The constitution of Sāmoa provides for freedom of religion but some villages have laws which prescribe what religious denomination could be established in the village. Sometimes, as in Vaie'e, on the south coast of Upolu island, only one denomination (Congregational Christian Church) is allowed in the village; in others only two or three may be allowed. This village "law" therefore conflicts with the provisions of the constitution guaranteeing freedom of religion.

In pre-contact times, villagers followed the law to the letter, without hesitation, but in the last two decades or so, some have challenged the right of the council of chiefs to prescribe on matters of

religion. Such opposition has led to unpleasant consequences for them (see Va'a 2000:151-169).

In the political arena, the introduction of universal suffrage in the early nineties has drastically altered the balance of power. Before this event, chiefs introduced and changed governments almost at will. Now a vastly more substantial portion of the population, in the form of women and untitled men over 21, acts as a powerful check to *matai* power at the national level, at least.

Some Sāmoan customs have been abandoned, for instance, polygamy, virginity tests (*fa'amasei'au*), giving of first fruits or particular kinds of fish to the paramount chief, and so on. Others have been maintained, for instance, gift giving (*si'i*) and kava ceremonies to welcome visitors.

Quite obviously, Sāmoans have chosen to discard those customs and traditions which are no longer relevant today, and to retain only those ones which continue to benefit their societies in Sāmoa and in foreign countries. While this can be considered an appropriate response on the part of Sāmoans, certain areas need to be looked at.

### **Economic, Religious and Political Change**

Social change, without a doubt, has had a dramatic impact in the economic area. While it is true that Sāmoans continue to practise the basics of their traditional economy, in the form of sharing, gift-giving and redistribution of wealth, the cash economy, brought about by trade and capitalistic enterprise of both small entrepreneurs and international business concerns, such as the German firm, Godeffroy, which established its headquarters in Apia in 1857 (see Gilson 1970), has made gigantic inroads into Samoan life, for the reasons already given.

Sāmoans, at the time of first European culture contact in the 1820s, were first attracted to European goods because of their novelty (such as blue beads and mirrors) but also for their effectiveness, such as guns, steel axes and knives.

With the establishment of the Christian missions in the 1830s and 1840s, the cash economy received an additional boost in the form of coco-

nut oil donated to the church by religious adherents.

The civil wars of the final four decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also proved to be a catalyst for the cash economy as Sāmoans sold thousands of acres of land to European entrepreneurs to enable them to purchase guns.

During the colonial period, 1900 to 1940, much of the cash economy involved trade. Sāmoans earned most of their cash income from the production and export of copra, cocoa and bananas. Most planters operated on a small scale, but a few, such as the Va'ai family of Vaisala, Savai'i, operated large plantations.

With the Second World War, Sāmoans experienced the cash economy in a big way for the first time, as U.S. marines spent lavishly for their needs. This contact with American wealth, not only benefited many Sāmoans employed by the U.S. military, but also increased among Sāmoans a desire for European wealth (Gray 1960; Davidson 1967). The decolonization period, which started with independence in 1962, saw new developments as Sāmoans took control of their own economic future. And in this they have succeeded admirably. Lately, for instance, Sāmoa's economic performance has been lauded at the highest international levels as a model for the South Pacific. Perhaps this is not surprising given that Sāmoa is a strong supporter of the good governance policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund; and for the last few years, has introduced Institutional Strengthening Programmes intended to heighten the efficiency of the public sector. In 2006, Sāmoa is scheduled to enter the World Trade Organization, which means Sāmoa will be linked to the global trade network.

Sāmoa's economy started with a traditional-type economy based on kinship affiliation and networks and has ended as part of the global economy. But this does not mean that only one particular form of economy predominates in Sāmoa. More accurately, the Sāmoan economy is a mixed one, with capitalistic, centralized and traditional characteristics.

In the area of religion, it can be argued that the English Evangelical missionaries did not introduce



the concept and practice of religion to the Sāmoans, since they already had these. What they did introduce was the concept of a new religion, namely, Christianity. In some areas of belief, the traditional religion and Christianity shared similarities, in others they differed. For instance, in the traditional religion, it is alright to curse one's enemies, in Christianity, one is encouraged to turn the other cheek.

Just as the pre-Christian Sāmoans were a deeply religious people who worshipped a multiplicity of gods, so they continue to be almost universally a member of some Christian church. According to the 2001 census, practically 100 per cent of the population are members of a religion, with the four largest denominations being Congregationalist, 34.7 per cent; Catholic, 19.7 per cent; Methodist, 15 per cent; Latter Day Saints, 12.7 per cent. The smallest is the Moslem faith, which has only 48 members.

In Sāmoa, the church occupies a key place in the village hierarchy, with the pastor accorded the highest form of social respect as *feagaiga*. Often, as among the Methodists, he is called the *ao fa'alupega*, which in effect means that in an honorific sense, he occupies the highest position in the status hierarchy. Village people believe that obtaining the favours of the Divine Will ensures success of village endeavours. Therefore, not to have a religion is "unthinkable" to most Sāmoans. The village church thus is an integral part of the social order.

Among migrants, scholarly research shows that Sāmoans are deeply committed to their churches, even after they migrate to New Zealand, Australia, and United States (Pitt and Macpherson 1974; Kotchek 1975; Rolff 1978; Va'a 2001).

This is not merely the result of a spiritual quest among migrants: it is also a sociological phenomenon, an attempt to recreate a Sāmoan-style universe, with the church at the centre, serving to represent the traditional village polity and its unique form of organization.

Here, the pastor, office bearers, deacons and elders substitute for the village chiefs. Membership in the church and participation in its activities thereby contribute to the development of the modern Sāmoan migrant identity. And sets

Sāmoans apart from outsiders.

In the political field, power arrangements in Sāmoa have altered drastically. Reference has already been made to the pre-contact model of power, centred on several powerful titles, such as *pāpā* and *ao* and how the competition for the acquisition of these titles became the causes of ancient civil wars. With the arrival of missionaries, traders and consuls in Sāmoa from the 1830s onwards (Gilson 1970), pressures were put on the traditional leaders to institute a system of government based on European models. This necessarily meant drastic changes to the old system of power involving domination by the government, or *mälö*, and the paying of tribute by the defeated side, the *vaivai*.

The failure of Sāmoan chiefs to bring this about led to the direct intervention of the colonial powers, Britain, Germany and United States, culminating in the establishment of colonial rule in 1900. The United States took over American Sāmoa, and Germany Western Sāmoa. Germany was followed by New Zealand in 1914 (see Davidson 1967; Gilson 1970).

But the pertinent fact is that as from that date, Western liberal forms of government were being introduced in Sāmoa, though slowly at first. These developments reached their climax in 1962 when Western Sāmoa became an independent state, with its own constitution, legislative and executive bodies, an independent judiciary and public service, and so on.

Sāmoa has a workable Western democratic form of government, though there are still some areas that need to be worked on, for instance, the issue of allowing untitled persons to stand for parliament, or of having a single electoral system, rather than two as at present, a Sāmoan Voters' Roll and Individual Voters.

Today, the Western liberal democratic system of government is the dominant one but the traditional system, represented by the village council, continues to operate in the villages. Village councils, for instance, are empowered under the Fono Act to make rules for village residents but any rules they make are subject to the scrutiny of the Land and Titles Court. Sometimes, there is conflict between a village council decision and central gov-

ernment and then the Supreme Court may become involved (see Va'a 2000).

### Language Developments

Closely related to the question of culture change is that of language. Sāmoa is fortunate in that the vast majority of its residents continue to speak the language, though more and more Sāmoans, especially the young and overseas-educated, are turning to English. The increased use of English is associated with ever widening exposure of the population to foreign cultures and ideologies; it is a development which has intensified in the last few decades as a result of Sāmoa's greater involvement in globalization.

In a study conducted by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) under a programme called *Augmenting Institutions for General Attainment* that was released in July, 2000,

some startling revelations about the use of the Sāmoan language were made.<sup>5</sup>

It was found that fewer people, especially between the generations, were using the language. Thus, only 89 per cent of grandparents could talk to their children (the parents) in Sāmoan, while only 70 per cent of parents could do the same to their children.

About 90 per cent of grandparents could talk in Sāmoan, while only 65 per cent of their grandchildren could do the same. This means language use has been reduced by 25 per cent when comparing the above figures and also that within another three generations, only some 50 per cent will be able to talk in Sāmoan.

Another finding is that while the use of the Sāmoan language has been reduced, there has also been an increase in the number of people who use code-switching, that is, people who switch be-



tween English and Sāmoan. About 20 per cent of those surveyed were in this category. These tended to use Sāmoan mainly in the course of their ordinary daily activities, but English when they discussed important and abstruse subjects.

Fifty-six per cent of the respondents cited as the reason for not using Sāmoan regularly was that as a language it had a limited vocabulary. In the words of the report, "Sāmoan language has a limited capacity to express and conceptualize ideas and is suitable only for social, cultural and religious domains."

Similar findings were also found for language users in American Sāmoa<sup>6</sup> and as in Independent Sāmoa, are major causes for concern. Truly, Sāmoans are not alone; they are susceptible to language and cultural influences brought about through migration, contacts with foreign cultures and the impact of the mass media.

Apart from language usage, other current problems affecting the Sāmoan language involve the use of diacritics, such as the macron and glottal stop. It now seems that there is a general consensus about the need for diacritics, especially for the guidance of migrant children and learners of the Sāmoan language. The basic problem remains though, how far? Should they be used for every word, or only when there is an ambiguity in the meaning of a word?

Another problem is the review of grammar, now being undertaken by the Language Unit of MESC. Compared with the problem of diacritics, there is a likelihood of a deeper division amongst Sāmoan linguists over grammar. Many, for instance, oppose the changes proposed by the ministry, but these changes relate mainly to orthographic requirements. For example, should the article "the" be written as "o le" or "ole"?

While contemporary linguistic issues might seem irrelevant to questions of human development in Sāmoa, they are significant to many Sāmoans, especially those involved in the field of education, because they have a bearing on Sāmoan cultural identity, of which language is a primary aspect. For instance, many Sāmoans believe that the ability to speak the Sāmoan language is a *sine qua non* of Sāmoanness, while the ability to use or write the correct forms of the language consti-

tutes the same. A narrow view, perhaps, but common nevertheless.

## Sustainable Livelihoods

The basic question here is that given the causes and the nature of social changes as explained, what kind of evaluation can be given to these developments? What aspects of culture need to be retained, what dispensed with as irrelevant in today's Sāmoa? The answer can be expressed in a few words: because the social changes to the various aspects of culture, such as the social, economic, political, religious and linguistic aspects were the result of essential modifications of the culture in order to enable it to adapt to its modern environment, they can be considered as positive. That is to say, for the most part, they cannot nor should they be reversed, as long as they serve the general needs of Sāmoan society.

That is not to say there are no areas which need looking into, for there are. In the social system, for instance, there has been a general decline in the social solidarity of the family kin group,<sup>7</sup> brought about largely as a result of the fragmentation of the kin membership. The constant flow of relatives to overseas destinations and to the urban areas has weakened the family structure at home, leading to a certain degree of underdevelopment in the villages due to a shortage of agricultural labour. Also, the dispersal of the family group has weakened the moral support structures inherent in the *fa'aSāmoa*, such as the *feagaiga*. There are thus tensions at the structural level of the Sāmoan family induced by this reduced manpower with consequential results on social relationships.

More problematic is the confusion in values brought about by competing lifestyles and ideologies which are the normal result of globalization. This has resulted in a state of social alienation, characterized partly by a lack of strong identification with any particular group. For Sāmoans at home, identity is not a serious problem: everyone is a Sāmoan here. But in New Zealand, for instance, there is a competing allegiance between being Sāmoan and being Pacific Islander. Many migrants want to be just Sāmoan, but the dominant culture tends to label all Polynesians, Melanesians and Micronesians as Pacific Island-

ers, an official perspective now increasingly being opposed by the Islanders themselves, who prefer to be known by their individual ethnic characteristics as Fijians, Tongans, Sāmoans.

Social, economic, political, ethical, moral and spiritual values also present serious difficulties. Just what values should Sāmoans adopt in their particular context? It is not that Sāmoans lack values, but that they have a plethora of them emanating from different sources. Are these values dependent on which particular identity Sāmoans exhibit in a specific context? And if it is an ethnic identity that concerns Sāmoans, then what values are important to that identity? Fortunately, values can be determined through the use of social surveys.

Moreover, through such surveys, it may be possible to determine the extent of changes in social values through time. Already, as indicated earlier on, surveys on language use have found that significant changes are taking place, changes which cannot be ignored.

Commerce, trade, capitalism, the global economy and so on may be considered irreversible. That is not the problem inasmuch as small countries cannot do much to stop them if they wanted to. The real problem is how to adapt to these new forces in the economy.

Sāmoa is set to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2006, and there is fear among some of its political leaders that such membership could be detrimental to its economic interests. There is concern that the rich countries of Europe, America and Asia will swamp the country with their surpluses, and that this would seriously affect the development of Sāmoa's local industries.

However, the present government firmly believes that Sāmoa's membership in the WTO would be more beneficial than detrimental. Whatever the truth, the fact is Sāmoa needs to make some basic changes in its economic structure and way of thinking in order to survive in the new world created by membership in the WTO. It represents a challenge for the future, not only for Sāmoa, but for the small island states of the Pacific region.

If the new experiment does become successful, then it should be helpful to the *fa'aSāmoa* also,

because any increase in wealth created by the establishment of new global networks would necessarily spill over into the traditional Sāmoan economy as practised not only in Sāmoa but also in migrant host countries. The *fa'aSāmoa*, as researches have shown (Va'a 2000), has a tendency to thrive in the ambience of greater wealth.

As with the economy, so with political organization. The modern form of government in Sāmoa, influenced mostly by Western systems of government, is practically irreversible, because it represents many years of evolution, beginning with culture contact in the 1830s.

To be sure, more so than the economy, the introduction of a liberal democratic system of government has had serious hiccups over the years. It posed serious challenges to the pre-contact system of government, which was managed by the so called power centres of *Pule* and *Tumua*.<sup>8</sup> And it had resulted in the political non-violent opposition movement called the *Mau*, first during the German Administration, 1900 to 1914, and then during the New Zealand Administration in the 1920s (Davidson 1967; Field 1984).

As expected, the *Mau* did not defeat the colonial powers with their vast military machines behind them, but the *Mau* did manage to put pressure on them to decolonize, eventually resulting in political independence in 1962. From then on, political wars were no longer fought between Sāmoans and their white colonial masters, but between Sāmoan chiefs themselves.

This new politics, however, did not affect the democratic institutions put in place by the former colonial powers. In fact, Sāmoan governments have improved on them in many ways, including the introduction of universal suffrage in the early 1990s, and the trend is continuing.

Currently, the government's emphasis is on the principles of good governance, characterized by transparency, accountability and equity, the very same principles regarded as a *sine qua non* for the proposed UNDP Human Development Report.

These new policies of government do not necessarily conflict with Sāmoan cultural traditions and practice. What is needed perhaps is a redefinition of what constitutes transparency, accountability and equity in the traditional context of the

villages, for example, so that village practice and government practice can operate at the same level.

It may mean more government involvement in village affairs through greater rationalization of the government bureaucracy in the districts, a step that eventually has to come with the introduction of a workable system of local government. This is something that has been discussed in government circles for at least 50 years but nothing significant has yet emerged (Davidson 1967).

In the area of religion, the customary relationship between religion and the people has been established for close to 200 years. This is expressed in the *feagaiga* system which is applied to all religious denominations in Sāmoa, regardless of orientation. There are four main denominations in Sāmoa (Congregational, Catholic, Methodist, Mormon) with numerous smaller sects, all enjoying the right to practise their forms of worship, except where such right is limited by village rules, as explained before.

The desire to unite the village in its loyalty to one or several churches is one of the main reasons for the prohibition against the establishment of new

religions in some villages. Where such prohibitions exist, the Supreme Court has generally reversed the village rules because of the constitutional provision relating to freedom of religion. This, therefore, represents an area of continuing conflict between government and the villages.

However, as long as both village council and members of a prohibited religion do not overreact and resort to violence, there is a good chance of reaching a peaceful and satisfactory accommodation. Given time, disagreements have more chances of being resolved.

Fortunately, the problem involving prohibition against certain religious sects by some villages is limited only to a few villages. The vast majority continue to be liberal in their attitudes towards the acceptance of new religions. And this is a good sign for the future.

In Sāmoa, religion and culture are usually allied, they support each other. Religion legitimizes culture, and culture legitimizes religion and this coexistence promotes the establishment of solidarity in the Sāmoan community. Therefore, both are integral in the formation of the Sāmoan personality and identity.

#### CULTURE AND RELIGION



Funeral procession for Cardinal Pio Taofinu'u. Described by some of his peers as "very visionary and particularly good with the enculturation - the culture with the liturgy". On several occasions Cardinal Taofinu'u took Samoan delegations that danced and performed during mass at the Vatican.

## Conclusion

The viewpoint expressed here is in line with the Pacific Forum's second principle of good leadership, which is respect for cultural values, customs, traditions and indigenous rights and observation of traditional protocols in the exercise of power. This applies to Sāmoa as to the rest of the Pacific. Thus, in a recent speech at Auckland University entitled, *Pacific States and Development: The Role of the New Good Governance Agenda*, Sāmoa's Minister of Finance, Misa Telefoni Retzlaff, said: "Every Pacific state is culturally unique, and every Pacific state is proud of its cultural heritage. This means that all initiatives, including good governance initiatives, will fail, if they are not culturally sensitive."

Yet there is more to an acknowledgment of the important contribution of the past to the lives of Sāmoans today. The present and future also present their challenges to the social system and the culture must adapt or perish. Culture is not a static phenomenon, because influenced by outside forces and by the internal dynamics of a social organization. It is constantly changing and adapting to new developments, such as those referred to under the general rubrics of social, economic, political, religious and linguistic developments.

Cultural change in Sāmoa today is largely successful because it represents a healthy compromise between the needs of tradition and of contemporary society. But more needs to be done, such as: the need to reinforce the dynamics of family

structure; the need to maintain the traditional economy as it faces challenges from the global economy; the need to give cognisance to the traditional power elites in the midst of implementing modern political reforms; the need to raise tolerance levels for new religious groups; and the need to promote the teaching of Sāmoan language and culture to the new generations of Sāmoans, many of whom are overseas-born and raised.

In other words, sustaining Sāmoan culture in the modern era is not just a matter of preserving what is best from the past, such as gift exchanges during times of family crises, but also of inventing new cultural elements to ensure that Sāmoan culture also incorporates the best from other world cultures, systems and ideologies. This is best achieved through the processes of education and training, supplemented by a realistic political assessment of development needs, goals and practices. Sustainable culture, therefore, is not a matter of tradition or modernity on its own, but a healthy combination of the two and each generation will have to redefine this combination for itself.

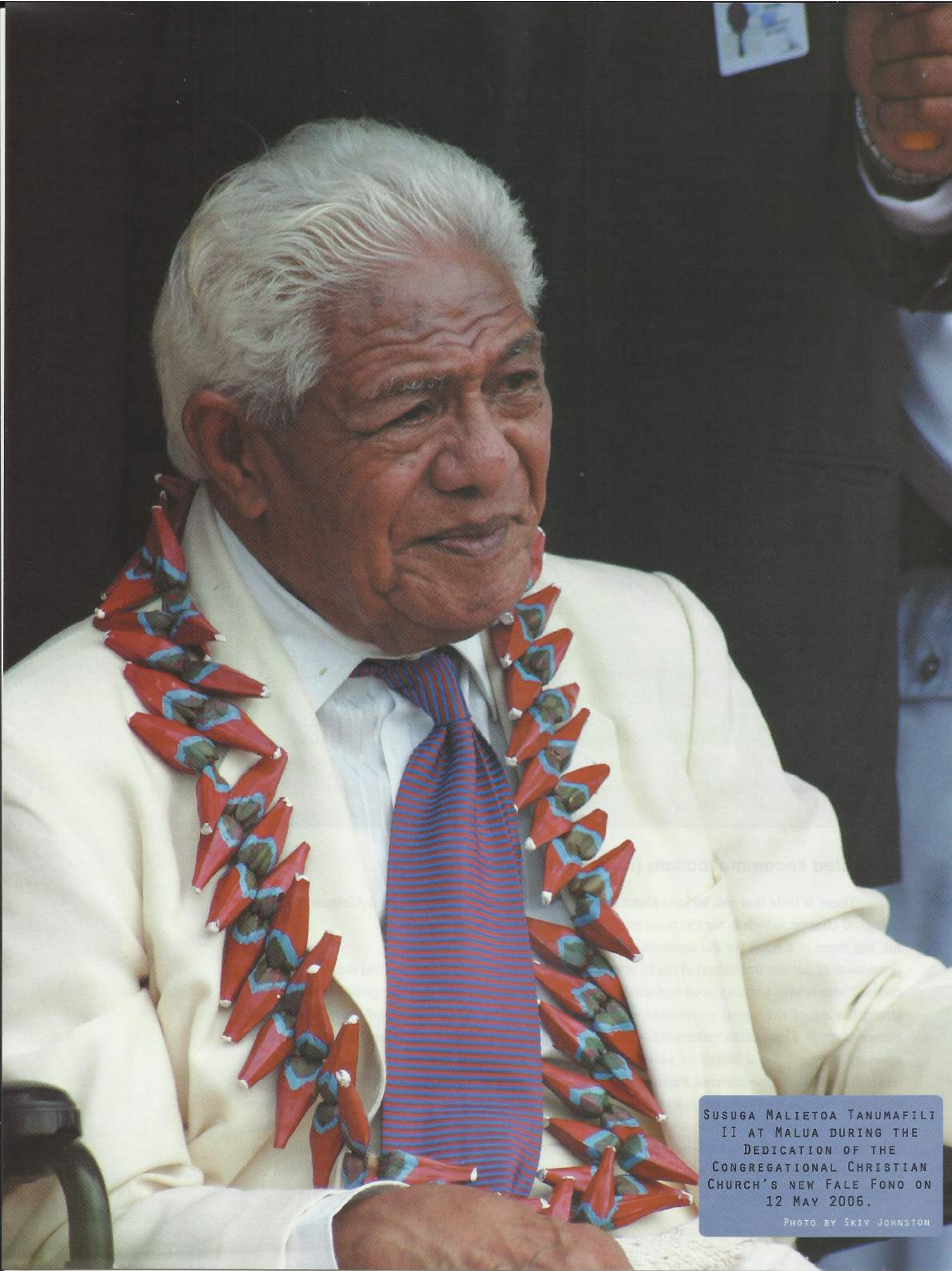
In short, in Sāmoa's pursuit of development objectives, policymakers on sustainable livelihoods should always be sensitive to the nuances of cultural aims and objectives of the Sāmoan people because it is by incorporating their cultural needs and aspirations that government will be more likely to succeed in its development strategies.

## Suggested Recommendations (in the light of this article)

1 There is little that can be said about technological change, which is for the most part useful, but there is a need for the continuation and promotion of certain traditional skills in arts and crafts. There is also a strong need to focus on the strengthening of the social relationships of the Sāmoan family. These relationships are being torn apart by the centrifugal forces of social change and rapid population movements. Raising the level of family income will help considerably, as will attempts to keep family members together, such as through raising the level of employment opportunities at home so young adults do not have to emigrate. The creation of new townships at Asau

and Salelologa in Savai'i, and Aleipata in Upolu, would help in this direction.

2 It is generally agreed that the cash economy is irreversible, and that the global economy, exemplified in the operations of the WTO, is inescapable, that there are pros and cons for all countries. The key to Sāmoa's survival in such a modern kind of economy is not to sink under the weight of globalization but to be able to maintain its own economic identity and ensure its own survival. This means it must still be able to maintain its traditional style of subsistence economy and exchange as a defence against a downturn in the glo-



SUSUGA MALIETOA TANUMAFILI  
II AT MALUA DURING THE  
DEDICATION OF THE  
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH'S NEW FALE FONU ON  
12 MAY 2006.

PHOTO BY SKIV JOHNSTON

bal economy, as well as a healthy mix of small-scale local industries to cater for the consumer needs of the local population. There needs to be a balance between the macro and micro levels. Or put another way, don't put all your eggs in one basket. However, trade relationships with the developed countries will be more problematic in view of the strict guidelines of the WTO.

**3** Religion is a thriving enterprise in Sāmoa. It is a truly Sāmoan success story because not only has Christianity survived in Sāmoa for close to 200 years, but Sāmoans have been able to incorporate many of their ancient religious beliefs and practices into the new religion. Religion is a unifying institution and therefore is a positive development in Sāmoan society. For the future, the trend towards the introduction of new religious groups is threatening to disrupt the political situation in some villages, where there are proscriptions against them. The constitution states clearly there can be no discrimination based on religion, but village councils may view the matter differently. Village councils and central government should be given more time to negotiate a settlement which must satisfy the requirements of the law, in the end.

**4** Some constitutional changes should be sought to (1) allow untitled Sāmoan citizens to stand as candidates for parliament and (2) allow for the establishment of a second house to cater for chiefs' only candidates. Rationale: one of the main reasons for the *matai*'s fear of allowing the untitled citizens to stand for parliament is that they might pass laws to change the land tenure system, upon which chiefly power is based, or alter any other significant custom or practice. By establishing a second, and higher house of parliament (for which only *matai* can vote and only *matai* can stand for election), any bills introduced by the Lower House will be subject to the scrutiny of the Upper House. This will result in the much-needed balance required by the *matai*. But from the point of view of costs, the establishment of a second House for *Matai* may be problematic.

**5** The two language studies mentioned demonstrate a trend towards diminished use of the Sāmoan language, due mainly to the fact that more

and more Sāmoans, through the processes of education and migration, now have increased options to use other languages, mainly English. This calls for more education in the use of Sāmoan language and culture and this in turn calls for the establishment here and overseas of more schools and training centres dedicated towards this purpose. New Zealand is already leading the way through the establishment of pre-schools which use the Sāmoan language, and through attempts by Sāmoan NGOs, such as FAGASA,<sup>9</sup> to promote the teaching of Sāmoan language and culture in New Zealand primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.

**6** Sustaining livelihoods in the midst of culture change calls for a variety of strategies. This generally translates into preserving the best from the past and adopting the best from the present. The best from the past will include those values, beliefs and practices which do not harm or lessen the dignity of any individual or group while the best from the present will include those values, beliefs and practices which promote the social, economic, political and spiritual well-being of an individual or group. Laws, when constructed with these views in mind, and they generally are, will contribute towards the achievement of these goals. Today, there is a fine, stable balance between the requirements of law and tradition and this has contributed significantly to the development of a peaceful society in Sāmoa.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Presumably this refers to some historical incident in which some chiefs were chosen for office in the Administrator's Council but who, in the opinion of some Samoans, were obviously unqualified.

<sup>2</sup> German influence in Samoa though extended back to 1857 with the founding of the German firm Godeffroy in Apia.

<sup>3</sup> Thus Aggie Grey launched a highly successful business selling American-styled hamburgers.

<sup>4</sup> Turner, G. 1884. *Samoa a Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*. Macmillan & Co., London.

<sup>5</sup> Citing from a paper called "Po ua mativa ea le Gagana Samoa?", presented by Maulolo L. T. Amosa at the annual conference of the Samoan Language Teachers Association of Aotearoa (FAGASA) held at the East-West Center, Hawaii, 5-10 July, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> These findings for American Samoa were also presented at the FAGASA meeting in Honolulu by Dr Dan Aga of the American Samoa Community College.

<sup>7</sup> The high suicide rate in Samoa during the last 30 years is partial evidence for this.

<sup>8</sup> Orator groups in Savai'i (Pule) and Upolu (Tumua).

<sup>9</sup> Fa'alapotopotoga Fa'aoga Gagana Samoa i Aotearoa.