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The Sāmoan Village: Past and Present
O le Nu'u Sāmoa: Anamua ma Onapō nei

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The cover design by Nadya Va'a comprises abstractions of breadfruit leaves and ocean colours illustrating the growth and development of Sāmoa, its natural resources and land. The fale motif represents the social, political, economic and religious structures of Sāmoa, with tapa (siapo) motifs and textures in the design referencing fa'a Sāmoa and cultural heritage. The diagonal elements from old tapa designs symbolize quantified information.

Content

The Sāmoan Village, the Brother-Sister Relationship
and the Rule of Exogamy

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Abstract

To the Western mind—as represented in most anthropological accounts—the "man/woman" differentiation is the broadest "gender opposition" subsuming all other more specific differentiations such as husband/wife, brother/sister, son/daughter, etc. The paper proposes that this Western illusion is deeply entrenched within contemporary gender studies, a consequence of the even broader Western analytical tradition based on the tool of dualistic complementary oppositions. In many anthropological accounts the traditional gendered spheres of 'nu'u o tama'ita'i' and 'nu'u o ali'i' in most Sāmoan villages have been misrepresented in as pertaining to a division of responsibility or interest between men and women. This however is quite alien to Sāmoan conceptions in which males and females are defined by their distinct status and roles vis-à-vis one another, as brother and sister (tuagane/tuafafine) or as man and wife (tamāloa/āvā). The social structure of traditional Sāmoan polities or villages requires brothers and sisters to take their husbands and wives from other villages, brothers bringing their wives 'in', while their sisters go 'out' to their husbands. Village endogamy is deeply disapproved. The organisation of a village is thus based on a brother/sister distinction through a triad of founding names (titles), their sons and their daughters, and excludes wives.

Keywords: Sāmoa, gender, social organisation, marriage, kinship, siblingship, endogamy, exogamy.

Introduction

An Enigma

Gathering contemporary accounts of how Sāmoan people view their village organisation enables us to understand how the *nu'u* (village/polity)—and not only the *'āīga* (local or extended family)—is a fundamental unit in the social structure. The *nu'u* although usually translated as "village" is more than a settlement, but a 'polity' comprising a territory and a community bound together through many rules and obligations. A *nu'u* is first and foremost a social grouping rather than a geographical entity. In this paper I will use the term "village" rather than "*nu'u*" to refer to the community, to avoid confusion with the social groups within a village also metaphorically referred to as "*nu'u*". The term "family" will be used when the reference is to the part of the *'āīga* that is living in the village, and "*'āīga*" when referring to the extended family encompassing those who reside in other villages. The enquiry here is limited to (Western) Sāmoa villages, but, from few discussions I had during the early 1980s in American Sāmoa, I have no doubt that it entirely applies there as well. The analysis presented here is based on observations made during the 1980s. Today, Sāmoan consider many of those issues differently, as will be discussed in the last section of this paper.

Among village rules is a strong rejection of intra-village marriage. This rejection is surprising since the families that make up a village are not literally *'āīga*, in the sense of being related closely enough to forbid any intermarriage on a kinship basis. But Sāmoans condemn marriage within a village. It was thus not a question of kinship, but one of the village as a community. According to all the Sāmoans I have met, the idea that intermarriage within the *nu'u* should not happen goes back as far as family accounts stretch (the late 19th century), but they have no explanation for this part of the 'custom' (*āganu'u*) or would only say "people of the same village are too close". We get a better understanding once we uncover that, at a certain encompassing level of representations of what is a

nu'u, all villagers are "brother or sister" to each other, as will be further discussed. This village organisation is another example for the prevalence of the 'brother-sister relationship' (*feagaiga*) in Sāmoa (Schoeffel 1978a, 1979, 1995; Tcherkezoff 1993, 2003: 276-494; 2008a, 2008b: 319-321, 2011; 2016: 252-312; Latai 2014, 2015, 2016).

This brother-sister overarching link becomes evident if we analyse the composition of the village, not just as a collective of families but, more importantly, made up of three ceremonial groupings that includes everyone and that are also called "*nu'u*": firstly, the group of each family 'representatives', the family heads (*sui, ulu o le 'āīga*) called *matai* (translated in the literature as title-holders or "chiefs"), secondly the boys and men of the village designated by the chiefs as their "sons", and third, the girls and ladies of the village designated by the chiefs as their "daughters" or "sisters". A village is a set of families, but, as a community, it is a "sacred circle" (*alofisā*) of chiefs made as one, and these chiefs have "sons and daughters" who are thus considered to have a brother-sister relationship. One consequence is that the marital links within the village are put at the back of the scene, nearly invisible. It is rather easy to maintain the marital links in the backstage, except when a marriage occurs within village members.

The ethnographic literature is nearly silent on this condemnation of intra-village marriage, which has thus escaped discussion and analysis (but see Gilson 1963, 1970: 22; Schoeffel 1979, and Aiono 1986: 104, ms.3; the observations go back to the 1950s for Gilson, and earlier for Aiono who mentioned to me accounts handed down by her grand-parents). The reason for this relative silence in the literature is twofold. First, the principle of village exogamy is expressed as an ideal, rather than as an absolute rule such as would apply to incest. Secondly, social life needs to be analysed at village level and not only, as the literature to date reflects, at the first unit that the observer comes across beyond the individual—that is, the family.

Any visitor to Sāmoa can observe that the relevant social units in daily life are the family and the village (see Tcherkezoff 2003: 55–96, 2008a). Each individual belongs to at least one family and one village, and most of the obligations and restrictions guiding his life result from his dual membership of these two units. Every Sāmoan is aware of this membership system and talks extensively and spontaneously about it whenever there is a problem among relatives or in the neighbourhood or when explaining the 'Sāmoan way' (*āganu'u fa'asāmoa*) to foreigners. Remarks include statements defining marriage restrictions, such as, "you can't marry anyone that's *'āīga* with you". But additional statements may be heard when an opportunity arises. In a conversation about a young woman, for example, someone from the village may say wistfully, "She isn't happy with her husband". The conversation may proceed:

> *'Why not?—'Because she was in love with someone else.'—'Why didn't she marry him then?'—'Because the parents didn't want them to.' [A pause, and then:] 'Didn't you know…?' [Another pause and then, in hushed tones:] 'They're from the same village.'*

The problem caused by their common origins does not surface in conversations about defining notions of family or village, but in personal stories like this. Much later, one discovers that a couple one knows is "from the same village, but nobody talks about it, because what they have done is unseemly". One then notices that such uncommon couples—at least they were uncommon in the 1980s—are never at the forefront of village life. Thus it becomes apparent that there is a glaring contradiction between village endogamy and the status system.

It then becomes easier to understand why the prohibition on village endogamy is not defined as incest. It is absolutely 'forbidden' (*sa*) to marry a person related to you; it would be committing 'incest' (*māta'ifale)*. Apart from family and village custom, the word *sa* is used for all prohibitions decreed by religion and government. When asked why families do not wish their children to marry within the village, however, Sāmoans will invariably answer that it is because it is 'unseemly' (*matagā),* 'shameful' (*mā),* 'bad' (*leaga*). Thus, it seems that intra-village marriage is condemned in terms that denote the unseemliness caused *once the act has been committed*, implying that the problem has more to do with the consequences of such a union within the community.

Sex and Gender

Indeed the consequences of village endogamy are heavy. The main consequence is a considerable loss of status for the wife (and consequently, but in part, for the husband as well), as the woman is no longer a "sister" in the village. In order to be able to appreciate this, the status groups that make up a village need to be clearly understood. At this stage, a further surprise emerges, not because of any apparent contradiction between the data gathered, but because of a discrepancy between observations in the villages and anthropological literature on this issue. Most of these claim that village organisation is based on divided spheres of responsibility between men and woman (Mead 1930: 31; Shore 1982: 98). They misunderstand the metaphorical terms "*nu'u o ali'i*" and "*nu'u o tama'ita'i* " to refer to the "village of men" and the "village of women" instead of the more approximately and contextually correct gloss; "village of fathers/brothers/sons" and "village of sisters/daughters" (but see the critiques by Schoeffel 1978a,b, 1979—who was the first scholar to explain that the male-female division derives from the sister and brother's complementary roles rather than the husband and wife's—by Aiono 1984b and Tcherkezoff 1993, 2003: 459-468).

The observer is up against a difficulty in Sāmoa that the region's anthropology has seriously underestimated or simply ignored (with the exception of Schoeffel, *op.cit.* and 1995, 2011, 2014) because of a massive Western bias. To the Western mind, the "man/woman" differentiation is the broadest "gender opposition" and includes all other more specific differentiations, such as husband/wife, brother/sister, son/daughter, etc. We begin to understand the history of that Western illusion, deeply entrenched within contemporary gender studies, which is itself a consequence of the even broader Western analytical tradition based on the tool of dualistic complementary oppositions (see Thery 2007, 2008; Downs 2009; Tcherkezoff 1987, 1994, 2008b, 2011, 2014). In Sāmoan studies, Shore (1982) is a classic example, where the pseudo-dualism of Sāmoan gender is integrated into an even more general social and cosmological dualism. The book became widely read, being the first study of Sāmoan social structure since Mead (1930), while the more accurate view presented by Schoeffel in her unpublished Ph.D of 1979 remained known only to some specialists.

In Sāmoan language and values, however, the gender distinction (in the Western sense) is narrowed down to sexual relationships: the male and female united by sexual intercourse, whether actual or potential. The brother/sister distinction, however, is defined in terms of 'kinship' (*'āīga*) 'genealogy' (*gafa, āugānofo*). In Sāmoa, these two types of membership are viewed as being opposed to each other or, at least, as two views of mankind that must be kept apart. The sex/gender distinctions of 'male/masculine' and 'female/feminine' are both understood in Sāmoan to carry the implication of sex and reproduction; a person is either male or female, which speaks of a world

modelled on animals, on 'living creatures' (*meaola)*, in which all actions are said to be 'nocturnal' (*fa'apōuliuli)* and therefore also unseemly, shameful or bad like everything associated with the 'night' (*pō*) as a cosmological element. A person, however, lives in a village because he belongs to a family and, therefore, to a genealogy. That makes everyone a 'child', a 'child of a family' (*tama o le 'āīga*) and places him among children, where everyone is a brother or sister. All that is on the side of 'light' (*āo*). This extends to the village level. People are brothers or sisters not just within a family *'āīga*, but also through 'custom' (*āganu'u;* literally the essence [*āga*] of village-community [*nu'u*]). The man/woman or male/female distinction, in its restricted form of gender difference and belonging to the 'living creatures' *meaola*, is maintained outside the village. In contrast the brother-sister distinction is operative within village relationship. In summary, this is the answer to the apparent enigma of the condemnation of intra-village marriage.

Sāmoa and its Social Organisation

Sāmoan Custom

The broadest notion is 'Sāmoan custom' (*āganu'u fa'asāmoa)*, shortened to *fa'asāmoa*: rules of greetings, invitations, obligations and prohibitions. One notices that greetings and ways of showing one's identity always have the same reference points: on one hand, the village name and, on the other, the family name or "title" (*suāfa matai*). Once these names have been exchanged, host and visitor know how to establish a mutual 'respect' relationship (*fa'aāloālo*)—where to sit in the home, whom to serve first at a meal and which lexical register to be used when talking to each other (there are often two or even three different ways to say "please come in, sit down etc.", depending on the status of the person invited). In Sāmoa, all public or just visible interaction (a reference to the village, home and "light"—that is, daytime or around a kerosene lamp or electric light in the home at night) is asymmetrical, involves "respect" and requires everyone to know more or less how to assess his or her own status with regard to others.

There are two orders of chiefs (*matai*); those classed as *ali'i* are addressed with certain honorifics, and preside at meetings where they remain seated, eat lightly and drink tea in small cups, all of which are signs, not of weakness, but of greater sacredness. Few words and gestures are needed, as the authority represented by these chiefs is great. Those of highest rank have the final say when a matter is discussed. Other *matai*, known as *tulāfale* or *failāūga*, (orators), speak more, make their speeches standing, eat more at meetings and feasts, and their genealogies generally spring from those of *ali'i* chiefs. Overall, *tulāfale* are vested with less sacredness than *ali'i,* but, in a given locality, a *tulāfale-ali'i* title may have a greater rank than all the *ali'i* present (Shore 1982; Tcherkezoff 2000a, b).

Respect is assessed once the village and *'āīga* names are known. They apply throughout the island group and everyone agrees that all family names could ideally be classified in hierarchical order, but of course there is no agreement on the ranked order of such a hierarchy. In approximate terms however, knowledgeable people immediately assign a rank to a name on hearing, deeming it "very great", "great" or "small". At island-group level, the hierarchy is relatively ill defined and sometimes quite controversial. There is also a distinction between the western islands of the Sāmoa archipelago that have constituted the independent state of Sāmoa since 1962 and the eastern islands (American Sāmoa). In the latter, the ancient hierarchy was quite clear (19th century accounts

and legends all cite Tui Manua, but the administrators of American Sāmoa abolished the title in the early 20th century). Later, customary law there has been to a large extent codified under American law, whereas in (Western) Sāmoa this has only been done to a very limited extent (Va'ai 1999) and no foreign power was ever able to abolish any titles. In Sāmoa, the finer details are unclear, as there are several thousand *'āīga* names, but clear in terms of major areas. There are ten or twenty "very great names" that everybody knows, even youngsters. Otherwise, one has to come down to district and even more to village level to find names that are well known to all and constitute a more specific hierarchy. The 'district' (*itūmālō*) is an ancient notion from the times of wars (etymologically "the winning [*mālō*] side [*itū*]"), and thus its boundaries sometimes changed through war or alliances prior to European contact. Since independence, the country has been divided into more districts for electoral purposes, with each district sending a representative to the national Parliament. (Tcherkezoff 1998, 2003: 211-274, 2008a: 285–292; Meleisea *et. al*. 2015).

Most social interaction takes place at village level, however, where hierarchy is clear. Every time the various family heads (their *matai*) gather, they have to know where to sit and when it is their turn to speak and take the '*ava* (kava, the ceremonial drink when only one person drinks at a time). The *nu'u* is a fundamental concept contained in the word for "country" as evidenced when referring to Sāmoa (or American Sāmoa or any other social and political entity in the world mentioned on local television or the press): it is *ātunu'u*, which literally means "a chain (*ātu*) of communities, villages or polities (*nu'u*)". Also, as already mentioned, the word for 'custom' as used when Sāmoans talk about their lifestyle, is *āganu'u fa'asāmoa*, meaning literally "the essence (*āga*) of *nu'u* life in the Sāmoan way". A social human is a human that lives in a *nu'u*.

The *'Āīga* and Matai, Gender and Status

The village is a 'sacred circle' of family names. The local and extended family (*'āīga)* is defined by at least one such founding name (*suāfa matai*), which is passed on by ritual bestowal and kept by each generation. The duty of bearing this title is called *matai* (Sāmoan chiefs were called, as elsewhere in Polynesia, *ali'i*, while *matai* were household heads; during the 19th century, a partial levelling occurred [Tcherkezoff 2000a, b]). All families have a *matai,* or chief, who represents an ancestor, and all family members are said to be "children" of the *matai*. The *matai* is said to be everyone's "father", which should not be all that surprising as, in a way, he is the embodiment of the founding ancestor. When the *matai* invested with the founding name passes away, another is chosen*.*

Anyone who can claim (and convince others) that he or she has a genealogical link to a founding ancestor (or any of his descendants who had born the ancestral title) is thus 'related' to the family and therefore potentially an heir (*suli*) to its title. All Sāmoans are linked through such links to many families through a very extensive cognatic and genealogical memory stretching back four to ten (in some cases over twenty) generations. In order to maintain an effective link, however, a Sāmoan must take active part in work required for ceremonial exchanges with other families, such as at weddings and funerals, and in major discussions, like those held for choosing someone new to ceremonially bear the founding title. Membership of a family is demonstrated by being able to show a connection to one of the past *matai*, whether through the male or female line, adoption or marriage (if a relation-by-marriage has received a 'founding' name through their spouse). This means that the genealogy of *'āīga*, in terms of its full extent, essentially consists of a line of *matai* (a

dynasty known as *āugānofo*), each of them bearing the same title as a first name, followed by the person's individual name that they had prior to being invested with the ancestral name.

The founding ancestor is usually a man and most *matai* are men. This observation opens a wide discussion. Firstly, there is a dimension that cannot be fully developed here, but which is essential to family organisation. When the whole family gathers for an important decision, especially choosing a new chief, it can (and some Sāmoans believe it still should) break up into two groups: the *tamatāne*, or descendants of the founding member's brothers or sons who are entitled to bear the founding name; and the *tamafafine*, or descendants of the founders' sisters or daughters who are not supposed to covet the title but who "know" by mystical means the right choice because they enjoy special communication with the origins, the divine and ancestral realm. Today, such a division is much less common, and families are simply made up of sub-lineages descended from both sisters and brothers who vie on a similar footing to bear the name. Although the younger generation now often do not even know the terms for these two groups, this division, well attested to in the nineteenth–early twentieth century, is still practised in some 'great' families and known to older people. Again, very few authors have pointed to that system (Schoeffel 1979 and, recently, Latai 2014: 305, n. 13), while it has been misunderstood by Mead (1930) and Shore (1982).

This *tamatāne/tamafafine* dimension touches upon the much debated issue of gender. What may seem to be gender roles must be understood from that encompassing level. *Tamafafine* and *tamatāne* are groups made of both sexes. The *tamafafine* represent the mystical knowledge; the *tamatāne* are there to "to hold authority" (*faipule*), but under the peace-making, mystical guidance of the *tamafafine*. Both groups are made of both sexes, but among *tamafafine*, women of high status (*sa'otama'ita'i*: see *infra*) usually take precedence, mostly embodying the qualities of the *tamafafine*. Conversely, among the *tamatāne*, men closely related to the title and having shown "strength" in doing "service" to the community mostly embody the qualities of the *tamatāne*. Thus, if most *matai* are men, it is not because of a Sāmoan expectation that holding power is an attribute of the male gender, but because it is an attribute of the *tamatāne* and it is within the *tamatāne* that a man seems more appropriate to carry the burden of power—but a woman can very well be chosen. The whole gender distinction (in Western terms) is an encompassed level of a broader (encompassing) distinction where the two terms are not the man and woman, male and female, but are the brother(s) and the sister(s) from whom *tamatāne* and *tamafafine* groups are born.

Of course, when this ancient distinction is forgotten or erroneously understood as a distinction between a "male line" and a "female line", the social roles of each side is reduced to a question of gender and opens the contemporary discussions about "male domination" in the *matai* system, and the justified call for more women to take the *matai* role. Now that contemporary Sāmoans often ignore the former sacredness of the *tamafafine* and the former sacredness of the ladies as sisters *feagaiga* within the *tamafafine*, now that there is only one coveted position, that is "to be a *matai*" and holding the 'power' *pule* attached to it, then the non-access of women to *matai* positions is seen as an "inequality". That inequality is wrongly attributed to some pseudo traditional Sāmoan custom that would have valorised the maleness in the position of chief since immemorial times.

As an "inequality", it must be redressed, in the name of human rights and gender equality. Hence the demand for women to be able to access to *matai* positions is upheld by many women and, gradually, more and more men. Of course, a number of *matai* (men) then fear that one day

women could be a majority in the village chiefs council (the percentages today are still very far from that vision—see below). With that fearful vision in mind, some villages enacted a decree (by the council of chiefs, of course) forbidding women to become *matai* in any family *'āiga* of the village. Of course, as this is now seen as extremely conservative, for non-acceptable reasons ("male domination"), those villages gradually lift that ban. More villages (that is: again a decision by the council of chiefs *matai*) limited their move in not allowing female *matai* to take part in the village council; thus, whatever is the policy within families of that village to bestow or not titles on women, at least the main seat of power (as it is seen now), that is the council of chiefs, will stay an all-male council. A detailed survey was recently done by the Centre for Sāmoan Studies and led to a report on « Women's political participation in Sāmoa » which contains not only important statistical data but important sociological-anthropological analyses (Meleisea *et al.* 2015). Between 18 and 30 percent only of all villages have decreed one at least of the two modes of barring women to access *matai* roles (*ibid.:* 28). Nonetheless, women *matai* are still only 9 percent of the total number of *matai* registered, and the aforementioned survey found the percentage drops to 5.5 percent if one considers only "village-based *matai*" (excluding the town and overseas).

The entire island group is organised around a stock of founding titles. The stock is renewed and grows, as each *matai* may, if the family agrees, create secondary founding titles, which implies that he allocates them with accompanying land. Sāmoa's overall history is also presented in these terms. The gods came together with the first mortal humans (of course created by the supreme god Tagaloa) and created name-founding ancestors. These forebears in turn allocated names and land to some of their relatives, often for services rendered in local wars. For our purposes, however, the relevant factors are that all Sāmoans define their place in the world in terms of their link to a given founding title and that all such titles have a hierarchical order. This order is ill defined in the larger geographical areas, but much clearer at district and, especially, village level.

The ethnographic literature on Sāmoa talks of 'titles' when referring to these names, and 'chiefs' (or 'titled men') to refer to the *matai*—the person in each family that has been invested with the name. The 'title' concept encapsulates both essential factors—the perpetually bequeathed founding name and the name's rank in relation to the other names. It should be emphasised, however, that all Sāmoan *'āiga* have titles. Not having titles in families would be unthinkable, as an *'āiga* is a group that could be described as a type of ancestor-cult group where descendants strive to preserve the founding name. Thus all Sāmoan families are, by definition, 'chiefly' families. Here lies a gross error that observers made, including official UN commissioners who came to Sāmoa in the 1950s for preparing independence. All viewed the Sāmoan society as a class system in Western ways ("nobles/commoners"). We can understand how shocked they were when, viewing the society from this vantage point, and hearing that nearly everyone wished to have only the *matai* (but the word in English was "the chiefs") to be candidates for future parliamentarian seats, they lamented that Sāmoan society is still under the power of the "nobles" (Tcherkezoff 2000c: 181-183, 2003: 231-238, 2008a: 285-292). Even if they could not reverse this majority, they made their best to pass on to the UN nominated legal advisers (advisers for "helping" drafting the future Constitution) the message that the constitutional text should allow for future amendments "towards democracy". This was to have far-reaching consequences in shaping the political scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the well-known 1990 "referendum" in favour of a universal suffrage for Parliamentarian elections (at least for the voters; candidacy remained restricted to the *matai*).

The *matai* is merely the head of a family and there are as many *matai* as there are families. All senior family members choose their title holder; no rules of primogeniture or lineage preference necessarily apply. Individual aptitude is much more important and an heir (*suli*) may become ineligible to bear the founding title for inappropriate conduct. All the adults of an *'āīga* choose their matai, but they may also withdraw their support. The office of *matai* requires 'dignity' (*mamalu*) and the person's 'nature' (*āga*) and 'behaviour' (*āmio*) must befit the ancestral name he bears as a title and uphold the dignity of the ancestor that 'lives' (*ola*) inside him. From the moment he is invested, it becomes his day-to-day name, even to his children. In each generation, one of the founding ancestor's descendants must be invested with the founding name, which thus becomes a kind of title. The invested person is the receptacle of the ancestor's 'essence' *agāga* (in Christian times it became the word for "soul") and the ancestor's 'dignity' (*mamalu*). As such, he becomes the family's *matai*. It is significant that one of the ceremonial names used for the *matai* office is "the god here below" (*o le atua o lalonei*) an enduring reference to pre-Christian beliefs. The translation with 'god' is of course misleading and is used here only for sake of brevity. Even if, today, the word *Atua* is used only for the Christian God, apart from ancient frozen expressions as the one we quoted for the chiefs, it was applying to all superhuman forms, forces, objects coming from this superhuman realm, etc. (for a discussion on this pan-Polynesian notion of *atua* and the Western misunderstandings of it, see Tcherkezoff 2008c: 115-131). The name-founding ancestors were gods or, often, demigods from a union between a god and a mortal. The other founding ancestors were born to these first ancestors and received a name and land from them as a reward for their support during a war. In other words, all founding ancestors have some sacred authority. A *matai* is a living receptacle of such antique authority.

Exogamy

At first sight, it would appear that the exogamy rule in Sāmoa clearly refers to the concept of *'āīga*, whereby nobody is to marry anyone claiming to belong to the same *'āīga* (whether or not they live in the same village). Those who do are in the Sāmoan sense (although not necessarily in the criminal sense) committing incest (*māta'ifale*)—which literally translates as "facing inwards in the house". The reference is to the house (*fale*), which, as a concept, also defines the *'āīga*. (see Fox 1993; Lévi-Strauss 1984; Macdonald 1987). The *'āīga* link that rules out marriage is, however, understood in differing ways. It is said to be a "close" link but, on investigation, it appears that there are different levels of "closeness".

The most straightforward category is exemplified by two individuals belonging to two small *'āīga* (small in status terms, that is, with short genealogies). Their genealogies *gafa* do not 'meet' (*faiā*) and they can, therefore, marry. Shore (1976: 278) cites a young man who felt that, since he had never seen a particular young woman or her nuclear family before, three degrees were sufficient distance for him to marry her. There was no question of incest as, even though the couple's maternal grandmothers were first cousins, the respective families were not part of the same exchange or family meeting network. The fact that there could be, in another family *'āīga*, another single genealogy containing the origin of both the family titles involved is not a problem, as such knowledge belongs to the *'āīga* kin network of another title, that is, the original name in the genealogy, in the history of which two names were created in different generations. Any title-holder *matai* (who is also a land custodian) can create another name, which will also be a founding title, at

least if the holder gives land to the new name-bearer. A new *'āīga* then begins. At some other time, another founding name is similarly created. These two *'āīga* are "related" within the genealogy of the person creating the name, but soon cease to be related to each other (beyond the fourth or fifth degree and, more precisely, once ceremonial gift-exchanges with the original family have become few and far between). The history of a founding name, when told in descending order through the generations, stops at points where descendants obtained a name that in turn played a founding role. A name has a founding effect and becomes a title when associated with land that was either conquered or given (or received from the gods). A name therefore becomes a 'title' (*suāfa matai*) because of its sacred origin, or because it was created by another bearer of another founding name who gave land.

The other category is exemplified by two individuals belonging to a 'great' *'āīga,* in the sense of a lineage to its maximal extent*.* Genealogies (*gafa*) go back a long way and specify the links made by marriage, so there is nearly always a connection between the two people if the investigation is taken far enough back. Marriage seems to be allowed more or less beyond the fifth degree but the limit for allowing marriage is based on frequency of common ceremonial cooperation. Ideally marriages should be made with a view to maximising the breadth of affinal connections that an *'āīga* can draw upon for ceremonial exchanges. If the young people live in different villages and their families do not see much of each other, even though they know they are related, and if the mutual assistance with ceremonial gift-giving exchanges is minimal, because both families have set up networks with relatives that do not overlap much, the marriage is not really a problem. Beyond that, it is a matter of political manoeuvring, as great title issues are also a question of national politics. Criticism will soon be levelled at the couple if, for political or other reasons, they arouse bitterness, resentment, envy or jealousy. People in the upper political or status level will start grumbling about them along the lines of: "How can they claim to be standing for our traditional values when they didn't hesitate to violate them by getting married to each other? You know, they were cousins" (Sāmoans refer in English to relatives of the same generation as themselves as "cousins" between whom marriage is "incestuous"). On the other hand, if the related couple do not make any enemies, the idea of incest will not cross anyone's mind. Once again, the background is Polynesian with its relational notions of kinship-and-status. In the past as in the region's contemporary nation states, kinship and politics are inseparable.

Matai and Nu'u

This examination of the rules of exogamy between *'āīga* social organisation is, however, incomplete, as there is also the notion of the village which is the basis, as previously explained, for defining the concept of country and custom. This notion responds to two needs.

The first need relates to the hierarchy of family names or "titles". Because names are titles, because their value varies according to their antiquity and because a genealogy's length only makes sense when compared with others, a name's rank has to be visible and, therefore, acquire substance by interacting with other names. The country and district are both too large for day-to-day interaction. It is, therefore, the village that provides the basis. A village consists of a number of families (with a great variety, from 10 to 40 or more), as their representatives, their *matai* meet to deal with issues affecting the community.

The second need is the connection with the land. The name of a founding ancestor, which defines the family, is not handed down as a title and does not lead to a new family unless there is land attached to the name as its 'home' (*nofo*). Family meetings are held in the land's 'great house' (*faletele*) and, although this rule is usually ignored today, the person chosen to bear the founding name is supposed to live on the land (or settle on it, if he lived elsewhere). He also becomes the custodian of the land, in fact, of the whole 'house' in the sociological sense of the term, that is, the name, land and houses built on it, as people settle there or are adopted. Any family member may settle on this land. If they subsequently leave, they do not lose their family membership, which they held before coming, as long as they demonstrate their connection through their 'service' (*tautua*) to the name, by contributing to ceremonial exchanges (*fa'alavelave*) or its other collective needs. *'Āīga* are therefore organised around the inheritance of a name and its associated land and ancestral authority. In this sense they are comparable to the "houses" of European historical nobility, with the previously stated proviso that, in Sāmoa, all families are "noble".

A family name, which can only be handed down as a title if it is attached to land, draws its status from its rank within the "sacred circle" of titles that define the village's history and in which the ages of the various genealogies are compared. The village is therefore defined as a circle of families, although there are other terms that refer to the merely geographical location that makes up a village. This circle is part of the definition of an *'āīga*, as a family cannot exist unless it belongs to a village and land is always village land. We can thus understand why banishment from a village was and is the supreme penalty in the customary judicial system in Sāmoa (Tcherkezoff 2003: 113-114, 133, 225, 249-253; 2008a: 258-259, 264, 282, 289; Iati 2009: 16–17).

A village is thus a circle of territorial ancestor names and of locations where the descendants live; these names have become family names. Each ancestor founded a name and identified a plot of land. The title's land always belongs to a village and all the titles make up the village's foundation. The title's "home" is a ceremonial house located on the land and each of these houses has a special name. As a genealogical identifier, however, the title is recognised throughout the country. People living in other villages can claim they are connected to the title. All the living and deceased descendants of a founding ancestor comprise an *'āīga,* which may also include members by adoption. Those who marry into an *'āīga* (because of the strong tendency of marrying to another village that one's own) may in certain circumstances be counted metaphorically as *'āīga*, as, for example, when a man is given at title by his wife's family. Part of this *'āīga* lives on its ancestral land, whilst other members live elsewhere by personal choice because anyone can decide to go and live with relatives elsewhere, or migrate overseas.

Within the village, a family is a house in the sociological sense. It is based on the mnemonic and ceremonial preservation of a founding name (often accompanied by secondary names belonging to the main ancestor's close relatives) with his/their ancestral authority, and associated with land. The land is an everlasting heritage, for which households only enjoy a life tenancy. It "belongs" only to the founding ancestors of the *'āīga* and the living are merely "children of the land". The land cannot be sold; land classified as *'āīga* land is not freehold. Sāmoa is famous for having preserved 80 percent of the country as "customary" land despite the colonial period. A further 16 percent of the country is State land (previously seized under German colonisation early this century and then frozen under the 1920–1965 New Zealand Mandate); the rest is private freehold land for Sāmoan citizens only and was originally "bought" in the 19th century by foreigners and subsequently

recognised by successive administrative powers (Tcherkezoff 2008a: 280-284; 2003: 107–152). But since the mid-1990s, there are attempts by the Sāmoan government and foreign "experts" on development to introduce some part of private-individual registration, in order to comply with demands by foreign investors, and recent legislation already permits the leasing of customary land (see Meleisea 1987, Tcherkezoff 2003: 107–152, 225, 249–253; 2008a: 280–289; Iati 2007, 2009, 2010: 191–192, 199–200; Meleisea and Schoeffel 2015).

Membership is not only passed on by unilineal descent; as stated earlier, but also by being a relative connected by any kinship pathway, through male or female links, to a current or past *matai*. There is also an extended use of adoption and, as previously noted; even a relative by marriage can receive a secondary founding name. Sāmoans use *'āīga* more often than *fale* to refer to this set of people. The word *fale* when referring to the human group rather than the building (the same dual meaning exists in Sāmoa as under France's *ancien régime*) is used, in its widest sense, to mean the whole line of *matai* (or non-unilineal descent group) and, in its narrowest sense, to mean all a couple's descendants. The fact that it is a "house" in the sociological sense, however, is essential. The link with the land necessarily places these "houses" within a specific social unit: the *nu'u*. As previously described, this is much more than a mere geographical collection of houses. It is a social unit. Therefore, this calls for an examination of the groups that are organised and brought together to form the village, especially that these groups are also referred to as "*nu'u*", as "circles" or sub-communities within the community.

Village Organisation

The Nu'u of Matai ("Chiefs")

The observer of interactions beyond the *'āīga* first comes across the concept of *fono*. The word means 'meeting' and can refer to any kind of meeting when followed by the name of the group concerned. When used on its own, however, a Sāmoan immediately thinks of the meeting of *matai* in a village. The *fono* is the council of *matai* or the "village council". The *matai* regularly meet and make decisions affecting village life; these can be initiatives for economic cooperation, to allocate fundraising tasks to each family, to prepare a *malaga* (a visit to another village or hosting of another village), to help organise weddings or funerals associated with the great titles of the village, or its church ministers, discussing messages or orders from the central government, or deciding punishments.

The extent to which the village rather than the *'āīga* is the custodian of 'custom' should be emphasised. Any breach of a prohibition, even between members of a single *'āīga*, can result in a punishment decided upon collectively. Apart from very special cases, such as proven incest, the most common offences are breaches of 'respect'. These can vary from collective cases (a member of family A insults the *matai* of family B) to individual offences, as when a young woman weeding in her garden is too skimpily clad (wearing shorts instead of a *lāvalāva*) and is noticed by the chief of another family. Other offences are instances of failure to comply with communal obligations, such as fundraising drives. Punishments range from small fines (in cash, tinned food or taro) to exile from the village. An expulsion can apply to an individual or a group, all of it or part of it (see references above). The land still belongs to the expelled family but the right to live on it remains subject to a collective village decision. No family can oppose the expulsion of any of its members. If the whole

family is exiled, other members of the same *'āīga* may come from another village and occupy the land. In this land rule, it can be seen how family is closely intertwined with village. The village is not simply a collection of families or separate units. It is the families' 'sacred circle' and, as such, a higher sphere of authority.

As in all meetings in Sāmoa, the *matai* meet in a circle at their *fono*. It is literally a "circle of chiefs". Like all meetings, it takes place in a house, the "great house" of a "great" family in the village (if there is a family that, by the genealogy of its name, far outranks all the others), but more often than not, the various great houses of the prominent families host the meetings in turn. The building is often round, but if it is oval or rectangular, as is sometimes the case, the seating order is the same. The family chiefs sit with their backs against the posts located along the house perimeter. The houses have no walls and are made up of a base on which posts arranged in a circle, or in oval or rectangle shape, supports the roof edges. A clear hierarchy is attributed to the posts. Without going into details, there are always 'four sides', already ranked, and within each side, order starts from the middle post and goes down on both sides, until reaching the next 'side'.

The result has two effects. Everyone sits at a place that has a different rank, but in the same circle facing the same centre. Everyone will speak (and drink the ceremonial kava), but in an order reflecting this hierarchy. Although the hierarchy appears to be fixed, it may be manipulated, for example if someone (either subtly or crudely) tries to show that he is not seated in a place befitting his status, or if he manages to give the impression that his speech is more convincing than those of others, or if he speaks before his turn. These breaches of protocol may earn his audience's admiration, thereby dispelling the irritation caused by his intrusion. By such actions he will try to magnify his status. Manoeuvres such as these may have been backed up by generosity displayed by his *'āīga* at ceremonial exchanges within the village or between his village and those of others, and by such efforts he may enable his *'āīga* to advance a claim that their genealogy goes back further than is commonly admitted. If he is convincing, the status of his *'āīga* in the village could change in over time.

At each meeting, then, circle of *matai* reveals a hierarchy among *matai* of the various *'āīga* and therefore a hierarchy among family titles. All meetings are held in an open traditional house without walls, with the whole village able to see and listen to the proceedings from outside. The hierarchy is therefore regularly displayed. It determines the order operating in other groups taking part in communal village life, which is discussed below.

Finally, Sāmoans have different ways of referring to the circle of chiefs in their conversation or ceremonial rhetoric. It can be just 'the *fono*', or more explicitly 'the *fono* of *matai*', or 'sacred circle' (*o le alofi sā*). As previously stated, the *matai*, the family heads invested with the title of the family, can be ceremonially referred to as "the gods here below" (*o atua o lalonei*) and this hallowed description is used for the *matai* of the *nu'u* collectively, or as it is often put, "the village of chiefs" (*o le nu'u o matai*). Thus, just like the whole village is the *nu'u*, the *fono* of the *matai* is itself metaphorically called a *nu'u*. In light of discussions above and to follow, let us note from the start that *matai* can be men or women, even if much more rarely women than men, and that, before the recent times of the last 20–30 years, their role is not primarily defined by their gender.

The Nu'u of Taulele'a ("Servers")

When the *fono* of *matai* make a decision, those who carry it out are the *aumāga*: the men living in the village who are not *matai*. They may cultivate common garden, repair buildings or, when there is a crisis, may act as police (for example, to force a recalcitrant family to comply with a decision). In Sāmoa, the standard police force used to operate only in the capital. It only intervened in a village if requested to by a member of the public or the council of chiefs. Such a request was always seen as shameful for the village, because, as visitors are told, "The real police in Sāmoa are the *matai* and the whole *fa'amatai*" ('the way of *matai' fa'amatai* is the whole system generated by the hierarchy of family titles borne by the *matai*). The men are also required to cook and serve food to the chiefs' circle. All their tasks are a 'service' (*tautua*) to the chiefs and the community: I shall say 'servers'.

They are known as *taulele'a* (singular form is *taule'ale'a*). The likely origin meaning of the term is 'those who prepare or look after (*tau*) the kava for the chiefs' and part of the preparation was chewing the roots before mixing with water (an ancient practice now abandoned). This etymology is usually unknown and may seem surprising to many, in Sāmoa or viewed from other parts of Polynesia, like Tahiti (see *infra*). The name *le'a* is ceremonial, while the ordinary term for kava is *'ava*. One of several examples is a *solo*, where mention is made of the wish to drink the *le'a* (*lo'u fia inu le'a*) and the words are followed by, "Behold these houses [where] the young girls' (*teine*) and *taule'ale'a* groups are (*le galu teine ma le galu taule'ale'a*), those who are in yonder houses to chew kava for the chiefs" (*se'i latou māiā ai se 'ava o i fale na se'i taumafa ane ali'i* (Moyle 1988: 176; see Pratt's Dictionary 1960: 177). Aiono (1984a: 25) and Le Tagaloa (1991: 34, 44) consider the etymology certain. Also, the *taulele'a* group's ceremonial name, *aumāga,* points to the same reference (the group of those [*au*] who chew [*ma* + *āga* as a nominalisation suffix]).

The word is well known in Eastern Polynesia (*taure'are'a*, see Grépin 2001, Levy 1970) and Sāmoan linguistics can bring some light. In French Polynesia today the term means "adolescence" for both sexes and "adolescents" for boys only. An etymology cited both locally and in anthropological literature suggests that the word means "time (*tau*) for fun (*'arearea*)" (Langevin 1990:68, quoted by Grépin *op. cit.*, p. 82), wrongly conflating two words. Indeed, in Sāmoan, *lealea* 'go and show off to have fun' (an uncommon word not listed by Pratt 1960 or Milner 1966, but spontaneously given to me by an informant—an angry mother asking her daughter where she had been) and *le'a* are two different words. But in Tahiti, the idea of the service through preparing the kava has been lost.

The difference between the Tahitian notion of fun and adolescence for both genders and the Sāmoan concept of *'*kava people' doing 'service' confined to males, is further evidence of the oft-noted difference between the two cultural areas in their general depiction of gender difference. In Sāmoa, the brother/sister differentiation depicts the brother as being on his way to a title, from *taule'ale'a* to *matai*, with one of the services required being kava preparation. In contemporary Tahiti, the man/woman relationship unites both genders much more. With the changes of the last century in Tahiti, such as the disappearance of kava drinking rituals, male tattooing and chiefly titles in general, the notion of *taurearea* is referred to very differently and I would make the hypothesis that the word was artificially reconstructed to fit with the new outlook on life and came to mean "(fun during) adolescence".

The duties assigned to the servers are known as 'providing service' *tautua*, and those who provide these kinds of service belong to the 'servers' circle'. As Sāmoans conceive it, to provide *tautua* is not only an honour, but also a means of advancement, as indicated by the saying "service is

the way to power" *(ala i le pule le tautua)*, in the sense of chiefly authority. To become a *matai*, one must first be a *taule'ale'a*. All accounts indicate that, in the past, every young man joined this group at puberty after undergoing the tattooing initiation rite. Those who later became *matai* had to have been through this stage. Older informers clearly state that in the past it would have been unseemly and shameful to become a *matai* without first being tattooed and doing service. Some, of course, remain *taulele'a* all their lives, as one out of ten in the population of Sāmoa becomes a *matai* (based on figures of the 1980s: approximately 15 000 chiefs for a population of 160 000 in Western Sāmoa at the time). As the vast majority of *matai* are men, one out of five *taule'ale'a* will eventually become a *matai*. The *taulele'a* once served the whole village as its armed force and today they are still collectively known as the "strength of the village" (*o le mālosi o le nu'u*).

Today a person is still regarded as a child until leaving school. Those who go on to the end of junior secondary school and those who win a place in the National University of Sāmoa, or a scholarship to study overseas become *taule'ale'a* after they graduate. Sometimes, the kudos that comes with a qualification, particularly if it leads to a well-paid job, prompts the family to make the young adult a *matai* without first doing communal service. They give him a secondary title name or they split the founding name (the founding name can be split up and given to several people simultaneously or otherwise). *'āīga* with "great" names hardly ever do this, but those of medium-rank often do. The practice of splitting the name, that is bestowing it on more than one head, was recorded early last century (Meleisea 1987). Nowadays the same name could be represented by a man who stays in the village and also by one or more of his brothers or close kinsmen who had moved to town or emigrated and was valued for his remittances, as they contributed to ceremonial exchanges which enabled families to maintain their rank.

When the *taulele'a* meet to plan and allocate the tasks assigned to them, they sit in a circle in one of the houses, just like the chiefs, and the seating arrangement mirrors the rank structure of the *fono*, in this way, the son of the highest ranking *matai ali'i* of the village is deferred to as the leader of the *aumāga* (*sa'o'aumāga*).   Their meeting is known as the *fono* of the *taulele'a* or, to metaphorically and ceremonially designate the group, the "*nu'u* of the *taulele'a*" (*o le nu'u o taulele'a*). Just like the whole village, the servers' group on its own is called a *nu'u*. Its members are only men.

Gender, Sex, Affinity, Residence and Social Status

Gendered Conventions:

We have encountered the 'village' of the chiefs and the 'village' of the servers. Western observers need to resist temptation to think that it is the "men's groups" that have been studied so far. It is true that the two groups account for the village's entire adult male population. However, it would be false to assume that Sāmoans think of this category as representing a single-sex or even gender-exclusive whole. Neither of the two words meaning 'men' in general (*tane* or *tamāloa*) are used to refer to these two groups together. While *taulele'a* are always men, the same is not true of the *matai* who may be women (however recent research, Leasiolagi (Meleisea) *et.al.* 2015, shows that of all village-based *matai*, only about five per cent are women and a number of *nu'u* do not recognise *matai* titles when the holder is a woman—see the last section of this paper). Where an *'āīga* chooses a woman to bear their title, if their village has no rule preventing it, she is recognised as a *matai* and receives all the courtesies and privileges that accompany the status of her title. However many

women *matai* choose not to take their place in the circle of chiefs, feeling that they would be unwelcome there (*ibid*.)

Affinity and Residence:

The case of chiefs and servers who came to live in their wife's village is now examined. To begin with *matai*, among those sitting in the circle of chiefs, there may be, occasionally, a husband of one of the daughters of an *'āīga* of the *nu'u*. He will be a man who came to live in his wife's family and who was chosen by her *'āīga* to bear their title (or rather one of its secondary founding titles). In such cases, the man always comes from another village and often from a family that does not have a 'great' title (but who may be chosen in future to hold a title of his own *'āīga*). He may hope that his wife's family will improve his prospects, even if it means living with his wife in her family's village and on its land. His wife's family may even prefer him to bear the name over other candidates, if he has good qualities, whether traditional (as a hard working gardener, good at public speaking) and/or modern (as a senior public servant or has another well paid job). The family may grant him a secondary title that it holds, so that the man can sit in the *fono* and lend extra weight to the interests of his wife's senior *matai* and her *'āīga*. Some *'āīga* have several founding ancestor names from secondary lineages. In addition, the senior *matai* of the *'āīga* (its *sa'o*) may, in certain circumstances, create a new, secondary *matai* title and grant it with the consent of the *'āīga*.

A man honoured in this is not distinguished formally from the other *matai*, even if, privately, people may mention to outsiders that he resides uxorilocally; in Sāmoan terminology he is a *faiāvā* (*fai* = make, *āvā* = wife). That is the general term that identifies men who came to live in their wife's village. Let us note that, when this man goes back to his own village and family, he may not be considered to be a *matai* there and would therefore join the *aumāga* that he belonged to before he married, went to live in his wife's village and got a *matai* title there.

Among *matai* who sit in the *fono* and who came from elsewhere as in-marrying husbands, there can be another type. He has a high title in his own family; he did not receive a title from his wife's family. He is thus not a *matai* in his wife's village, but is nevertheless at home there and the host village allows him to sit on the chiefs' council, particularly if his name is relatively 'great'. When decisions need to be made on village matters, his opinion counts as advice (*fautuāga*), but not authority (*pule*). I have, however, seen one such man who had become a central figure in his host village because of his public speaking abilities and knowledge of the country's major genealogies. There are also instance of women holding *matai* titles from their own village who settle in their husbands' villages. In these rare instances the husband himself has been a high-ranking *matai*. If the circle of chiefs permits, and if the woman herself accepts the honour, a woman *matai* may sit in the *fono* on an honorary basis. There are probably few, if any, cases of a woman taking a title bestowed by her husband's family.

A second category of men who reside in the village and on the land of their wives, are those without *matai* titles from their own *'āīga* or that of their wife. Such men make this choice for various reasons. Some may hope to acquire a title there; some may have better economic opportunities there. In recent decades men from villages located very far away from the capital will chose to live with their wife if her village is close to town. But there is a heavy price they have to pay in terms of limited authority over his wife, and obligations to sharing household chores. Parents-in-law wield their authority over such a man and from his first day will be expected to do all the chores

performed by the young men in the household, such as cooking, gardening, repairs and serving his wife's parents. Such a husband is not treated any differently to his wife's brothers of the same age or younger. He fully shares the tasks that punctuate the family's home life, in which brothers provide 'service' (*tautua*) to their sisters. In addition, his wife's parents will give him orders in the same terms as their own sons: "Hey! Boy (*sole)*! Go and do the …!" He refers to his mother-in-law as "my mother", and to his father-in-law as "my father". In short, he has become a quasi-junior son of the family, and in the public space, a quasi-younger brother of his wife.

The circles of *matai* and *taulele'a* together account for the entire male population of a village, with the exception of its ministers of religion (who come almost always from outside the village). While this fact may seem insignificant at first glance, it has a major consequence: a male in-law from another village who marries a woman and settles in her village will be integrated into the two existing ceremonial circles that we have discussed, the *fono* or *Nu'u o Matai*, and the *aumāga* or *Nu'u o Taulele'a*. In other words, male affines are at least partly integrated and accommodated in the *nu'u* of their wife.

In sum, there may be permanent male affines in the chiefs' circle or in the servers' circle. But there are no permanent women *matai* members through marriage. It could happen that a woman, a *matai* in her own village, marries a non-*matai* from another village. However, the idea that she might follow her husband to his village struck my informants as preposterous. The other possible scenario – his living in his wife's village where she holds a *matai* title—met with the comment, "Well, if he's long-suffering enough to live in his wife's village, he will of course be in the *taulele'a* circle". The 'long-suffering' comment relates to the fact that the husband would be in the group that serves the village and, therefore, 'serves' the circle of *matai,* which his wife is a member. It is not an issue for a sister to have a higher status than her brother (as traditionally she belongs to the 'side' that was seen as 'communicating with the gods' while her brother 'makes power' by bearing the title or, if he is a server, using 'strength' to 'do service' for the family and village), it is clearly a problem for a wife to have a much higher status than her husband.

Women's Committees:

Since the 1920s, village women's committees have been established throughout Sāmoa and have become a part of village organisation. In the 19th century Protestant missionaries came to Sāmoa as couples and imported gender-segregated teaching and division of labour. Missionaries' wives would gather all the village women—a category that made sense to a Western wife's mind and thus included both the daughters of the village and the wives who had come from other villages—and would teach them together (on this crucial role of missionary wives in Sāmoa, and the whole ensuing transformation of women's role from "sisters" and "covenant keepers" to "women" in the Western sense—that if first of all "wives"—, see Tcherkezoff 2008a: 271–276; Latai 2014, 2015, 2016: 53–77). When the New Zealand administration set up health committees that were managed by women, grouping village women together confirmed the system introduced by the missionaries. Shortly before independence, some local élite groups tried to use this structure as a basis for a true women's movement (see Grattan 1948; Schoeffel 1977, 1978a, 1978b, 1979, 1982; Aiono 1992, ms.1, ms. 3; Meleisea *et al.* 2015: 27–33). The outcome of this was complex in its finer details, but, in essence, family chiefs' wives, non-chief's wives and the village daughters spent more time doing things together for the village community than separately.

The Sāmoan term for a village women's committee is *komiti tumamā*, the word "*komiti*" denoting its foreign provenance, "*tumamā*" meaning "cleanliness or hygiene". These organisations have become an established part of village life, usually led by the wives of its highest-ranking chiefs. These groups had an important but largely utilitarian role to promote public health. Each committee is divided into groups comprising the wives of the *matai* (*faletua ma tausi*), the ladies of the village (t*ama'ita'i*), and the wives of untitled men (*āvā taulele'a*). In meetings of the women's committee, the same ranked seating arrangements are followed, but the seating area of highest respect in the meetinghouse belongs to the *tamai'ta'i*, with the wives groups seated in the less prestigious areas.

The Nu'u of Tama'ita'i: The Circle of Ladies

The third circle with the metaphorical status of *nu'u* comprises that of the *tama'ita'i*. The women's committee is not the "*nu'u o tama'ita'i*". That honour belongs only to the *tama'ita'i* sub-group within the women's committee. In the event of disputes between the *tama'ita'i* and the *faletua ma tausi* (who have formal authority over the whole women's group, based on the status of their husbands), the *tama'ita'i* will usually prevail, pointing to the 'outsider' status of the leaders. Also, in certain villages, at some ceremonial events only the daughters of the village gather, excluding the wives (see Schoeffel 1979, 1982, 1985).

The circle of *tama'ita'i* comprises women who belong to the *'āīga* of the village, living there either permanently or temporarily. This, therefore, includes girls, young unmarried women, and also women who have married a man from another village and who brought him in, or who, although usually living (or have been living) in their husbands' villages, have temporarily (or permanently after separation or their husband's death) returned to their village. These women, even if married, belong to, take initiatives in and have rank in the *tama'ita'i* group independently of any husband. Everything depends on the family name they belong to in their own village. The etymology of *tama'ita'i* is unknown but is an ancient term, noted by Captains Cook and Erskine (see Tcherkezoff 2008c: 20 [n.4], 105–106). The word *ta'i* meant a group's 'front line', particularly in old time warfare. It is well known that, in some case, the first line was indeed made of the daughters of the chiefs' village attacked; either their sacredness would bring in the divine power and the army will win, or they will be taken as wives by the chiefs or chiefs' sons of the attacking party, thus avoiding bloodshed. Although unable to ascertain I would make the hypothesis that the word *tama'ita'i* is linked to that context. I have translated it as "ladies", as most Sāmoans do when explaining in English in order to discriminate from the word *fafine or āvā* referring to a woman as wife or sexual partner of a man.

Tama'ita'i who bear titles, derived from the names of female founding ancestors in their *'āīga* are invested by their families, and are known as *sa'otama'ita'i*. Such a title may be known as the *feagaiga* of a male founder. *Feagaiga* is the ceremonial term for any brother/sister relationship as well as the sister herself within this relationship (it is also the honorific used to address a member of the clergy). Only the highest ranking *'āīga* possess *sa'aotama'ita'i* titles and nowadays they are seldom formally bestowed. Any female member of an 'āīga entitled to bestow a *sa'otama'ita'i* title may be formally addressed as such. In some villages the adult *tama'ita'i* have their own Sunday banquet or *to'ona'i*. Recently there has been a revival of the bestowal of *sa'otama'ita'i* titles, often split up and conferred on several women, just like a *matai* title.

In earlier times young virgin girls from *'āīga* with "great names" would be invested with the name of a genealogically important ancestress (often the sister of an important ancestor) and were

known as an *'augafa'apae* (etymologically: 'the trans-generational line of the foundations of the title's stem house'), or, more commonly *tāupou*. The word *āūgā* conveys the notion of a flow or steady stream (Milner 1966: 29), as in "the years drifting by" or "the succession of *matai* bearing this name" (*o le āūgāmatai* or the word *āūgānofo* mentioned above); *pae* means the house foundations; the (abutting stone) foundation height is a direct and regulated sign of a family title's rank in the village circle. As for the word *tāupou*, etymology is now well established. The literature on Sāmoa regularly mentions "ancient Sāmoa's ceremonial virgins" or *tāupou*. (Mead misspelt the word as *taupo* (1928) as did Keesing (1937). The word *tāupou* actually designated any unmarried woman— and therefore supposedly virgin: the etymology is 'pertaining to a new state' *tau-fou* (Pawley 1982, Tcherkezoff 2008c: 106), someone who is no longer in her adolescence (at which time the word indicating that she was a virgin would have been *muli* or 'recent, new or not yet mature', which would have been added to *teine*, girl).

When these girls married (usually by political arrangements), another *'augafa'apae* was chosen. However, after marriage a *sa'otama'ita'i* used to keep her female ancestor's name and receive the deference due to it. What was probably the most important *tama'ita'i* role, that of chaperoning the *'augafa'apae*, has disappeared, as the last ceremonial virgins were invested in the 1920s.

When English-speaking Sāmoans explain the cultural identity of a *tama'ita'i* to a foreigner, they make a significant distinction by saying that the *tama'ita'i* is 'not a woman, but a lady'. Sāmoans say that, to them, the English word "woman" corresponds to *fafine*, as does the term "female". The Sāmoan word *fafine* can be used for a female animal (preceded by the name of the animal species) or in certain circumstances for a woman, but not politely, when her only social definition is as a wife (especially a *de facto* wife) of a untitled man. Nowadays, the role of *tama'ita'i* is mainly ceremonial, but in village events, the *tama'ita'i* of the leading family or families are usually respectfully acknowledged with the use of *sa'otama'ita'i* names. The *tama'ita'i* group is a *nu'u*. Individually each woman is a 'lady' of her, and collectively they are *o le nu'u o tama'ita'i*. When the ladies meet, they sit in a circle that follows the hierarchy of the chief circles, as each lady is a 'daughter' or 'sister' of a *matai*. Another term for the group is *āualuma*. It may refer to the notion of a 'group' (*au*) being 'put forward' (*luma*). In that case, it may have referred to the ceremonial context where the *tama'ita'i* were always the front group of the collective dances offered to visitors and/or to the more dramatic context of front line in ancient wars, as already evoked for the etymology of the word itself *tama'ita'i.*

An important distinction is made between a daughter of the village and the woman marrying in from outside. Whenever there is some ambiguity or dispute, Sāmoans may mention this distinction: "Who do you think you are talking like that? You're not a *tama'ita'i*." Although ceremonial virgins are no longer invested, expressions are still used today that indicate that the concept is still ideologically relevant and that all single women of a village have a responsibility towards the village. If an unmarried single woman commits the error of allowing herself to be seduced before marriage and cannot keep it a secret (if the boy brags about it or she falls pregnant), she may be accused of bringing shame not only on the family but the whole village. By 'falling', she is said to have "taken off one of the feathers from the virgin's fine mat" (an expression used by an older informant). The fine mats, Sāmoa's greatest treasures (Schoeffel 1999, Tcherkezoff 2002, 2012, nd.) are decorated on their edges with red feathers that most probably represent the blood that was publicly spilled at

defloration, which was the high point of a traditional wedding, as still witnessed around the 1920s. It is known how premarital virginity for a family's daughters is still considered important by Sāmoans. This value may be linked to the ancient beliefs that it was a condition for perpetuating the family name. The "seat of life" was believed to be in a woman's blood and there was the fear of the loss of these powers if the blood of the "first break" were not properly cared for in traditional marriages (see Krämer 1902, vol. I: 36; and Tcherkezoff 2003a: 346–411; 2013: 58–60; 2016: 266–287).

When referring to the ladies' circle, Sāmoans say, "The *tama'ita'i* are our village daughters (*teine o le nu'u*)". The word *teine* generally means young unmarried woman. If the speaker chooses to specify that she is a virgin, he or she will say *teine muli*, or *tāupou*, if she is older. If a person wishes to state unambiguously that a woman of any age has lost her virginity, whether legitimately or not, he or she may use the term *fafine*. Calling a woman *fafine*, when she is known as a *tama'ita'i* in the area, is a very grievous insult. If she remains single, she will no longer be *teine* but, after some time, *tama'ita'i*. However older women may also be addressed as *teine* in their own families, in an affectionate tone. Further, in contemporary usage in non-village contexts, all women may be formally referred to as "*tama'ita'i*," in order to avoid the issue of their marital status.

Another statement relevant to this investigation is: "The *tama'ita'i* are the *feagaiga*". *Feagaiga* refers to both the brother/sister relationship and to the sisters themselves in any family. However, the term is most specifically applied to the relationship between names that have become titles and belonged to a male ancestor and his sister respectively. In honorific language it is used for all the family's daughters. The chief will say to them, "You are the *feagaiga* and should behave accordingly". This opens up a wide scope for observing women's ceremonial role in the *'āīga* insofar as it is linked with perpetuating founding names, and with old traditions of brother-and-sister avoidance, as well as the traditional value attached to premarital virginity. There is also the distinction between, for example, *tamatāne* descendants (of both sexes) of the brother or son of a referenced ancestor, and *tamafafine* descendants (of both sexes) of a sister or daughter of this ancestor; collectively the *tamafafine* may be referred to as *feagaiga*. This intrafamily concept extends to village level. Thus, if a chief speaks about the ladies of the village, he may say, "They are our *feagaiga*, they are the village's *feagaiga*" (Aiono ms.2: 2). In other words, the ladies' circle includes the 'sisters' of all the 'brother/sister relationships' that define each family within the village.

Stories about decisions regarding the succession in a great family of the chief title in the 1930s indicate that whilst the 'brother-side' members (*tamatāne*) are responsible for presenting candidates, the role of 'sister-side' members (*tamafafine* or *feagaiga* among whom women bearing *sa'otama'ita'i* titles hold most authority) is to ease tensions caused by rivalry between the various brother-side branches and to hint at the best choice (as the sister side is thought to have mystical communication with the origin and to 'know' what is the best choice). According to Aiono (ms.3), there is a specific expression for this pacifying role: "to iron smooth" (*pae ma le 'āūli*), referring to the power ascribed to the *tama'ita'i* to make peace in the family or the *'āīga* as a whole, or within and between villages. The expression conveys the notion of "smoothing out" probably in reference to pressing the newly made fine mat with flat and heavy shells or stones, and, since the 19th century, pressing with another heavy tool that had a large flat side: the missionary introduced iron (for ironing clothes, called *auli*); see also Latai (2014: 304) who was told in Sāmoa that it means "the shell and the iron" and that *pae* "was a particular shell used by women to straighten the bark of the mulberry plant before it is used for the making of *siapo*". In my time (that is since the early 1980s), I

have not come across any instances of a *tama'ita'i* playing this sort of collective role in a village's internal disputes. In all cases observed that went beyond one extended family *aīga*, it was the chiefs *matai* who restored peace between quarrelling families.

There is a term for an outstanding *teine* or *tama'ita'i*, which may be applied to her because of her graceful dancing at ceremonies, but also connoting beauty—*tausala*. According to Aiono (ms. 3), the etymology is to be understood as the "lady who bears [the risk of] the fault and punishment". The word *sala* means "fault" or "punishment" and implies the notion of the risk of loosing virginity. In relation to that, Aiono (*ibid.*) mentions the old practice that we already evoked: when there were still wars between districts, a conquering side intending to destroy those defeated would face their virgin *sa'otama'ita'i* referred to as their *tausala,* who would stand in the front line, perhaps to be taken as wives by the victors, who might then spare the village (see also Freeman 1983). Aiono specified, however, that only *tausala* could do this, as the enemy would only accept virgins, adding (personal communication, 1994) that, comparatively, the status of *tausala* is to be understood as "worthy of sacrifice".

We have mentioned the value of premarital virginity for a family's daughters. If a girl loses her virginal reputation, her *'aīga* is thereby shamed, particularly if it has a "great" name, or is the family of a church minister. As previously pointed out, the same attitude prevails at village level; it is thus easy to see links between a lady or girl's *feagaiga* status as sister in her family and the *feagaiga* status of the *tama'ita'i* in the village. As the "sisters" of the village they are expected to uphold its dignity. As sisters to all the men in the village, marrying within the village would be the height of unseemliness.

The Status of Wives

As noted previously, the circle of *tama'ita'i*, unlike the circle of the *taulele'a,* never admits women who marry into the village. As previously discussed, untitled male affines are admitted to the servers' circle, and male affines who are *matai,* to the chiefs' circle. The sub-group within the women's committee comprising the wives of *matai,* the *faletua ma tausi,* bears comparison to groups previously discussed, as well as differences. In terms of similarities, when these women gather in a circle, as do other groups, the hierarchy of the circle of *matai* is faithfully reproduced. But the differences outweigh the similarities. First, the sub-group is restricted to wives of *matai*. Second, they are not referred to as a *nu'u,* as is the case with the *matai,* the *taulele'a,* and the *tama'ita'i*. The fact that the group exists and bears a different name shows that female in-laws are not treated like male in-laws. Far from being integrated like the men, these women form a separate group. The name *faletua ma tausi* itself lacks unity, as the group is made up of two status groups. The *faletua* are the wives of *ali'i,* while *tausi* are the wives of the *tulāfale* order. Finally, some very great *ali'i* are entitled to specific honorific formulae and their wives are ceremonially known by a third term (*masiōfo*).

The *faletua ma tausi* bear a name that entirely derives from the husbands' status rather than a village status. Let us also immediately note that the group does not represent all the village wives, as it excludes the wives of the *taulele'a*. There is no such group (a circle of all the wives) that would function as such. Wives of untitled men can only be referred to by their affinal status—o *āvā a taulele'a*. The term *āvā* is the ordinary word for 'wife' (without any status marking), and would be offensive if used in speaking about a chief's wife. They do not have any ceremonial or other names

denoting their status as an established group and so there is no concept of their constituting a *nu'u* (particularly as even the chiefs' wives' group does not make up itself a *nu'u*). With regard to their tasks, in addition to the work they do in their husbands' families, they occasionally accompany their husbands to prepare food for village meetings.

Setting aside the difference between chiefs' wives who make up a group and non-chiefs' wives who do not, the common feature shared by all wives—that of not being a *nu'u*—is the individual name that applies to them. The villagers refer to them as 'our *nofotāne*' (from *nofo*, stay, live, and *tāne*, man, husband). They are women who 'stay or live with their man'. They are their 'husbands' wives', and this relation of possession is clearly marked in the system of possessive markers. While most of the kinship terms require the "*-o-*" class possessive marker, indicating that the possessor is not the cause of the possession ('my mother' is *lo'u tinā*: *l'ou* 'my' applies to also to 'my land': the real possessor are only my ancestors), 'my wife' is *la'u āvā* (*lo'u/la'u* differentiation), as 'my' children, 'my' garden (in opposition to the whole family land), and any objects acquired.

Husbands marrying-in, on the other hand, are referred to by a term indicating what they did something—they sought to 'make a wife' (*faiāvā*) and therefore came to live with their wives (this term is always used to specify the uxorilocal residence). The *faiāvā /nofotāne* ("wife-maker"/ "she who stays with her husband") asymmetry is also reinforced by the words that precede the terms, whether implicitly or explicitly. In the expression 'the *faiāvā* men of our village', the word *tamāloa* will be used for men: this word applies only to human males, men, and not to animals. However, when talking about the gender of 'the *nofotāne* women of our village', only the word *fafine* can be used (never the word 'ladies' *tama'ita'i*) and that word designates the female of humans as well as of animals. Through this distinction that arises from social organisation, in Sāmoa the word *fafine* (that occurs in all Polynesian languages to indicate female) necessarily includes the notion of sexuality. This is why all Sāmoans, whether men or women, agree that the term is 'impolite' or 'disrespectful' (*lē fa'aāloālo*). It not only contains the notion of wife (which is generally *āvā* or *nofotāne* when residence is specified) but also includes the idea of 'she is not-a-lady', a non-*tama'ita'i*. In contrast, the word *tamāloa*, for man, does not imply anything about status (chief or servant) and about residence (in his village or as in-law in his wife's village).

The vocabulary denoting kinship-by-marriage-and-residence conveys the same bias. First, the terms for men in their circles (*matai* or *taulele'a*) has nothing to do with their wives' statuses, whereas the term for married women precisely depends on their husbands' status. Second, the asymmetry in the wording of these terms reminds the hearer that the man came to his wife's village and 'made' something specific (a wife), whereas the woman who came to the man's village is simply 'she who stays in her husband's home' (*nofotāne*). Another instance of this asymmetry occurs in the language of the sexual act, known, from the male point of view as "doing", while the female partner is "touched, wounded, knocked…" and all kinds of similar metaphors (for an analysis of the Sāmoan vocabulary relating to sexual matters, see Tcherkezoff 2003: 302-336).

The latter instance of asymmetry needs to be offset by the fact, indicated by all older informants, that in earlier custom, it was usual for the woman to move to her husband's village, with the opposite being rather rare. It would seem that, today and for the last two generations, it is more a matter of convenience—and a cause of instability of residence. The choice is made in terms of the husband's hopes of receiving a title, the distance from town, and the status difference in the two

families' founding titles. There is a third option that is āvāilable to very few people, ie buying freehold land which is very limited and expensive, thus being independent from both families. Those able to live independently of family outside the village are usually members of the small, more affluent middle class.

So far the major asymmetry between the affinal status of men and women has been explained. A village is a *nu'u* and comprises three *nu'u* groups plus the wives. The husbands may be assimilated, but not the wives. The husbands blend into a system that refers to titles (either being a *matai* or as a *taule'ale'a* that is said to be 'the way to become a chief'). Wives are identified only in terms of their husbands. As detailed above, for villages, in a *nu'u*, there are *matai* some of whom are the embodiment of the deceased ancestors and the founders of the names given to the land. Then there are two *nu'u* that are ceremonially arranged on the lines of the first: first, the untitled men, who absorb male affines and, second, the daughters of the village (exclusively those born to the village's founding families, and excluding the wives married into these families). This three-part view is based on the importance attached in the investigation to the local categorisation applied to each group— that is, that it constitutes a *nu'u*.

It is now possible to compare this finding with Sāmoans' perception when asked how they would explain what is a "*nu'u*", without restricting the question to *nu'u* groups only, but by simply asking what there is in a village. The most common reply consisted of a listing of all sorts of groups. Usually *matai* were placed first, then the women's committee, or, if the informant was elderly or a village woman, the *tama'ita'i* circle, followed by the chiefs' wives (if it was a conversation with a married woman, the latter order was reversed), the circle of *taulele'a* and, finally, the various religious or sports groupings (congregations, new churches, the village choir, the sport teams).

In Aiono's analysis of the social organisation of a village (1984: 24, 1986: 104; ms. 2: 2) there are five groups—the chiefs, the ladies, the servers, the chiefs' wives and the village children, connected in a way that presents the village metaphorically as a single family. In her diagram, there are five circles with the chiefs' circle in the middle. The line joining this circle to each of the four others is commented as a "*faiātoto* or *faiāfa'asuli* link"—that is, a blood *toto* link *faiā* or the "position *faiā* of being *fa'a*—an heir *suli* (to the family's founding name)". Each of the four circles connected to the chiefs is defined by a relationship with the chiefs: the *tama'ita'i* are the chiefs' daughters, the *taule'ale'a* are the chiefs' sons, the *Faletua ma Tausi* are the chiefs' wives and the *tamaiti* are the chiefs' children. This is a significant view both in terms of the order followed and the intention of presenting the village as a single family. In fact, Aiono (ms.1: 2) has expressly stated in one of these five-circle presentations that "this is the 'ʻĀīga*potopoto* writ large in the *nu'u*": the first word means the *aīga* family when all members meet formally for an important decision (*potopoto* means 'to gather individuals or assemble'). The "one plus four" pattern can be reduced to three. In the past, at least according to Aiono (ms. 3) there were only three formal groups—the chiefs, ladies and servers. That corresponds to my observations of a village *nu'u* constituted of only 3 ceremonial groups *nu'u* or at least of three formal eating-together gathering (*to'ona'i*). It can then be further reduced to two, emphasising (Aiono ms.1: 2) that "the *Tama'ita'I* ... is the unit in the ideal social organisation that repeats the authoritative level of the *matai* group itself; the Sāmoans refer to the *nu'u* as having a *Nu'u o Tama'ita'i* and a *Nu'u o Matai*".

With this view reduced to two groups, we come back here to the misunderstanding in the literature already evoked about "a village of men" and "a village of women". Aiono has previously stated (ms. 2: 2) that "the *Tama'ita'i* of the village occupy a place in the social system equal to that of the village *matai*". The expression often used by Sāmoans, 'the ladies' village' and the chiefs' village *(nu'u o tama'ita'i ma nu'u o matai)*, is often said in the reverse order: '*nu'u o tama'ita'i ma nu'u o ali'i*', where '*ali'i*' has replaced '*matai*'. This allows for an ambiguity—only to foreigners' ears. The word *ali'i* or 'chiefs' can also be, since some decades, a polite way of referring to men in general in a speech or ceremonial address, as the English 'Sir'. Similarly, the word *tama'ita'i* is used as the English 'ladies', when the female half of the humankind needs to be mentioned in public (as *fafine* is considered impolite and quite inappropriate for speeches because of its "non-virgin woman" connotation). This alone has led various observers to see in this expression the notion of a male/female division, joining with the Western bias that we mentioned several times, that of trying to view any society as, first of all, a grouping of "men and women".

The summary picture that emerges shows Sāmoan polities based on a family model, with the ancestors made present in the chiefs, followed by their sons and daughters. It is essentially one of a world of consanguinity with an agnatic ideology (in the limited sense that any chief, whether man or woman, is "father" to the members of the family whose name he or she represents) that totally ignores affinity in the kinship system. Only the fathers and their sons and daughters are included. Bringing the fathers together in a single circle, however, suggests that all these sons and daughters are each other's brothers and sisters. Significantly, when Aiono (ms. 3) emphasised, during a lecture, the importance of the relationship between the *matai* and *teine* or *tama'ita'i* within a village and when she was asked from the audience what the role of the circle of *taulele'a* was, she replied that "the *aumāga* were the brothers of the *tama'ita'i*'".

This brother/sister relationship is also at work between the chiefs and the ladies' circle, as it is essentially the chiefs' circle that symbolises the village and the chiefs say "the ladies are the village's sisters *feagaiga*". *Matai* chiefs are mostly men and, whether men or women are said to be their family's fathers. All other men, whether younger or older in age, are their juniors in status terms. They do service for their chief and, through them, for the community. The relationship between the chiefs' and servers' circles is a father/son or older/younger brother relationship that supersedes age (an older man will say to a younger *matai*, "You are my older brother"). The ladies' circle, however, includes both the daughters and sisters and other consanguinal kinswomen. A man owes respect to a woman of his *'āīga* and generation, especially to an older woman, as she is his *feagaiga*, or classificatory sister. A female blood relative, however, is supposed to have a special relationship with the origin (gods, founding ancestors), which used to be ritually condensed in the ceremonial virgin figures, but is more or less deemed to be the purview of all female kin (Schoeffel 1979). In a way, the *matai* owes respect to his sisters as *feagaiga*.

Something of this relationship is clearly at work in the collective relationship between the village chiefs and the village's ladies (even if the ancient tales about the virgin ladies' sacrifice in offering themselves to the enemy are no longer part of the collective consciousness) and the reduction of the village to the two first groups, the chiefs and the ladies, emphasises this. For example, if a *taule'ale'a* commits an offence, he is only fined and his family, and therefore his chief, pay the fine to the chiefs' circle. If *tama'itai* loses her reputation for chastity the entire village may be put to shame.

Village Endogamy: Conclusions and Perspectives

Conclusion on the Enigma

What happens in a marriage between a man and woman from the same village? For the man, there are no consequences. If he is a *matai* in his own village, he will remain so, even if his marriage is criticised. If he is a *taule'ale'a* in his own village, he will also remain so. In both cases, the men will continue to belong to their own village circle of either the *matai*, or the *taulele'a*. For the woman the situation is different. Regardless of whether her husband is a *matai* or a *taule'ale'a*, she loses her honoured status as a *tama'ita'i* and will become the wife of a *matai* (a *tausi* or *faletua*) or the wife (*āvā*) of a *taule'ale'a*. In both cases, she becomes a *nofotāne,* one of the women who have come from outside 'to live with their men'. In both cases, she loses a fundamental part of her social identity in her village.

To illustrate the severity of this situation, there was a case involving a woman who was one of the country's last surviving ceremonial virgins within one of Sāmoa's great families. Through circumstances unknown to me, she married a *matai* of her own village and, despite her fame and previous status, was not admitted to the village's ladies' circle. She was reduced to staying at home for many years (until she divorced, for unrelated reasons, and re-joined the *tama'ita'I*—though without the same honour as before) and then spending much of her time away from home. She explained to me, forty years later, that as the highest ranking *tama'ita'i* and the first among them to bear a *sa'otama'ita'i* title, she would never have considered associating with women on a daily basis who were socially defined solely in terms of being *nofotāne*, 'she who stays with a man'. She had to either remain secluded in her house, or to leave. "You see," she said. "*Tama'ita'i* or *nofotāne*, you've got to choose and make sure you get it right."

Beyond the Enigma: Gender Asymmetry

I suggest that the cultural logic underlying expectations of village exogamy, and the censorious attitude to village endogamy lies in the gender asymmetry in relation to consanguinity and affinity. There is no dissonance between the status of "brother" and "husband". In his village a man will have his married life as well as the duties of a brother to his sisters and parents. In his wife's village, the man will be a husband who is also a quasi-younger brother. That is why, in the case of a marriage in his own village, the greater proximity that arises between his status as brother and as husband does not create logical and social contradictions for his status. In contrast, the roles of "sister" and "wife" are mutually exclusive. No women can hold these two roles at the same time in the same place.

This enormous difference between men who, in the same social unit, can be brother and husband, and women cannot be sister and wife, is to be put in relation to the difference (as viewed by all age and gender categories of Sāmoans) in relation to the threshold and transitions in sexuality. While there are no words, not even any notion, of male virginity (it is extremely difficult to make Sāmoans understand for instance the Old French notions of such male virginity: "*puceau*"), we know how heavy is the frontier, for Sāmoans girls, and how many 'heavy' (*mamāfa*) words are there to express that condition of being, or not being, virgin. In Old French, at least in words, there was a symmetry between boys and girls: "*puceau*" for boys, "*pucelle*" for girls. In Sāmoa, there was and still is a total asymmetry.

Thus, when comparing Sāmoan social categories with Western-influenced concepts of gender, it is as though there are *three* genders in Sāmoa: men, women-as-sisters, and women-as-wives (not mentioning a fourth-and-fifth gender category, the transgender *fa'afāfine* and *fa'a(fā)tama*, see Schoeffel 2014, Tcherkezoff 2014). Therefore, when we consider the question of the status of women in Sāmoan society, the question of a woman's standing as either consanguinal kinswoman or an affine must be considered. Although there is historical evidence that women in Polynesia have, or once had, very high status and authority (see for example Gunson 1987; Schoeffel 1987), and that the bodies and sexuality of Polynesian women have been legendary objects of pride—and prey—for men (Tcherkezoff 2008c, 2009) the discussion of gender has been largely focussed on marriage and sexuality and thus affinity, rather than on, as in the case of Sāmoa, women's roles as sisters and consanguinal kinswomen*.* It is only when a woman takes a high-ranking chiefly title that she moves beyond these gender dichotomies (as long as she obeys the rules of and exogamy pertaining to her *'āīga* and *nu'u*). And there is certainly not such a secure place during adolescence, where every day the adolescent girl must evaluate if she will be seen as behaving as a "sister" or as a potential or actual marital partner to a man. Adolescent boys do not have such a dichotomy of identity constantly weighted on their mind. Thus, quite contrary to what Margaret Mead and others have written, for girls their coming of age in Sāmoa is anything but an easy social transformation, recently as well as in the distant past.

A woman who marries in her village takes on wife status and, because of that, loses her position as a daughter of the village. Despite this norm in Sāmoan social organisation, a village daughter will sometimes "fall" (*pa'ū*). Young men may secretly have their first sexual experiences in their neighbourhood and sometimes, even if rarely, with their own relatives. As we now know, they do not stand to lose as much by a marriage within their village as do girls, and their access to the various status categories is diminished. It is the girl that bears the brunt of the risk. And her upbringing, which is oriented towards her duties as a daughter of the family, and therefore, of the village (and until recently was devoid of any proper sexual knowledge) hardly prepares her to manage the dangers associated with the consequences of sexual desire. This makes her all the more likely to "fall".

More often than not, girls do not fall, but pay the price anyway. I knew two young women who, when they were teenagers, were bubbling over with zest for life, but had their lives more or less ruined when they were unable to marry the men they loved, as he was from the same village. Ten years later, one is married to another man and the other has been through a string of casual relationships with all the disgrace that entails in the village. They are fairly dejected and their homes often dogged by quarrels.

The village's symbolic 'family' configuration runs deep throughout the village, affecting each and every person. In one of the unhappy marriages mentioned above, the man the young girl could not marry was the pastor's son in her village, the child of an *'āīga* that was not even from the village. The trouble was that, ever since the first missionary arrived in Sāmoa, the ceremonial status of a pastor has been as the metaphorical "sister of the village" (*feagaiga*) and he is formally addressed as such. This remark leads to a whole development that cannot find its place here: the chief who welcomed the first missionary gave him the founding ceremonial role of "sister" of all the community of villages in his authority; see Aiono (1986), Tcherkezoff (2008a: 271–276); Latai (2015 [section "The Pastor as Feagaiga"], 2016: 35–53). Thus pastors, who are all Sāmoans today, are

therefore "like-sisters" to the whole community of villages in their care and are cherished and presented with numerous gifts by the villagers who treat them as they would their own sisters, i.e. they constantly do 'service' *tautua* to them. Not so long ago, the *tama'ita'i* often met in the pastor's home and young unmarried ladies often slept there. The pastor's son is therefore brother to all the village daughters twice over. Village chiefs only have sons and daughters; chiefs are "gods here below"; and God watches over the village through His pastor who is the village's Sister. There is no place for marriage in such a setting. It must happen outside the village.

Past and Present (1980-2016)

As I said at the beginning of this paper, the whole analysis presented here tries to understand why intra-village marriage was unanimously rejected in the 1980s; occurrences existed, but they were embarrassing for everyone. That situation has very much evolved during the last thirty-five years.

When I discussed, in the initial part of this paper, the gender dimension in the *matai* position, I have insisted how much the old encompassing level of value of the *feagaiga*, the whole brother-sister relation complex, was fading away, how much it is often now misunderstood, and gradually replaced by a dualistic gender distinction in Western terms, where the only choices are equality or inequality between men and women. For the very same reasons, the distinction between village ladies as the daughters of the village and in-marrying wives is fading away, gradually leaving only "women's role", women's committees, etc. As this sharp distinction is fading away, the harsh consequences for women in case of intra-village marriages are *ipso facto* gradually disappearing. Thus, more and more it is not such a problem for a woman to be at the same time a daughter of the village and a married woman into the village.

I did not make any specific enquiry on those new trends, and I will refer again to the recent survey already mentioned (Meleisea *et al.* 2015), complemented by personal communication that Dr Penelope Schoeffel was kind to share with me (September 2016). She told me that the survey team did not define intra-village marriage as one of their topic of studies, but inevitably, during interviews, the topic came up:

> We did not ask the question about intra-village marriage in the quantitative survey of villages, but in most if not all of the 60 qualitative interviews with sui o le nu'u and suitama'ita'i, marriage within their village was mentioned as common nowadays. Of the 28 suitama'ita'i, 17 of them were born in the village, married to a matai of the village.

As the discussion we had, during the PIURN Congress (September 2016), was also on post marital residency patterns etc., Schoeffel also added a note which resonates with what has been said above, concerning the willingness of men to come and live in their wife's village if that village is near town:

> Susana Taua's random survey of informal vendors in Apia (for her PHD thesis) found the majority of them were in uxorilocal (faiāvā) marriages. In a study of cocoa growers registered with MAF I did with Emele Meleisea-Ainu'u earlier this year, there were 450 male farmers and 60 female farmers registered for the program. Those farmers were from all over Sāmoa. The female farmers were the land owners (i.e. the actual cocoa planter was uxorilocal husband and in some cases a son).
>
> (P. Schoeffel, personal communication, September 2016)

Today, the few sad stories that I heard in the 1980s of young women having their personal expectations ruined because of the "customary" rejection of intra-village marriage would not

happen. At the same time, women are facing new challenges. The respect *fa'aāloālo* that once was always due to them when they were in their 'sister' *feagaiga* role has often disappeared, and they have to fight their way in this new world of inequality of access to decision-making positions.

Acknowledgement

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The Reconstruction of a Sāmoan Village: Quest for the Spatial Narration of the Mythological origin and the Social Structure of Poutasi.

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Abstract

In 2009 the traditional village centre of Poutasi was destroyed by a tsunami and a majority of the inhabitants since have abandoned the old settlement. Only a few of the former residents repaired or reconstructed their houses at the traditional site at and around the village square; most of them decided to adopt a settlement development which increasingly took into account a persistent trend: to meet the requirements of modern mobility and to live at or near the road. As a result of this shift the village has lost its traditional public space, the village square, but at the same time it has not found a similar place at the road. Although most central institutions of the village and the district today are located at the main road within a small distance from each other, there is no public square where people can meet, communicate and celebrate their festivities as they were used to do at the traditional square. The loss of the traditional village centre is not only a loss of sociability, but also a loss of the social identity of the village: The traditional village square and its surrounding buildings once reflected the legendary origin and the social structure of the village as described by the Sāmoan mythology as documented in the 19th century fa'alupēga, a ceremonial salutation of greeting made on formal occasions, which refers to the historical justification of the village hierarchy of chiefs. The loss of the traditional village centre of Poutasi means the loss of an important part of the Sāmoan spatial archives.
Keywords: Sāmoa, social organisation, village, social change, disaster response, spatial organisation.

Introduction

At the end of September, 2009, a tsunami destroyed almost all villages on the south coast of the island Upolu (Sāmoa). According to eye-witnesses the village of Poutasi in the district of Falealili, situated in a central position of the coast, was one of the worst hit places. The wave extended approximately 200 m inland, overrunning all buildings as far as the main coastal road, also damaging most of the hospital and school buildings. In the old village nucleus the house of the village council, the houses of the families of the three high chiefs (*ali'i*), the church buildings of both the Congregational and the Catholic church, the residences of the two pastors and the houses of some of the high-ranking talking chiefs (*tulāfale*) and a handful houses of some kinsmen of the high chiefs either have been severely hit, completely destroyed or even been swept away to the sea. The following picture taken from a helicopter (Fig. 1) shows the village nucleus a few days before and one day after the tsunami and a picture taken only a couple of hours after the wave (Fig. 2) provide evidence of the disaster.

Figure 1: Aerial pictures of Poutasi before and after the Tsunami

(Source: MNRE)

Figure 2: Poutasi a few hours after the Tsunami

(Source: MNRE)

The present study surveys the spatial patterns in the course of the reconstruction of the village and the central themes and ideas which have served the village people as marks of orientation in the process of reconstruction. In order to achieve its aims the study proceeds along three methodical steps of research: (a) the procurement and comparison of aerial pictures showing the spatial structure of the village before and after the tsunami, (b) a detailed mapping of the current village structure and its comparison with previous mappings and (c) interviews with all heads of those families whose houses were affected by the tsunami, concerning eventual behavioural changes after such a natural phenomenon, their aims and central ideas for the reconstruction of their homes, including the question of the symbolic values of the traditional place and its implications concerning social esteem, prestige and political power.

This article argues that the Poutasi as it was before the tsunami architecturally and spatially has been marked as a place of a specific social identity and a spatial mirror of the social structure. Even so the majority of the village people did not rebuild their homes on the original place at the sea but shifted inland to a place securely above the sea level at the main road in the same time means the loss of the traditional village centre. One of the leading questions of this project was to find out whether the present generations still are aware of the meaning of the spatial narration of their

village and whether they consider it to be important enough to suppress their fears concerning a recurrent tsunami and rebuild the settlement according to its tradition. It maintains that this trend is not only a loss of sociability, but also a loss of the social identity of the village: The traditional village square and its surrounding buildings once reflected the mythological origin and the social structure of the village as described by the Sāmoan mythology and documented in the fa'alupēga, the archives of the Sāmoan society. The loss of the traditional village centre of Poutasi means the loss of an important part of the Sāmoan spatial archives including sociality. It begins with some observations on the spatial structure of the village before and after the tsunami, continues with the observation of local and general trends in architecture and settlement structures in Sāmoa and then focuses on a reflection of some social consequences of this spatial development. The second chapter moves from observation to explanation presenting first an analysis of the spatial village structure as a symbol and a message of social prestige and identity, then opening up for a discussion on spatial structures and "ideal public spheres" in the sense of Habermas before theoretically reflecting on the observed spatial trends in terms of privacy, publicity and social identity.

Poutasi after the Tsunami – Depopulation of the Village Nucleus

A map drawn of the village centre during the field work conducted in 2006 shows the spatial structure of Poutasi as it has developed in the course of the last centuries (Fig. 3). Located on the sandy bank of a peninsula (respectively an island) between the lagoon on the south side and a river/swamp on the north side, the village presented a line of settlements, i.e. a series of houses for the various families stretched along the lagoon in the neighbourhood of the buildings of the main institutions of the village: the house of the village council (fono matai) at the village square (malae) and the buildings of the two churches, congregational and catholic, all in all eleven buildings. The village primary school and the district college are located north of the village square and on the other side of the river, i.e. beyond the traditional village nucleus, while the district hospital is located west of the school.

**Figure 3: Village nucleus of Poutasi: Stock of buildings (2006)**
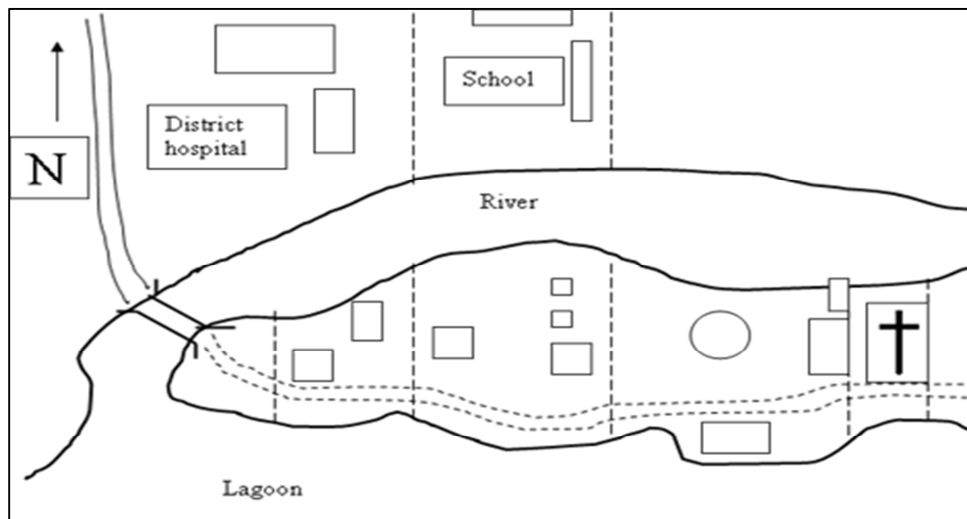
(Source: own draft according to mapping in 2006)

In July 2015, six years after the tsunami, the village centre presented a totally different picture (Fig. 4). Of the once 10 buildings on both sides of the malae or village square only four houses in this part of the village have been repaired or reconstructed since the tsunami: apart from the church building and the guest house of Tuatagaloa (1), which almost completely withstood the force of the

wave, is the house of the Tuatagaloa family (children of the late previous ali'i sa'o, among first ranking chiefs of the district) (2), and the house of the present holder of this high chief title (3); every one of these four buildings was and now is of brick or concrete. All the other houses or their remains have been levelled off. The places have been abandoned by their owners and residents, although the buildings (though damaged) as a whole were strong enough to resist the tsunami, i.e. the stone-walls of the community hall of the Congregational Church.

Figure 4: Village nucleus of Poutasi: Stock of buildings (2015)
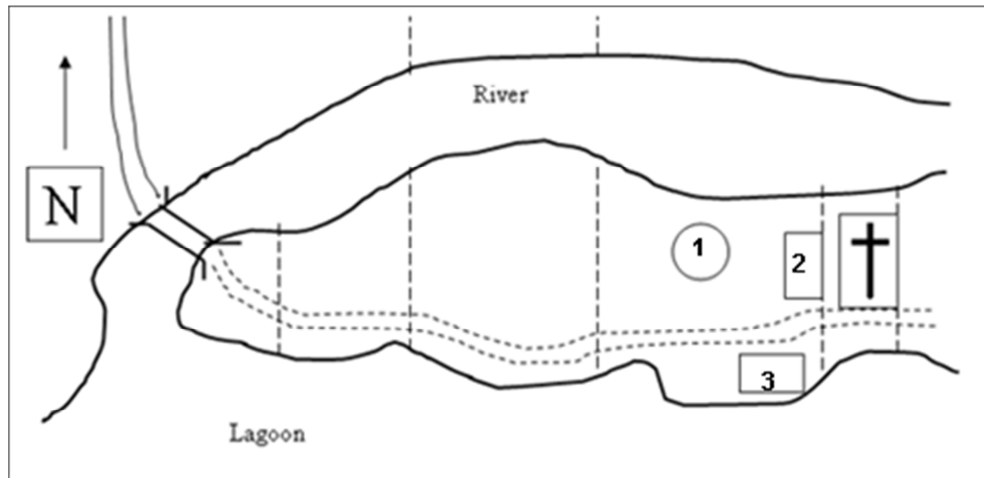
(Source: own draft according to mapping in 2015)

Further on to the east end of the coastal part of the village and beyond the Congregational Church once there stood all in all thirteen buildings, the Catholic Church and the catholic community hall and to both sides of the church and the small square in front of it the houses of another eleven families (Fig. 5).

Figure 5: East end of the coastal part of Poutasi (2006)
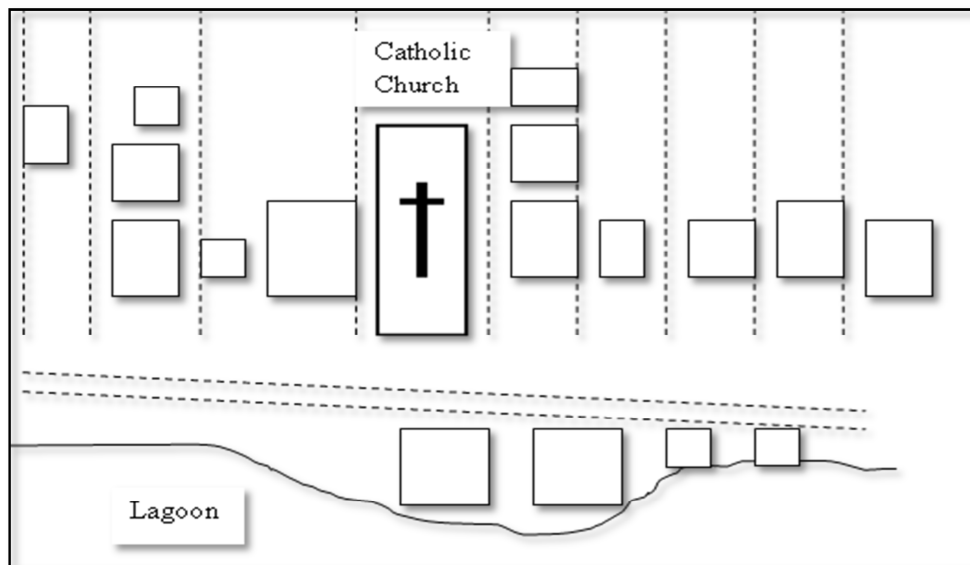
(Source: author draft according to mapping in 2006)

Today only seven of them have been repaired or reconstructed, very similar to what happened in the central part of the village. Apart from the Catholic Church building, the Catholic community hall and the house of the Catholic minister (all buildings in stone and concrete) we find today only two residential houses (3 and 5), one of which has been repaired but not occupied, and another one (4) on its way to reconstruction (Fig. 6).

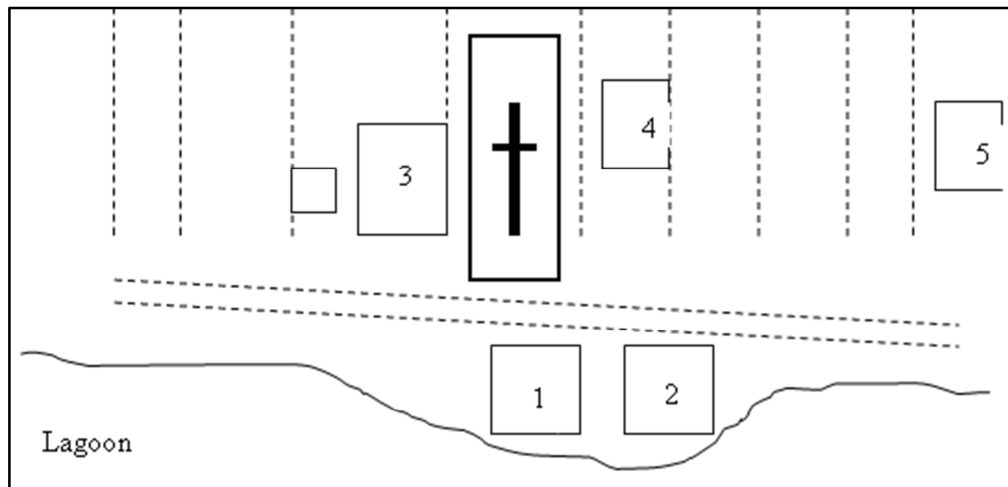**Figure 6: East end of the coastal part of Poutasi: Stock of buildings (2015)**

(Source: Author draft according to mapping in 2015)

Reasons for Leaving the Place

All of the fifteen families which once lived in their houses at the lagoon before the tsunami have been interviewed concerning losses, decisions, process and reasons for decisions, eventual behavioural changes after the tsunami, previous and present locations and costs of reconstruction, financing and aspects of prestige (*mamalu*) and power (*pule*). Included are interviews with the three present holders of the high chief titles and the daughter of the late first ranking chief of the village and the district who occupies the representative house of the Tuatagaloa family at the village square between the village council and the congregational church.

The shock they all experienced during this natural disaster was deep and is long lasting. Six persons lost their lives, many others were injured, some of them so severely that they had to stay in hospital for weeks and even months. While a few of the residents were not on the spot when the wave occurred, most were present, some of whom succeeded in escaping in time by running up the 200 m to the main coastal road which is a few meters above sea level and proved to be safe; many others didn't make it in time and were overrun by the wave. The survivors succeeded in holding on to a tree or a strong branch until the water had drawn back. The experience of the tsunami led the majority of the village people to a noticeable behavioural change: to abandon the traditional site of residence at the lagoon and to move to a safer place located on a ground higher up and further up inland.

Twelve buildings were totally destroyed, three others partly damaged. All furniture, kitchen equipment and clothing were swept away and lost for ever. The value annihilated hardly can be estimated in monetary terms but the costs for only reconstructing homes and buildings amount to a sum of about WS $1 800 000 (€ 630 000), a substantial sum for a village economy which largely still is based on semi-subsistence livelihoods. In 2006 the monetisation factor (defined as the share constituted by monetary income in relation to the total income of a village community from both

subsistence and the market sectors) of the village came to less than 50percent of that amount, while the per capita monetary income per year in 2006 was amounted to roughly WS $1 550, equivalent to €550 (Hennings 2011: 106). The financial aspects of the village reconstruction also reveal that solidarity systems and social networks are as intact as they were 10 years ago (Hennings 2011: 111f):

- all families were helped by the government with a sum sufficient to meet the basic requirements of a house to live in,
- 80 percent of the families received assistance by their nuclear or extended family, both in financial form and in labour/ material,
- 40 percent of the families received substantial financial, material and working aid by church relief organizations like the catholic Caritas and;
- in the cases of the two church ministers the congregational and the catholic community contributed almost for the total of the reconstruction costs.

The new Spatial Structure of the Village – A Trend to the Road

After having found provisional and temporary accommodation and board in the houses of other members of their extended families for some weeks or months, in the end the heads of the families had to decide how and where to re-establish the home. In most cases the decision was taken commonly by a family council, in some cases by the head of the family on his own. The majority of the families and their heads in the end decided for security. In only six cases the decision was to repair or to reconstruct the buildings on the traditional ground, in eleven cases the decision was for a new location. Three families decided to do both, to rebuild on the old place and to build a new house (new houses) somewhere else, and one family decided to leave the village. The result of these decisions can be viewed in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Shift of houses from the coast line to the road after the tsunami
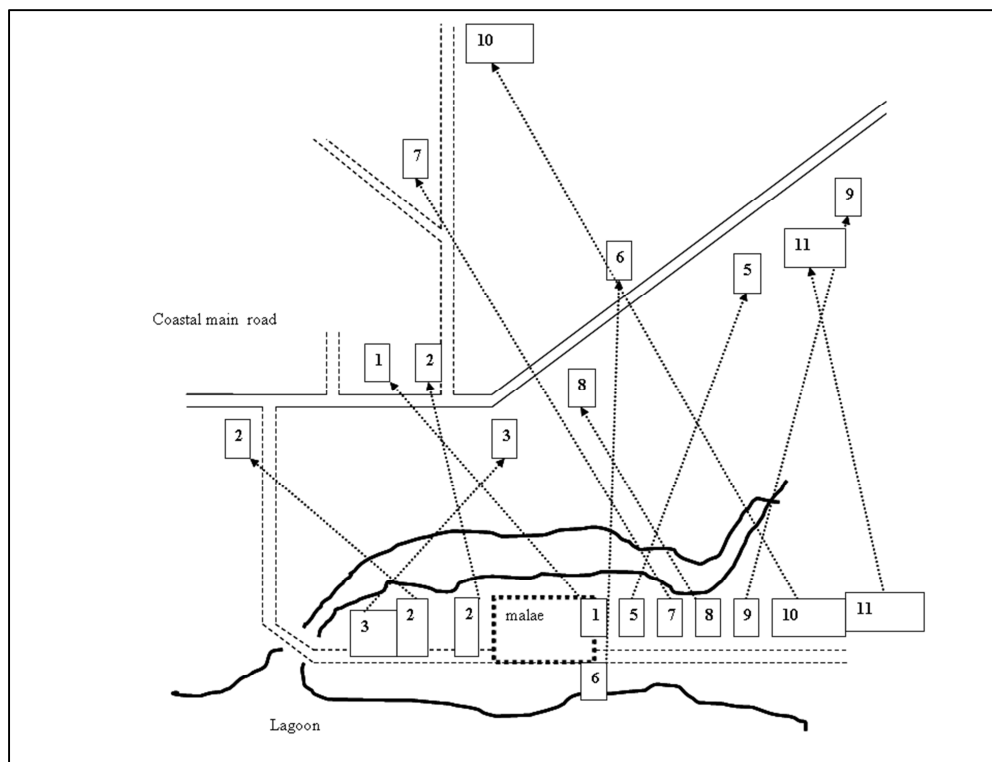
(Source: Author draft according to interviews and mapping 2015)

Considering the dangers of another possible tsunami the twelve families once living on the sea side of the village now occupy a home in a more secure place, i.e. on a ground further up inland and situated clearly above sea level, in that part of the village which was not affected by the wave, ten of them along the main coastal road, the other two even further inland along the access road to the plantations. The decision to settle at the main coastal road is not new, but rather the confirmation of a long existing trend. In the course of the last 50 years the settlement patterns of the village have been totally reversed: Whereas in 1965 only 25 percent of the village settlements were located at the main road and the large majority of 75 percent was situated at the seaside, in 2015 we find 85 percent of the village settlements at the road and only a small minority of 15 percent still remaining at the sea (Table 1).

Table 1: Development of the settlement patterns in Poutasi

Year	Sea side	Main Road
1965	25	8
1989	25	21
2006	21	28
2015	7	38

(Sources: Lockwood 1971: 125 and author data)

The development of the village settlements towards the main road clearly reflects the socio-economic development of the Sāmoan society as a whole and particularly the Poutasi development in the course of the last 50 years. It is a development from a more or less subsistence-based economy with small scale commodity production on its way to a market economy. Whereas in Poutasi between 1989 and 2006 the monetary income per capita increased by 28 percent, in the same period the respective per capita income from subsistence product declined by eight percent. The monetisation factor (defined as the share constituted by monetary income in relation to the total income of a village community from both the subsistence and the market sectors) increased in this period of time from 63,6 to 70,9 (Hennings 2011: 106).

There is no statistical data for the development of the last ten years, but there is visible evidence, based on architecture, equipment of the households with modern furniture and kitchen appliances and the development of motorization, that the monetisation of the society as a whole and of the village society has continued. More and more village people are engaged in market economy, many have a paid labour job, either in the village but even more in other parts of the island, especially in the urban area of Apia. Busses run more frequently and the number of cars owned by village people has increased considerably. Whereas in 1982 during my first field trip I observed only two private cars in Poutasi, in 2015 I registered 32 of them (not all in a roadworthy condition) and in addition two taxis. Thirty two cars for 56 households means that almost 60 percent of the village households are provided with a car. The taxis of the village are quite busy, both in the village and beyond it in the coastal districts of the southern part of the island.

The trend to settle at the main road goes along with another trend of modernity (Tab. 2). 50 years ago 90 percent of the houses of Poutasi clearly were constructed according to traditional Sāmoan architecture (circle or oval ground plan and open, i.e. without walls to divide inside and outside and using home materials grown in the plantations) and only 10 percent of the houses had a so-called European shape, i.e. rectangular or quadratic, in most cases constructed with materials imported from overseas. In 2015 this relation proved to be the other way round: 88 percent of the houses had a "European" (rectangular or quadratic) ground plan and only 12 percent still favoured the traditional Sāmoan shape. Whereas in 1965 only five percent of the houses in Poutasi were closed, i.e. with walls to separate inside from outside, the closed type of houses in 2015 already

represented the majority, i.e. 51 percent. The development of the village architecture thus reflects a clear trend to modernity and privacy.

Table 2: Architecture and choice of construction materials in Poutasi

Year	1965	1989	2006	2015
Big Sāmoan house	20	1	-	-
Sāmoan house	43	50	34	11
Open European house (wood)	2	35	34	38
Open European house (stone)			10	2
Closed European house (wood)	4	16	10	13
Closed European house (stone)			22	33

(Source: Lockwood 1971: 125 and author data)

Village Settlements at the Road – A General Trend in Sāmoa

The following section does not intend to follow up the settlement development of the observed villages in detail as in the case of Poutasi but rather is meant as a means of comparison in order to describe the general settlement patterns prevailing in Sāmoa today. Like Poutasi many other villages of Upolu were struck and severely damaged by the tsunami. In most cases the fear of a repetition of such a misfortune led a majority of people to look for a safer place to rebuild their home. Such safer places in general exist further inland on grounds clearly above sea level. In the south-eastern part of the island entirely new settlement patterns have been developed: Above the old villages and on top of the cliff new settlements have emerged from the forest and the plantations and roads were built in order to connect these settlements with the existing infrastructure. Good examples for this type of resettlement after the tsunami are the villages Lepa (Fig. 8) and Lalomanu (Fig. 9). Before the tsunami both villages were located at the foot of the cliff and the uplands remained uninhabited, whereas in 2015 many plots at the shore once inhabited now remain abandoned and instead many other houses have emerged in the uplands.
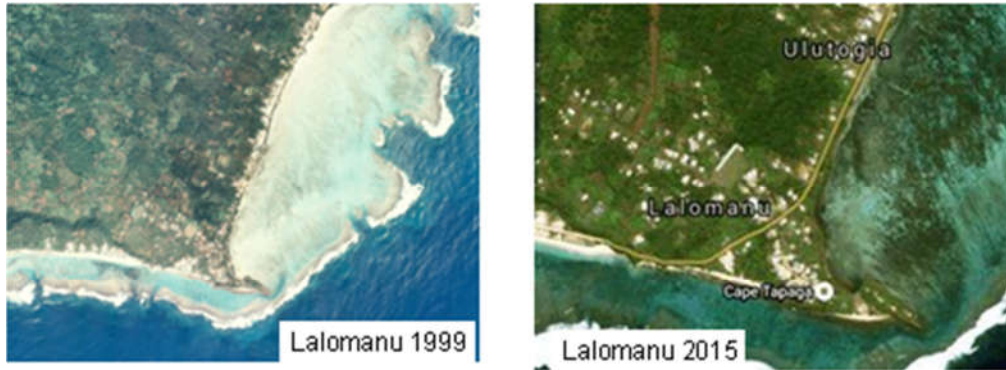
Figure 8: Settlement patterns in the village of Lepa before and after the Tsunami
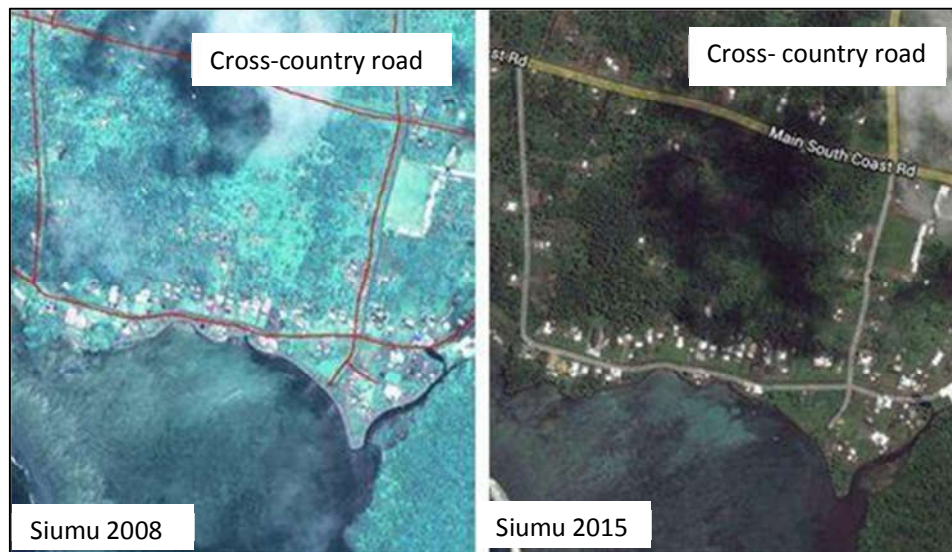

(Source: MNRE and google earth)

(Source: MNRE and google earth)

Siumu village is situated in the middle part of the south coast. This is the appropriate location to connect the south coast of Upolu with the capital Apia at the north coast, and the cross-country road was built in the 1960s. As a result of this Siumu which so far had its settlements exclusively at the sea from now on developed settlements at the main coastal road and its junction with the road across the mountain ridge to Apia. In the case of Siumu the destructions of the tsunami did not have similar effects as in the villages at the southeast end of the island. In the main Siumu has not spread more inland and beyond the range of settlements than it was before the disaster, maybe also because the seaside village is situated some meters above sea level so that the inhabitants didn't feel as threatened as their compatriots elsewhere (Fig. 10).

Figure 10: Siumu before and after the Tsunami

(Source: MNRE and google earth)

A very special example is the village of Salamumu in the western part of the south coast. In contrast to most other Sāmoan villages Salamumu is a relatively new settlement, founded at the beginning of the twentieth century after the volcanic eruptions on the great island of Sāmoa, Savaii. The lava covered entire villages and the people who founded Salamumu at the south coast of Upolu were given new land to set up their new homes. They did very well and built a village which for a long time could be regarded as a masterpiece of traditional Sāmoan architecture and which proudly was presented to foreign visitors and tourists (Fig. 11).

Figure 11: Salamumu 1982, Advertising poster of the Sāmoan Visitors Bureau
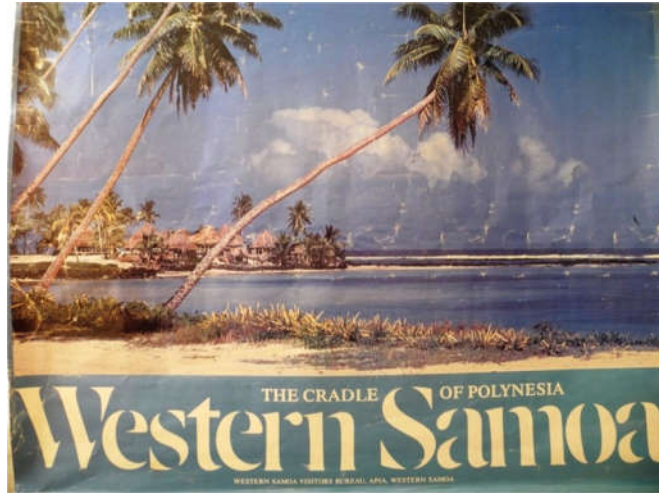
Almost exactly 100 years after the volcanic destruction of their old village in Savaii the new one again was eradicated, this time by the sea. By 2015, six years after the tsunami, the village has not been rebuilt; people have moved further inland where Salamumu uta (Salamumu inland) had been long since developed—as in many other cases a settlement at the coastal road.

50 years ago, and long before that, practically all Sāmoan villages were situated at the sea, although there is extensive archaeological evidence of inland settlement in earlier pre-contact times (Martinnsson-Wallin 2015). The desire for increasing mobility led to the construction of roads and the establishment of bus routes, which were subsequently expanded more and more, so that in the end individual traffic tempted people to shift their homes from the traditional location at the sea further inland to the main road which connects the villages with the urban area of Apia and with other villages.

## Social Consequences – A Village without Nucleus and Centre

Before the tsunami the village square (*malae*) of Poutasi in front of the village council (*fono matai*) and between the residential houses of the three high chiefs of the village undoubtedly constituted the centre of the village, all the more so since other social institutions were located next to it: the Congregational and the Catholic Churches and their community halls as well as the residences of the two ministers. Except for the village council, the two church buildings, the catholic community hall and two chiefs' residences (which are not permanently occupied because their owners predominantly work and live in other places) the traditional village centre now is uninhabited. The visitor who walks along the access road to old village nucleus today is witness of an empty and in a way dead place, populated and alive only on the occasion of a chief assembly (usually once a week for half a day) and on the occasion of church services (usually twice a week Sunday morning and afternoon).

On the other hand at the coastal main road and especially in its central part between the access road to the former village nucleus and the access road to the plantations certainly we can observe a greater presence and frequency of people in the public space, but there is no evidence of a new village centre despite the fact that many if not most main institutions today are located on this section of the road (cf.: Fig. 12): the new building of the district hospital (1) and the new village community hall (3) with the sports ground between them, the new district college (2), the buildings of the newly established "Poutasi Development Trust" (PDT) with a village pre-school, a new library, a new Art Centre (5, 6 and 7), an organic farm and the administrative building of the PDT with the

office its founder, sponsor and director who also holds the Tuatagaloa title, a high chief of the village and the district (8 and 9). Complementing this accumulation of institutions and buildings we find other important buildings of public interest: the district police station (10), the main village store (11), the new community hall of the Congregational Church and the house of its minister (4 and 14) and opposite of it the new residences of Meleisea Saivaega, the second high chief of the village and the district and next to this place the new residence of the daughter of the late high chief Tuatagaloa Teo Fetu (12 and 13).

The new buildings on this section of the main coastal road certainly form a cluster in the sense of centrality, but this is not sufficient to form a new settlement centre or nucleus comparable to the traditional one at the lagoon. The new cluster of institutions and buildings at the road lacks one important condition to be a real centre: The buildings are lined up along a busy road, there is no possibility for the people to take a rest without being disturbed by the traffic, to meet and interact as they could do at the *malae*, the old place in front of the village council, because the constantly flowing supralocal traffic forces them to move on more or less steadily. To form a real centre the village lacks in particular a public place in the sense of a square which clearly is defined by buildings which skirt the place and thus give it an aura of seclusion and unity. The sports field (15) between the district hospital and the new art centre is not a square in this sense.

Figure 12: Poutasi 2015 – location of central institutions
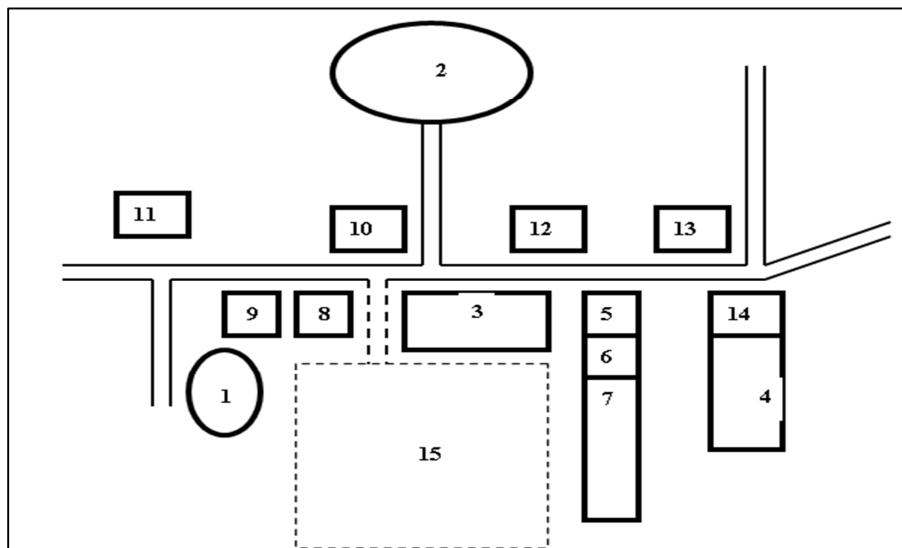
(Source: Author draft according to mapping 2015)

From Observation to Explanation

Based on the theories of Löw and Eco the present study assumes that spaces and places can be understood as texts written or created by individuals, social groups and societies in their historical contexts and as such also can be read or visually perceived. To put the thesis in concrete terms the Poutasi as it was before the tsunami architecturally and spatially has been marked as a place of a specific social identity and a spatial mirror of the social structure. Executing certain "spacings" on and around of the public square the leading clans of the village and district have formulated very distinct messages which in their symbolic effects contribute to, legitimise and stabilize their prestige, social power and supremacy. The focus of the spatial interest and creativity of the social elite aims to present the place as a stage of power which by means of symbolic effects and an atmosphere of amazement and fascination helps to establish a specific social identity and thereby to reproduce and

stabilize the existing and prevailing social relations of power and supremacy (cf.: van der Ryn 2012 and Hennings et al. 2016).

Poutasi - Ethnographical Research and Analysis of the Spatial Structure

Krämer in his ethnography of the Sāmoan islands mentions Poutasi in the context of a the village of Saga, which in the 19th century comprised seven village sections (*pitonu'u*) The were Ilili, Saleilua, Poutasi Sameanai, Vaovai (with two *pitonu'u)*and Matautu, known as the seven houses (*fale fitu*) (Krämer 1902: 287). In the 20th century Matautu, Vaovai, Poutasi, Saleilua and Iliili became separate villages. The *malae* of Saga was and still is in Poutasi.

In this context most interesting however seems to be the text of the original *fa'alupēga*, originally an orally handed down (and since Krämer a written) compilation of the family trees of all Sāmoan high chief titles and their mythological genesis accompanied by those ceremonial phrases of welcome, which even today are recited at the beginning of every assembly of the village council by one of the untitled men when serving the kava *('ava)* bowl to the various chiefs. The respective text of the *fa'alupēga* says for Saga:

|	
Tulouga alala gafa	Greetings to the present ancestor
tulouga alo o Fanene	greetings to the sons of Fanene,
susu mai lau susuga	Greetings your honour
o le matua 'o Fanene	our elder Fanene
afio mai lau afioga a	Greetings your honour
Tuatagaloa	Tuatagaloa,
'o le to'o savili	who steers the boat against the wind
'o le sa'o fetala 'i	and is the leading speaker.
afio mai lau afioga a	Greetings your honour
Meleisea	Meleisea
'o le sa'otamaita'i	leader of the honoured group.
tulouga a lau afioga a Leilua	Greetings your honour- Leilua
ma au tamatane Touli	and your sons Touli
ma Asuao ma Tapu	and Asuao and Tapu
ma Leali'ie'e	and Leali'ie'e
tulouga a oe Lufilufi	Greetings to you Lufilufi
ma lou ali'i	and your chief
'o le Tuisāmoa	Tuisāmoa

(Source: Krämer 1902: 290f)

Reading the *fa'alupēga* we thus learn that Poutasi not only is part of Saga but also one of the two highest ranking villages of Falealili district (*ītūmālo*) because they are the seats of two of the four highest ranking *ali'i* titles in Falealili. Tuatagaloa and Meleisea, according to mythology both of divine descent. The other two are Fuimaono and Leasiolagi of Salani village, and among the talking chiefs, Tofua'iofuia of Salani village and Talo-ole-Ma'agao of Satalo are the highest ranking.

According to the testimony of the elders of the village and especially of the orators in the mythology the highest Sāmoan god Tagaloalagi married a young lady called Muliovailele. Their son Pili, having misbehaved, was dropped down from heaven by his parents. He fell onto the Manu'a islands in the eastern part of the Sāmoan islands where he settled down, got married to a daughter of the Tuimanu'a, king of this group of the Sāmoan islands and thereby himself taking over the kingly

title. Later he married a daughter of the Tuia'ana, king of the kingdom of A'ana on the island of Upolu. His second wife gave birth to four sons, one of which was Tolufale, ancestor of Fanene who as we already know by the recited passage of the *fa'alupēga* is the father of Tuatagaloa and Meleisea, the two highest ranking chiefs of Poutasi and among the four highest in Falealili.

The fa'alupēga thus reflects the social order of the village and this social order is reflected by the spatial structure of the village nucleus according to a map drawn in 1965 (Fig. 13). Looking at the figure depicting the old village centre we must take into mind that the village square (*malae*) cannot been understood as a public space as it is normal for most public squares in Europe or the United States but that the ground is land under the authority (*pule*) of the two high chiefs: The *malae* thus has two sides—Fagamalama is the side of Tuatagaloa and their *māota* (east side) and Poutasi is the side of Meleisea and their *māota* (west side).

Figure 13: Poutasi – Spatial structure as by 1965
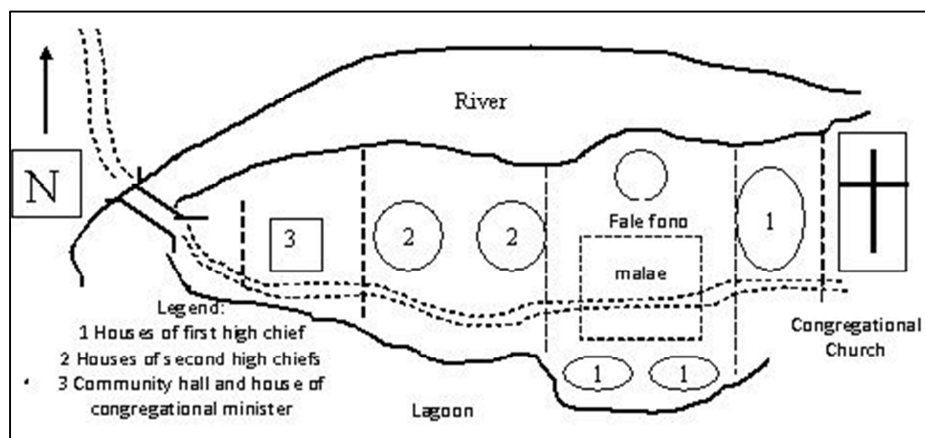
(Source: Author draft on the basis of Lockwood 1971: 125)

The traditional centre of the village is situated on the sandy bank of a peninsula well protected against possible enemies by a river and a swamp which separate the site from the mainland. At first glance the settlement which stretches from west to east in a row of houses seems unspectacular, but a closer look accompanied by some information concerning functions and occupants of the houses shows a well designed and realized village.

The inner nucleus is formed by the village square (*malae*), the central public place of the village, site of all important public events of the village. Here is the place to celebrate local festivities like the presentation of traditional dancing and singing, to ceremonially celebrate the weddings of the daughters of the high chiefs, to play the most popular Sāmoan version of cricket (*kilikiti*) and to receive and welcome high ranking foreign visitors. In these cases the square is the place for public celebrations of welcome with speeches of the talking chiefs and the exchange of gifts such as fine mats (*ietoga*) and roasted pigs.

The north end of the square is the location of the village council (*fale fono*) where the chiefs of the village, i.e. the elected heads of the families (*matai*), come together to hold their meetings. South of the square and located on a small piece of reclaimed area (land which artificially has been reclaimed from the sea by throwing huge lava rocks into the lagoon) is the site of two smaller Sāmoan houses meant as guesthouses of Tuatagaloa.

Lining up like a chain, a row of houses extends to both sides of the square: East of the square lies the house of the Tuatagaloa family, and west of the square lie the houses of the Meleisea family. Beyond the house of the Tuatagaloa family, i.e. east of it, is the location of the Congregational Church. West of the houses of the Meleisea family is the place of the community hall of the

Congregational Church and the residence of the congregational minister. Again to both sides of these building described above are the houses of the orators (*tulāfale*) and the kinsmen (*usoali'i*) of the high chiefs, all in all a settlement which has been designed in a very symmetrical order, at the same time reflecting the social structure and hierarchy of the village. The message of this spatial narration tells of the social significance and the prestige of the families and their titles, a message about the social consensus concerning social rank and balance.

The Traditional Village Square of Poutasi – Model of an "Ideal Public Sphere"?

Habermas bases his model of an "ideal public sphere" on three conditions:

- − free access to the place for every member of the community (openness)
- − free exchange of arguments (discursivity) so that in the end
- − the best argument may legitimize the acceptance and execution of a decision (legitimization).

It may well be that Habermas' definition of the public sphere is not very well suited to meet the requirements of a public square in Sāmoa because when he outlined his model of an ideal public sphere he thought of the conditions in a Vienna coffee-house, at that time ideal conditions for developing a free public opinion in a bourgeois society; and this background might not be suitable for the Sāmoan circumstances.

Therefore it may be more appropriate to include another concept of the public sphere initially formulated by Simmel already in 1908. In his idea of the public Simmel focuses on the model of communities open for a limited number of persons opposed to those communities open for everybody. A lodge, for example, is not to be regarded as private but as part of a group, i.e. another kind of public sphere, clearly distinct and separated from the rest of the public. Simmel emphasizes that the membership in a public sphere in the sense of a lodge implies two effects of one condition because the participation in and the attendance at the lodge on the one hand mean inclusion, but on the other hand exclusion for all others. Simmel's model of a public sphere based on the idea of a secret society may be suitable to describe and explain the public of a small and limited Sāmoan community and thus may be appropriate to demarcate and separate the public sphere and the public space of this village community from the surrounding and rival villages.

In fact the village square of Poutasi suits both theoretical approaches to the public sphere and a public space. Although the square usually is not the place for social or political discussions or debates, Habermas' model all the same meets the three conditions of his concept. Everybody is entitled to (1) enter the square, (2) listen to the exchange of arguments brought forward by the heads of the families (i.e. his own one's too) so that in the end the decisions taken by the members of the council, i.e. the heads of the families, are publicly accepted and legitimized.

On the other hand the village square appears appropriate for Simmel's concept of a public sphere restricted to a kind of a club such as a lodge. Being limited in the number of its members and focussed on specific local topics it allows the inclusion of all members of this community and at the same time the exclusion of all the other surrounding and competing village communities.

The Relocation to the Road is a move to Privacy and the loss of Public Space

As already indicated, the resettlement of the major part of the houses at the main coastal road ended in the loss of a real village centre, a square like the one at the lagoon in front of the village council. Today a cluster of central institutions of the district and the village certainly exists (cf. Fig. 12), but this neither meets the concepts of the public sphere brought forward by Habermas and

Simmel nor does it fit the definition of a public space and square in the sense that it may be—spatially and structurally speaking—a possible frame for human action.

A well-known definition of a square is based on three distinct factors: on the relation between the forms of the surrounding buildings; on their uniformity or their variety and on their absolute dimensions and their relative proportions in relation to width and length of the open area (Zucker 1959: 3). These three factors enumerated by Zucker may be completed by a fourth one, i.e. that it would be desirable that a square is free of road traffic in order to occasionally allow people to come together, meet and communicate. The possibility of meeting is vital for every community and society. In order to activate this possibility the community needs the public space, a place to meet in reality and not only virtually or occasionally passing by while walking at the margins of the road.

The public space in the sense of a meeting place involves more than a cluster of social functions, instead it is the place of social contact, communication and social relations; it is the place of belonging to a community and the place to experience identity with the community. A community which lacks such a public space is in danger of losing social contact and identity. A community without a public space in the long run not only loses the sense for the social but also the possibility to regenerate and to reinvent itself as a community. The public space of a community without a place for meetings, contacts and communication loses its sense of being public space, it becomes bare and empty (Quarch 2016:2). With a view to the social conditions of the "ideal public sphere" the cluster of central institutions at the main road neither is consistent with the model of Habermas nor with that of Simmel; the disappearance of a public square in Poutasi at the same time means the loss of the public sphere.

The imminent danger of losing social identity by neglecting the requirements for a public space in Poutasi after the tsunami goes along with settlement patterns which increasingly tend toward residential houses built in the "European" way, i.e. outer walls separate the interior from the outside and inner walls separate individuals from others inside (cf. chapter 1.3, Table 2). The traditional Sāmoan house is open, a building on posts which carry a roof and which has no separating walls, neither to the outside nor inside. Physically this kind of architecture is most suitable in a tropical climate like in Sāmoa because it allows the regularly blowing trade winds to ventilate the house, thereby preventing the overheating of the interior. Socially the trend to closed houses means a development which emphasises privacy and protects the occupants from the curiosity of others, but it is also possible to formulate it the other way round: privacy-enhanced houses protected by walls prevent people from establishing contacts and entering into social relations. The loss of the public space and the trend to privacy can be seen as two sides of the same coin, both are steps away from Sāmoan tradition towards global modernity.

The loss of the Public Space – Price to pay for Progress?

As we have seen the move of the majority of the villagers to resettle not at the traditional place but more inland to the main coastal road is due to two effects: the fear to be a victim of another natural disaster on the one hand and to take part in the modernisation of the Sāmoan society on the other hand. Both strategies have a common basis, i.e. to avoid by this settlement scheme vulnerability, precarity, poverty and social exclusion.

> "Precarity is the condition of being vulnerable to others. Unpredictable encounters transform us; we cannot control, even of ourselves. Unable to rely on a stable structure of community, we are thrown into shifting assemblages, which remake us as well as our others. We can't rely on the status quo, everything is in flux; including our ability to survive." (Tsing 2015:20).

The concept of precarity is closely linked with social development in post-industrial capitalist societies, especially with labour market deregulation, it also includes links with so-called natural

disasters: Flood disasters and perishing pacific islands f.e. are due to climatic change caused by the profit-mongering of a capitalistic production still based on the (over-)use of carbondioxide emitting industries. Natural disasters like a tsunami however are not related to man-made catastrophes because they are the result of geo-tectonic movements a couple of kilometres under the surface of the earth: In the course of the continental drift tectonic plates collide at so-called subductive zones and thereby cause tensions which then discharge all of a sudden and at non-predictable times: earth quakes and sea-quakes. The latter tend to provoke tsunamis, huge waves which threaten surrounding coastal areas. Although not man-made this kind of disaster nevertheless can be a cause of precarity in terms that it invokes a fear of indeterminacy: We never know when such phenomenon occur.

Indeterminacy thus can be a threat to human existence, in the modern world we try to control our life by following the paths of modernity: democracy, economic growth and science, in short by modernisation and progress. "Progress is a forward march, drawing other kinds of time into its rhythms. Without that driving beat, we might notice other temporal patterns… Progress still controls us even in tales of ruination. Yet the modern human conceit is not the only plan for making worlds: we are surrounded by many plan-making projects, human and not human" (Tsing 2015: 21).

The problem is that progress is not synonymous with general and all-round benefit, progress often means a loss, too. By choosing progress and security villagers leaving their original places at the village square in the same time may have lost their centre of public life and social identity. Realizing this dilemma it might be advisable to change perspective and paradigm: Instead of permanently looking ahead occasionally it could be wise to look around (Tsing: 22).

The spatial structures of Poutasi before and after the tsunami perfectly reflect this idea. "Looking ahead" (progress) symbolically can be imagined by streets, geometrically expressed by lines, i.e. a figure which leads from a place (a) to a place (b). "Looking around" (standstill) however symbolically can be imagined by squares, geometrically expressed by circles, ovals, triangles, quadrants or rectangles. Streets and lines stand for speed and acceleration (no time) whereas squares stand for slowing down and rest-time to pause and stay, to take notice and care of others.

The Generations of Today – Still aware of the Sense of the Place?

To the foreign visitor Poutasi does not reveal its atmospheric qualities and symbolic effects at first glance, but only after a closer look at the local mythology and social structure. Most certainly the message of the spacing underlying the spatial order of the village nucleus has been common mental property to all village people, but the leading question of this project was to find out whether the present generations still are aware of the meaning of the spatial narration of their village and whether they consider it to be important enough to suppress their fears concerning a recurrent tsunami and rebuild the settlement according to its tradition.

The decisions taken by the families and their heads provide a first indication that the majority (12) of them no longer is aware of the social qualities of the place because most of them resettled somewhere else. Four of the seven families rebuilding their house at the old place nevertheless have in addition a new house at the road where they predominantly live. Of the remaining three families who now own only the residence at the seaside there are two without any other choice because they have no other ground to build their house on; in case of urgent need, the last family may have the alternative to move to the new house of a sister next to the plantations.

At the time the interviews were taken (2015) only three families proved to have a clearly defined "sense of the place" (Feld/ Basso 1996), saying that for them it had been out of the question to rebuild the house at the old place. They are aware of the magic of the place and for them it is a question of prestige and tradition to show presence at the village square, the village council and in

the immediate neighbourhood of their churches. Two family sites stem from the Tuatagaloa clan, one is the current holder of this title and the other one is the daughter of the late previous title holder. The third family is part of the Tumanuvao title, the holder of which is one of the most important orators in the village council. The traditional site for the Tumanuvao family is the place immediately next to the Catholic Church and east of it (Fig. 4 and 13, houses 1 and Fig 6, house 4).

Some of the family heads remained pensive when at the end of the interview they were confronted with the narrative aspects of the traditional village centre, the magic of the place and the role their old place of residence might play in terms of prestige, social influence and power in village politics. At this point of the discussion the two heads of the Meleisea clan declared they were quite aware of the symbolic and social value of the site and were open to re-considering the question and trying to find a solution in the context of considerable financial aid by the extended family. Only one year after the interviews the new holder of the Meleisea title has made plans to build a new *fale tālimālō* on the *māōta* Poutasi, an important step forward to restore the traditional village nucleus and spatial identity of the village.

The majority of the villagers however show little concern about symbolic effects and atmospheric qualities but are interested primarily in safety and second in land tenure, i.e. to ensure that the property rights in the place where once the residence of the family was do not get lost if the ground no longer is guaranteed by using it. In most cases the family heads have a solution in mind which both saves their financial resources and gives a possibility to other members of the extended family who dispose of more money because they live overseas, but at the same time may plan to build a second home at the place of origin—the traditional site at the lagoon could be the appropriate spot.

Excursus: *Malae* and *Fale* in Poutasi – A look at Geometric Forms

Already at first glance the design of the traditional Sāmoan architecture appears to the observer as an image of perfect harmony. Today there are only a few remains of an architecture which only fifty years ago was totally normal for Sāmoan villages (cf.: Fig. 2). More than 60 percent of the houses in Poutasi were *faleo'o* (ordinary living house) and almost 30 percent were either *faletele* (representative round house) or *fale āfolau* (representative long house, cf.: fig. 14 and 15).

Figure 14: *Faletele* and *Fale āfolau* in Aleipata, Upolu 1996.

(Source: Author)

Figure 15: *Faleo'o* in Aleipata, 1996.

(Source: Author)

Looking at the shapes and the ground plan of this square and its surrounding buildings (Fig. 16) the observer immediately is taken by three perceptions: firstly by the regularity of forms, secondly by the geometric shape of the forms and thirdly by the symmetry and proportionality of the spatial structure which these forms hold in relation to the central square and in relation to each other. Having in mind the geometry of ancient and historical European architecture and famous architectures of other parts of the world, especially architectural ground plans of places in Asia and South America, one cannot avoid thinking that the basic forms of traditional Sāmoan architecture follow the same ideas of shaping, design and structure, thus making part of a universal architectural language of form.

In the ancient world the architectural and spatial leitmotiv can be characterized by the rule "*ordo, pondo et mensura, artem sine scientia nihil est*" (structure, weight and measure; there is no art without science). Science in these times has to be understood as mathematics and this motto goes back to experiments of Phythagoras who according to a legend after accidentally listening to the sound of certain tones coming from a blacksmith's workshop experienced feelings of well-being. The systematic experiments which he then carried out led to the antique school of thought which held that, just as the proportions we perceive in sounds produce harmonies and give pleasure to the ear, we have similar feelings of happiness whenever our eyes fall upon spatial structures created on the basis of the same proportions (Giorgi 1525, Palladio 1560, Staab 2010, Zarlino 1573; cf. also Hennings et al. 2016).

The relationship between the mathematical aspect of a proportion and its musical aspect can be demonstrated by a device which looks like a musical instrument made of an oblong sound box with a string stretched lengthwise along it. With the help of a crosspiece this string can be divided up into mathematically exact sections between its two extreme ends (1 and 0), i.e. proportions. If, for example, starting from the left to the right we shorten the string to three quarters of its total length we obtain a sound which is a fourth higher than the unison or prime; if we shorten the string to half of its total length we obtain a sound which is an octave higher than the prim (Fig. 16).

Figure 16: Monochord and its proportions.

(Source: Wikipedia)

The ensemble of the village square and its surrounding buildings is formed by five different geometric figures: the square and the rectangle, the circle and the oval, not to forget the point, all basic forms of the architectural theory of classical antiquity and its textbooks (Vitruv) as well as their followers in the renaissance and baroque (Alberti, Palladio, Serlio).

The geometric measures for a *faletele* are 3 in height and 4 in length, i.e. a proportion of 3:4 and those for a *fale āfolau* are 1 in height and 2 in length, i.e. a proportion of 1:2 (cf.: The Sāmoan *fale* 1992); we will come back to the architectural significance of these measures in the context of the geometric forms of the village square in Poutasi.

Figure 17: Spatial proportions of the village square in Poutasi in the 1950s.
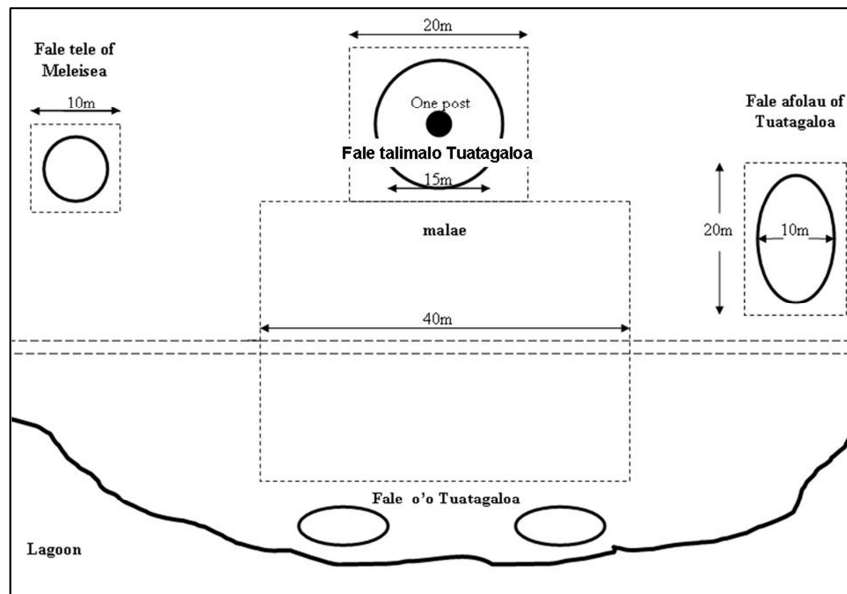
(Source: Author draft on the basis of descriptions of contemporaries interviewed in 1989)

The proportion of a square is 1:1 because it is equal in length and width, consequently the measure of a square is 1, perfect harmony according to the ancient architectural paradigm. The same applies to the proportion of a circle (1:1) because its radius from the central point to the margin is always the same; consequently the measure of a circle is also 1, perfect harmony. Except for the squares and circles around the village square we perceive rectangles and ovals. Both forms derive from the square and the circle, they take their shape by distorting the original form. In the given cases of the houses of the Tuatagaloa family the rectangles of the basements and the ovals of

the ground plans measure 1 in width and 2 in length, i.e. a proportion of 1:2, a harmony which comes next to the perfect measure 1. These proportions of the square are in perfect harmony with the proportions of the buildings in their sectional elevation: the *faletele* generally has a proportion of 3:4 and a *fale āfolau* of 1:2.

Mathematical proportions are a formally unassailable method to establish order in the world of forms between uniformity and variety. Applied to music, art and architecture mathematical proportions constitute an essential condition for aesthetics. The architectural and spatial proportions found on and around the village square of Poutasi musically can be expressed as follows: 1:1 (1) is a prime, the perfect unison, 1:2 is an octave, in the hierarchy of proportions coming next to the perfect unison and 3:4 is a fourth, also high up in that very hierarchy.

The message going along with the architecture and spatial structure of the village square and its surrounding buildings could be expressed like this: The perfect and almost perfect proportions tell of a community in harmony, a community in which every family and every individual has its firmly defined place in the social ranking and hierarchy which is most transparently and publicly reflected by the spacing's of the settlements in the old village situated at the lagoon. The perfectly proportioned measure of the place may allude to the mythology according to which the two high chief titles directly originate from a son of the supreme god.

Is it legitimate to understand the Sāmoan architectural and spatial proportions as analogous to European antiquity? Maybe not; but it is food for thought to consider that outside of Europe we find similar geometric forms and proportions in the architectural history of many other parts of the world and hundreds and even thousands of years ago: in Mexico (Maya temples), in Peru (Inca temples), Cambodia (Ankor wat temples) and Indonesia (temple of Borobudur, Java). In all cases the predominant geometric forms are the rectangle and the circle. It is very probable that in all advanced civilizations architecture and space were shaped according to similar proportional measures intended to cause feelings of harmony and well-being in the persons looking at them.

The Old Village Nucleus of Poutasi – A place of Social Identity

The traditional village square of Poutasi at the lagoon can be read as a spatial text; it is a narrative place reflecting the social structure of the village as it is told in Sāmoan mythology and laid down in the *fa'alupēga*. In earlier times the *malae* even was some kind of 'sacred' place'—it was forbidden to make loud noises while walking across it. If someone rode a bicycle through the village they had to dismount and wheel the bicycle across by hand. I can remember from my first visit to Poutasi that on Sunday it was forbidden to walk across the *malae* except for attending church service. Anyone who wanted to pass from one end of the village to the other strictly had to use a small path north of the square through bush land and swamp. The message of the spatial narration of the *malae* is dedicated to the public, i.e. to all villagers, to their community. The village square (*malae*) is the place for special festivities like the welcome of official foreign visitors and the organization of games like cricket matches or dance shows. The central building of the square is used as the *fale fono*, the village council, public place for the meetings of the social groups of the village: *fono matai* (meeting of the chiefs, the elected heads of the families), the meeting of the Women's Committee (comprising all adult female members of the village) and the meeting of the *'aumāga* (meeting of the *taulele'a*, i.e. all untitled men of the village).

Figure 18: The village square of Poutasi and festivities.

(1)   The square in the early 80s with traditional architecture
(2)   The high chiefs of the village with their orator addressing to a high ranking visitor
(3)   Ladies of the Women's Committee preparing for a the welcome of the visitor
(4)   A group of untitled men presenting the traditional gift for the visitor
(5)   Ladies of the Women's Committee performing a dance

(Source: Author)

The central public sphere was flanked by the representative buildings of the two *ao ali'i*, the two high chiefs of the village, one living in a *fale āfolau* east of the square (long house of Tuatagaloa), whereas west of the square were the two *faletele* (round houses) of Meleisea . Both the *fale āfolau* of the Tuatagaloa title and the two *faletele* of the Meleisea title were by houses in European bungalow style (*fale palāgi*) as well as smaller and simpler open Sāmoan houses (*faleo'o*).

Again next to these buildings and in a very symmetrical order follows another public space: East of the *fale āfolau* of the Tuatagaloa family is the place of the Congregational Church and west of the *faletele* of the Meleisea family is the place of the community hall of the Congregational Church and the residence of the congregational minister. To both sides of these buildings, symmetrically located to the west and to the east we find the places of the *tulāfale* (orators) and the places of the *usoali'i* (lower ranking chiefs), all kinsmen of the two high chiefs.

Figure 19: Malae and *Fale tālimālō* used today as *Fale fono* of Poutasi in 2006.

(Source: Author)

The *fale tālimālō* (guest-house) of the Tuatagaloa was built in 1960s by Tuatagoloa Simaile—used to receive guests and hold meetings. The Meleisea *fale tālimālō* was destroyed in the tsunami and was also used in the past as a *fale fono*.

The central positions of the traditional village nucleus are taken by the *malae* and the *fale tālimālō* (used today as *fale fono)* (Fig. 19). At first sight the building seems to be identical with all other Sāmoan *fale fono* and *faletele*. But whereas in all "normal" faletele everywhere in Sāmoa the roof construction is based on the wall posts (Fig. 19.1, *pou lalo*), in the Poutasi *fale fono* this function is taken over by the central post (Fig. 19.2, *pou tūloto*).

Figure 20: *Faletele* based on lateral posts(19.1) and on a central post (19.2)

(Source: UNESCO 1992: 77)

This special construction of the central post is crucial to set the final point in understanding the spatial narration of the old village of Poutasi. Seen from the bird's eye perspective the central post appears as a point, i.e. a geometric form already mentioned in the excursus but not taken up until now. The point may be defined as one element, if not the constitutive one, of geometry. Phythagoras defined the point as a unit which has a position and Euclid describes the point as something which does not have parts, i.e. something which is not divisible, an axiom. In any case the point is a concept which is decisive in the sense that it is constitutive for other axioms: The first axiom of Hilbert's system defines as first axiom: two non-identical points (P and Q) determine a straight line (Wikipedia).

The big house of Tuatagaloa, his *fale tālimālō*, used today as *fale fono*, and situated directly north of the village square (*malae*), has only one post, echoing the name of the village—Poutasi (literally 'one post').[1] Though today often used as *fale fono* this house one of two *fale tālimālō* (houses for receiving guests) the other, belonging to Meleisea, was used also used as *fale fono* before the 1990 cyclone when it was destroyed.

In the case of Poutasi the most prominent geometric form of a point is located in the centre of the *fale fono*; it is this point upon which everything of the building (now the most prominent building of the village) is based on. In the architecture of the building the roof is based on one post only; seen in the bird's eye view the post is nothing but a point. With the help of a set of different beams and rafters this one post carries the whole construction of the roof; the lateral pillars have a more or less decorative and assisting role (Fig. 21).

Figure 21: Fale fono Poutasi: "One post"

(Source: Author)

The central post of the *faletele* used as *fale fono* today thus is the point, the central pillar which makes the place unique and unmistakable. The theoretical concept of identity in a social context is defined as being such as all others, but with regard to the individual context identity means to be

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[1] The name is said to originate from the legend of Tuisamoa who was given Falealili by Malietoa Faiga and who built his house there with this one post only, which was said to be built in the manner of Fiji.

such as no other. Poutasi viewed from a sociological and architectural perspective appears to be as all other Sāmoan villages because it has the same social and architectural features, but there are a few details in its social order and its architectural structure in the context of the village square that make it unique and unmistakable among all other Sāmoan villages. The nucleus of the old village of Poutasi tells of the local identity of Poutasi and its people.

After the destructive effect of the tsunami and the reconstruction of the major part of the houses further inland at the road the village has not only lost its central public square but at the same time that ensemble of atmospheric quality and symbolic effects of the place which made the village unique and unmistakable. The *Fale tālimālō* of Tuatagaloa with the one central post withstood the tsunami but the *malae*, the public square in front of it, now appears to be an empty and almost dead place because it is no longer bustling with village people because life now has shifted to the main road. Up to now the majority of the village people are not aware of the social implications of this recent spatial development, but if there is no revival of the traditional village nucleus the consequence of this will be that an important part of the Sāmoan spatial archives definitely threatens to be lost.

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