

**A HANDBOOK FOR  
TRANSNATIONAL SAMOAN  
MATAI (CHIEFS)**



**TUSIFAITAU O MATAI  
FAFO O SAMOA**

***Editors***

**LUPEMATASILA MISATAUVEVE MELANI ANAE  
SEUGALUPEMAALII INGRID PETERSON**

# A HANDBOOK FOR TRANSNATIONAL SAMOAN MATAI (CHIEFS)

**TUSIFAITAU O MATAI**

**FAFO O SAMOA**

Chapter Editors  
Seulupe Dr Falaniko Tominiko  
Muliagatele Vavao Fetui  
Malepeai Ieti Lima

COVER PAGE

Samoan matai protestors outside New Zealand Parliament. On 28 March 2003, this group of performers were amongst the estimated 3,000 Samoans, including hundreds of transnational matai, who protested against the Citizenship [Western Samoa] Act 1982 outside the New Zealand Parliament in Wellington. They presented a petition signed by around 100,000 people calling for its repeal (*NZ Herald* 28 March 2003. Photo by Mark Mitchell).

Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of  
Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, New Zealand  
Website: <https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/mbc/>

ISBN: 978-0-473-53063-1

Copyright © 2020 Macmillan Brown Center for Pacific  
Studies, University of Canterbury  
All rights reserved.

This book is copyright. Except for the purpose of fair  
review, no part may be stored or transmitted in any form or  
by any means, electronic or mechanical, including recording  
or storage in any information retrieval system, without  
permission from the publisher.

No royalties are paid on this book

The opinions expressed and the conclusions drawn in this  
book are solely those of the writer. They do not necessarily  
represent the views of the Macmillan Brown Centre for  
Pacific Studies

Editing & Graphic Designing  
Dr Rosemarie Martin-Neuning

Published by MacMillan Brown Centre for Pacific  
Studies, University of Canterbury



**Macmillan Brown**  
Centre for Pacific Studies

# DEDICATION

## *A Tribute*

This book is dedicated to one of the symposium participants, Tuifa'asisina Eseta Motofoua Iosia, who passed away on 8 April 2020. Her contribution to this symposium was inspiring and her story will live on in the Handbook and inspire others to become matai also.

**The book is a result of a symposium on transnational Samoan matai held at the University of Auckland in November 2017.**

Figure 1 Symposium Participants<sup>1</sup>



---

<sup>1</sup> NOTE: Biographies are at time of the conference in 2017.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank Ratuva S, editor of *The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) for the reproduction of my chapter in this book, and the Marsden Fund, Royal Society of New Zealand for their assistance, without which my team would not have been able to conduct our research. We also wish to thank our research participants who kindly agreed to be interviewed by the team, the 550 transnational matai, who completed our online survey, and Pacific Studies, Te Wānanga o Waipapa, University of Auckland for supporting this research project.

## TRANSNATIONAL FA'AMATAI SYMPOSIUM OPENING PRAYER

Lo matou Tamā o i le lagi, o lau Afio o le Atua e to'atasi, na e faia le lagi ma le lalolagi, ona e faia ai lea o le paleali'i o au galuega, o le tagata na e faia i lou lava fa'atusa paia.

E vi'ia lau Afio ona o mea silisili ua e saunia mo le fanau a tagata, le lalolagi matagofie ma lona si'osi'omaga, aemaise le atamai e mafafau tonu ai.

Fa'afetai ona o lenei fa'amoemoe sa taumate fa'ameata'ita'i i 'ato, sa lilo i manatu pe taunu'u pe leai. A o lenei ua fa'ataunu'uina i le manuia a matou fuafuaga i lou agalelei, ua ta'ita'iina mai ai le soifua laulelei o le 'au usufono, i le lagi e mama ma le soifua manuia. E ao ai la ia i matou ona momoli atu le vi'iga ma le fa'ane'etaga i lau Afio lo matou Atua.

Fa'amanuia mai i le 'au usufono i matā'upu o le a fetufaa'i ai i manatu, le aoao o tofā manino mo le fa'alauteleina o su'esu'ega tauleatamai, mo le lelei auiluma o tulaga taulea'oa'oga. Fa'atamāo'āigaina i matou i lou mana, i lou poto silisili 'ese, 'auā o lau Afio o le punāvai o le atamai.

O la matou tatalo lea e ala atu i lou suafa Iesu Keriso, lo matou Ali'i ma lo matou Fa'aola.

Amen!

Oh God, our Father in heaven, the only one God who created the heaven and earth, then created the crown of Your creation, Your very holy image in a form of a man.

We give praises to your Holy Name for great things you have done for us, the beautiful world and the environment thereof, especially our minds to think rationally.

We give you thanks for guiding us through our plans, for bringing us together as a transnational group from afar. As humans there was doubt in our minds whether participants from afar would make it but, Lord we are grateful for your kindness in bringing us together safely today.

Bless each and every one of us as we share the knowledge and understanding of our search. Enlighten us with your spirit as we seek your guidance, for you are the source of all knowledge and understanding.

In the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen!

Muliagatele Vavao Fetui

## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

*Lupematasila Misatauweve Melani Anae* 1

#### **Chapter 1** **Mamalu Tau’ave** (The essence of faamatai)

The status of the fa’amatai in Samoa in 2017: A personal experience

*Fui Le’apai Pua’i’auofo Muā’autau Tu’ua Lau  
Īlaoa, Galumalemana Salapō* 8

O a’u o le matai Samoa I Niu Sila – I am a Samoan matai in New Zealand

*Hon. ‘Aupito Su’a William Sio* (New Zealand) 17

*Tofa Leituala Galumalemana Taiaopo  
Tuimaleali’ifano* (Hawaii) 24

*Asiata Ulugia Taofiga Snell Clements* (Australia) 33

*Tonumaipea Peter Stephen Po Ching*  
(New Zealand) 38

#### **Chapter 2** **Matai tamaitai** (Samoan women matai)

Matai Tama’ita’i at the intersections of family, fa’aletolu, and fa’amatai in Diaspora: Myth and meaning for a mother and daughter as chiefs in Hawai’i

*Loan Luafata Simanu-KlutꞤ* (Hawaii) 42

Matai Tamaitai: Samoan womanist agency and reflections on Nafanua

*Lupematasila Misatauweve Melani Anae*  
(New Zealand) 53

	Women matai: a case of the more things change, the more they stay the same?	
	<i>Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop</i> (New Zealand)	69
	Structure, agency and women matai: a post- colonial conundrum?	
	<i>Penelope Schoeffel</i> (Samoa)	90
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Matai Tautua (Matai who serve)	
	Tautua ai taumalele! Serving from afar!	
	<i>Fono-Tuvalu Fuimaono</i> (New Zealand)	98
	“E sui faiga, ae tumau le faavae” Transnational notions of service: “ways of doing may change, but the foundations remain the same”	
	<i>Seulupe Falaniko Tominiko</i> (New Zealand)	113
	Tautua: a relational obligation?	
	<i>Muliagatele Vavao Fetui</i> (New Zealand)	125
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Teu le va</b> (Relational spaces of matai)	
	Authority of the matai sa’o in contemporary Samoa: at home and abroad	
	<i>Meleisea Leasiolagi Malama Meleisea</i> (Samoa)	139
	The matai tautua and the word “matai” through time and space	
	<i>Serge Tcherkezoff</i> (France)	145



	Aga'ifanua ma aganu'u: localised and universal village practices – toward a better understanding of indigenous systems: a case from Falelatai, 'Upolu, Samoa	
	<i>Luamanuvae Morgan Tuimalealiifano (Fiji)</i>	158
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Loto alofa ma lima malosi</b> (Affective and effective ties of matai)	
	A modern matai: reconciling modern knowledge with ancient wisdom	
	<i>Papali'i Failautusi Avegalio (Hawaii)</i>	177
	Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church matai personal NZ-born/raised experiences:	
	<i>Anae Lupematasila Lima Arthur Anae</i>	184
	<i>Tuifa'asisina Eseta Motofoua Iosia</i>	186
	<i>Talamatavaao Peteru Sone Iosia</i>	191
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>'Fotu o malama'</b> Youth Panel (Suli: matai-in-waiting)	
	<i>Dillon Misa , Sili Mireta Pita , Elise Peleti Fuimaono Alolua, Seraphine Ekita Williams</i> <i>Facilitator: Leitulagi Natalie Maulolo Toevai</i>	195
	<b>Conclusion: Faamatai - A Globalised Pacific Identity</b>	
	<i>Lupematasila Misatauveve Melani Anae</i>	207
	<b>Authors Biographies</b>	239

## INTRODUCTION

Lupematasila Misatauveve Melani Anae

This special issue will mark the 58th anniversary of Samoa's Independence from New Zealand on 1 January 1962 and a celebration of the *Transnational Faamatai Symposium* that was held in November 2017, Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand, the first ever Symposium on global Samoan chiefs and the chiefly system. The two day event was hosted by the University of Auckland as part of Lupematasila Misatauveve Dr Melani Anae's Marsden Project 'Transnational matai (chiefs): ancestor god avatars or merely title-holders?' funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand. Members of her team included SeuLupe Dr Falaniko Tominiko, Muliagatele Vavao Fetui and Malepeai Dr Ieti Lima with emerging researchers Karen Mangnall, Seugalupemaalii Ingrid Peterson, Seira Aukuso-Su'e, Tiresa Poe, and Natalie Leitulagi Toevai. One of her team members, Muliagatele Vavao Fetui is writing the very first PhD Thesis in the Samoan language, based on this Marsden research project, and it will be the inaugural PhD Thesis written in Samoan at the University of Auckland and in New Zealand. The title of his thesis is 'O Toe Laumeanuti o le Fa'aaloalo I Agatausili a Samoa I Atualuga (Notions of politeness and respect in a Samoan transnational community), and it will be submitted at the end of 2020.

The Symposium provided a timely opportunity to produce the very first publication written by Samoan matai and transnational matai themselves, partly because for a long time, we have watched others write our story, and as a result, actively reinterpret and suppress our Samoan indigenous knowledges and experiences. It also provided a critical mass and valuable contributions to the experiences of transnational matai to date. For the first time ever, matai from Samoa and in the transnational space were able to come together and provide knowledge and scholarship on faamatai, often obscured in mainstream journals and publications. Diverse perspectives and indigenous knowledges can contribute new knowledge and new approaches to research. It is hoped that the diverse perspectives in this Handbook stimulate new ideas and development. Relating theory and practice in new ways and undertaking research collaboratively in, across, and beyond academia and knowledges will not only inspire new research directions, but will also initiate change amongst the communities of knowledge represented by the Symposium contributors and empowerment for Samoan diaspora communities – especially readers who are transnational suli (matai-in-waiting).

The central focus of this Handbook is to trace the multiple perceptions and experiences of intergenerational global Samoan matai, or titled family heads, and faamatai, the Samoan chiefly system - to find out how transnationality – the condition of cultural connectedness and mobility across space, is used to refer to the cultural specificities of global processes. How do transnational matai - those born and raised in western metropolises, as well as Samoan-born matai now domiciled in the western metropolises - maintain meaningful and sustainable ties to families and villages in Samoa? How are global cultural forces impacting on faamatai, faasamoa and identities? This Handbook explores these issues by focusing on the links between ‘cultural logics’ of human action and economic and political processes within the transnational Pacific.

Samoan indigenous knowledge, religion and culture have been shattered by the global influences of colonisation firstly by Germany and then by New Zealand; by Christianity which eroded Samoan religious thought; and by capitalism which has forced Samoans to develop alternative economic systems for survival. Indigenous knowledge and faamatai processes, as a result, have become scattered – destroyed, hidden, and transformed.

As suggested by Meleisea Malama Meleisea in his keynote address “As Samoans, we often speak of the pride we have in our culture; yet it is quite difficult...for people to agree what the principles of our culture are. The fa’amatai of today has evolved for more than a century into something our ancestors would not recognise. This is its strength; culture must evolve to survive. But there are threats. Today in many villages, church congregations are far stronger, more united and more organised than village councils. The fono (village councils of matai) are often made weak by the issues I have described here. Where are these trends leading us? It is not impossible that in fifty years’ time our villages and their fa’amatai governance systems will have faded away, to become like suburbs and small towns, with locally elected councillors under central government control (which is the way in which local government operates in most modern democracies). If, in the distant future matai titles become de-linked from the nu’u (traditional villages) and itumalo (traditional districts) as is the current trend (evidenced by the bestowal of titles upon people who do not live in the nu’u or have any presence there), matai titles may come to be regarded of equal rank, held by all their adult members.”

Much of the faamatai literature is polarised. Advocates of transnational faamatai view transnational Samoans as Samoa's 'comparative advantage' and 'competitive edge' - founded on the acculturation of mobility, and remaining true to one of the key tenets of faasamoa – the welfare of the collective. This view advocates that the overarching feature of this perspective relies on the transnational faamatai, and a leadership which is intent on attaining and maintaining peace and harmony for aiga (families) and for Samoa in changing times. By participating in Samoan life across the globe, most Samoans reinforce their relationships and fulfil their obligations and commitment to extended family and village. At the same time that they are becoming socio-economically and politically successful in their countries of birth – the host nations, they are reproducing the social relations that ensure the reproduction of faamatai. By doing this, they are demonstrating their comparative advantage in a global world.

Meanwhile, critics lambast the shifts in matai criteria as enabling better-educated youth, groups with new social agendas such as gender, sexual orientation and political philosophy to eradicate the former homogeneity of ancestral family and village matai. The perception that transnational matai "lack the proper cultural grooming to become 'proper' matai who know their stuff - oratory language, genealogy and esoteric matters, and many subtle nuances associated with faamatai" (So'o, 2007) pervade these views. Advocates of ancestral faamatai argue that we must confront and manage globalising forces, and they point to the flexibility of Samoan society which, although undergoing significant and real changes, does so without a sense of historical disjunction, ensuring that its cultural foundations remain intact.

Thus, there is a clear need to move beyond these positions on faamatai. Conceptualising faamatai from a transnational stance which recognises the experiences and narratives of transnational matai and their children born and raised on foreign soil are rare but pivotal, especially since there is the implication that this cohort are not considered real and viable networks of exchange or connection. Previous research on Samoan transnational matai and faamatai in New Zealand (Anae, 1998; 2001; 2002; 2004; 2006) has shown that the views of NZ-born Samoan matai, although regarded by some as indirect or involuntary participants in Samoan transnationalism, clearly expose this cohort as 'real' Samoans and as thinkers and makers of cultural discourse and thus critical for the persistence of the faamatai.

Importantly, matai in Samoa appear to 'do' faamatai differently than transnational matai, who operate in what social scientists would call a 'Pacific transnationalism space'. Pacific transnationalism is a topic of growing

importance, tied as it is to the very future of Pacific countries. Lee states that “Any issues facing Pacific peoples must be discussed in the context of both the islands and their diasporas, taking the processes of ‘world enlargement’ and transnationalism into account” (2007: 30). This will involve more than already documented political economy explanations for Samoan transnationalism. A broader focus is needed to take into account other elements of Samoan transnationalism, such as the cultural dimension of faamatai dynamics as a central unit of analysis, which will show how cultural and political elements are combined with emerging multilevel and multinational activities.

While there is increasing global concern about the ‘erosion’ of the faamatai, there is a need for more evidence of how transnational matai experience and practise faamatai and their roles and obligations to aiga and villages in their host nations and Samoa. This will enable a better understanding of both the potential and risks associated with the experiences of transnational faamatai, and will educate to liberate/empower the thousands of Samoan diaspora youth who are all suli.

The authors in this Handbook explore what it means to be a transnational matai in the 21st century. The 6 sections of the book contain chapters that examine faamatai experiences in relation to transnational understandings of how these sections resonate internationally. We finally ask questions about the future of the faamatai in the last section.

This Handbook extends conceptualisations of transnational faamatai by bringing inter-generational faamatai perspectives from Samoa, New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii and Oceanside/San Diego, USA. Responding to a recognised lacunae in the literature, this Handbook moves beyond polarised political economy analyses of the faamatai, and will examine the value of these experiences and activities from the affective ties of these cohorts, and advance theorisation of transnational matai as a viable network of exchange and connection. Affective ties are much more than merely emotional ties. They are ties which produce effective action through remittances of comprehensive cash flows which are driving Samoa’s development. Cash flows here refers to both money sent to Samoa and money spent in Samoa from transnational Samoans. The cash flows consist of aiga cash remittances, “tourist” dollars and visits, saofai (matai installation) contributions, aiga reunion, and funeral contributions; and these cash flows are providing the bulk of Samoa’s development capital. Despite complaints of transnational Samoans and matai reading articles in *Samoa Observer* about challenges to faamatai from the Government and Land and Titles Court in Samoa, very

few transnational matai have totally departed from its practices. It is an integral part of their lives despite its alleged faults and ambiguities, and Samoa's sustainable future depends on it.

The work in this Handbook provides intergenerational Samoan experiences across multi-disciplinary sites that give testimony to 'others' definitions of faasamoa, faamatai, language, customs, value systems and practices and the assimilation of these as global forces of modernisation. More fundamentally however, the work in this Handbook provides evidence for the powerful resistance and motivation of transnational Samoan matai to harness the promise and potential of tautua (service), to their families, villages and to Samoa, despite the risks and pressures their tautua embodies.

Collectively, the chapters in this Handbook address system-wide issues and challenges both in transnational spaces and in the homeland, and opportunities presented to them as matai. They span the following diverse but overlapping themes: mamalu tau'ave (the essence of faamatai), matai tautua (matai who serve), matai tamaitai (Samoan women matai), teu le va (the sacred/secular or spiritual/social spaces of relationships), loto alofa ma lima malosi (affective and effective matai roles), fotu o malama (matai-in-waiting/youth).

The scope of transnational faamatai is expansive and deep. It is concerned with what happens in formal and informal settings. It is concerned with outcomes of the values, understandings and practices of tautua which produces or transforms faamatai. Research on how transnational faamatai is practised is integral and maintains a critical gaze on the wider context of faasamoa and faamatai, and seeks to identify barriers to achieving leadership and wellbeing of families as well as innovative ways to educate suli to aspire to one day becoming a matai. The Handbook is based on transnational matai journeys and experiences, and is a timely text on transnational faamatai seen through the simultaneous research and experiential lenses of Samoan indigenous and transnational researchers and matai. But by no means does it represent the entire field of research on transnational matai and faamatai.

Some remarks about the book's orientation and assumptions, its terminology, themes and its structure are in order. This publication takes its bearings from the position of non-traditional academics or 'experts' as holders of valid indigenous knowledges and the transfer of oral presentations onto paper as a continuum of the telling of our stories, our way.

Therefore across the 6 sections, while 11 of the contributions are indeed academic papers, 13 contributions are short reflexive pieces - transcripts of oral Symposium presentations. Of the 24 book contributions, 19 have been written by matai – this is made up of 2 academics and the 3 suli – and only two authors are non-Samoan.

The Handbook therefore contains personal reflective pieces by not only Samoan international scholars and academics who are matai, but also politicians, community leaders, government workers, church leaders - men, women, faafafine, LGBTIQ, Marsden research participants and youth- and thus provides a critical mass and valuable contributions to the experiences of transnational faamatai to date. Another point of difference is a languaging one.

To include Samoan-speaking audiences, contributions written or delivered in the Samoan language are provided ad verbatim. It is interesting to note that many of the authors switch from English to Samoan and vice versa. Similarly, the use of the formal 't' and informal 'k' is interchangeable. These instances of 'switching' reflect the bilingual tendencies in the current speaking and writing of Samoan amongst many Samoan speakers. Thus, there are deliberate inconsistencies in how Samoan words, phrases and sentences have been presented to preserve the writing preferences of each of the authors. Translations and English paraphrases in some instances have been provided also.

The range of contributors is considerable, and the differences between their positions and perspectives are often significant. What they share, however, is their transnational viewpoint (which often translates into a distinct view of the world) from outside mainstream faamatai and a sometimes acute sense of marginality. They also share a keen interest in ways of being, seeing, moving, reflecting, thinking and advancing that are not currently common in mainstream faamatai research.

They therefore have in common an attentiveness to alternative ontologies and epistemologies, and a commitment to different aesthetics and ethics oriented towards transnational experiences.

The authors in this Handbook write from Aotearoa/New Zealand, Samoa, France, Fiji, Hawaii, the USA, and Australia. The transdisciplinary approach of this Handbook provides conceptual and empirical narratives across different disciplines and epistemological interests such as anthropology, pacific studies, history, social sciences, Samoan studies,

theology, politics, government ministries and departments, education, business, and church.

The contributions focus on contemporary issues and situations while drawing from historical reflections and lessons. The idea is not only to illuminate the intricacies of faamatai, but also to provide innovative ideas to help understand and address some of the contemporary challenges associated with these in our world today. Despite all their ‘same but different’ positionalities, we propose they share a connection: non-traditional authors’ approaches to the production of new knowledge have an affinity with the trajectories of many new and emerging research fields. The uncertainty they experience in the confrontation with knowledge systems that do not provide an easy fit for their research interests is matched by another: through their work, they raise questions that unsettle what has been taken for granted. In this condition of productive uncertainty, epistemological and methodological pluralism helps create an opening, or unfurl a horizon, in which different knowledges can be seen, shared and afforded potential for new comparisons, new discussions and new research directions.



**Figure 2** The Marsden team from left to right: Natalie Leitulagi Toevai, Tiresa Poe, Lupematasila Misatauveve Dr Melani Anae, Rev. Alec Toleafoa, Muliagatele Vavao Fetui, Seulupe Dr Falaniko Tominiko (Absent: Malepeai Dr Ieti Lima, Seugalupemaalii Ingrid Peterson).



## 1 CHAPTER

### MAMALU TAU'AVE (THE ESSENCE OF FAAMATAI)

#### THE STATUS OF THE FA'AMATAI IN SAMOA IN 2017: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Fui Le'apai Pua'i'aunofu Muā'autau Tu'ua Lau 'Īlaoa Galumalemana Salapō

##### Abstract

The practices of fa'amatai in Sāmoa are constantly changing as it tries to adapt to changes from within and without Sāmoa. Some of these changes are clearly visible and will be illustrated at three levels of the fa'amatai – the family, village and work. At the family level the author will share knowledge about the nine titles he currently holds, thereby shedding light on the significance of these titles in their respective cultural contexts and the challenges and rewards associated with each title and with all the titles collectively. He will also share his experience as a regular participant in two village fono, one on his mother's side and the other on his father's side. Village social organizations generally and fono dynamics speak of social and power relationships between and among village residents and between matai and non-matai. The author will also share his experience as a matai who heads the National University of Sāmoa. The author will draw from examples at the three levels of the fa'amatai discussed in the paper changes in the fa'amatai in last 50 years and possible reasons.

**Keywords:** fa'amatai; matai titles; challenges and rewards; practitioner and observer of fa'amatai

Oute muamua ona fa'atulou i le paia ma le mamalu o le fono o e lenei aso i ne'i ou si'i se matalalaga ia ona fai lea masala o le tatou Iunivesite o Samoa. Oute fa'afetai foi i le valaaulia (invite) lou afioga le fa'aluluga o le tatou poloketi i Aukilani nei lau Afioga Lupematasila.

Ia fa'atalofa foi i le Afioga le Minista o tula'i le foe o le sa o le tatou faigamalo i Aotearoa nei fa'apea fo'i ona fa'atalofa i le paia ma le mamalu o le fono o lenei aso.

This is my take of what's happening in the fa'amatai in Samoa. This is what I see as the changes in Samoa, and once one talks about changes you have in mind a baseline. My baseline generally is about fifty years ago or so. I look at these changes from two perspectives. My personal experiences as a practitioner of the fa'asamoa fa'amatai, and secondly as a keen observer of the fa'amatai.

### **Outline/Introduction**

I will talk about the fa'amatai at three levels: the family, the village - where I work and generally. I say generally, as I was happy to be part of the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the government, which I chaired and which looked at the integrity of the fa'amatai. That's where I gathered some of the information I will be using here [in this presentation]. I may not cite those particular aspects of the information, but I have put them together to try to understand changes in the fa'amatai. Then I present my observations of the changes and concluding remarks as to where we are heading with the fa'amatai in Samoa.

### **Introduction**

These papers about changes regarding the fa'amatai in Samoa will illustrate some of these changes from my personal experiences as a matai in the aiga, in the village and where I work at the National University of course, and for the country generally. Then observations and concluding remarks on the future of the fa'amatai are presented.

**The family** - I think I start talking about the family, to talk about the titles that I have, which I think is an illustration of one of the major changes in the fa'amatai at least as practiced in Samoa. Once you write your name down, your name, or my name; there has to be a name that comes first, so we are talking classifications. When you have so many titles, which one do you choose to come first? One way of classifying those nine titles that I have at the moment is to look at the dates when they were conferred. First one in 1985, the next in 1991, then another in 1998, 2000, 2005, 2006, 2010, and the last one in 2015 - so that's one way of classifying these titles. We can also classify those titles by 'ali'i's and tulafale's'. The ali'i titles of the nine titles are there: Fui, Tuua, Ilaoa, Galumalemana and then the tulafale titles are the other five. These being Lau, Leapai, Salepo, Pueonofo ma Muaaitau. Another way of classifying titles is their village and place of origin. Now I'm classifying them as titles from my father's side and from my mother's side. If you want the villages on my father's side: Fui and Leapai are from Savaia, Lefaga. In fact, all of the four titles there are from Savaia, Lefaga and in that

same village my Great Grandfather married my Great Grandmother from different families in the same village, so Fui is from the Great Great Grandmother's family; Leapai from the Great Great Grandfather's family, and so on. Mother's side: Lau and Tuua from the village of Lotofaga, Safata. Ilaoa from Solosolo and Noama'a and Galumalemana from Faleata - more specifically Vaitele. The other matai title is from my wife's family – Salapo - which is a tulafale title, and so that's one way of classifying those titles. Rank - so you can classify them as sa'o titles and pitovao titles, and there's a paper on sa'o later on, so I'll leave the explanation of sa'o for later. Pitovao is like you know a portion of your land or the land of the sa'o - allocated to matai lea fesoasoani i le tausiga o le aiga. So those are the sa'o titles at the top and pitovao titles.

**My ranking preference and why?** I think the professor has to come first, and that's a personal opinion. Others would put professor way after the many titles. I think it's a personal achievement and you have to acknowledge that. There's a lot of work that goes into it. Fui is an ali'i title of the village of Savaia. There are three ali'is in that village: i lesi muatala ia e afio ai Fui ma Malama - brothers. Ae o lesi tu o le tala o le fale ia e afio ai lesi tamali'i o Tusani so that's why Fui is in there and Fui is from my father's family. Leapai i le nu'u a lea o Savaia e lua tulafale e fai upu. There are two high ranking orators in the village of Savaia. These are the tulafales that do the laugas and things. E iai la Leapai. E to'alua tulafale e fai le upu o le nu'u le na. A fai la o le saofa'iga o le nu'u le na e tusa e to'alima matai. E to'atolu tamaali'i e afio le tuatala ia ma tulafale ia to'alua e faia le upu o le nu'u. O le Leapai ma lesi tulafale ta'u o le Paleoulata. So that's why I chose the Fui the tamaali'i one of the three highest ranking ali'i in that village, the village of my father and Leapai one of the two highest ranking tulafale of the same village. The sa'o title of the village of my mother from Lotofaga. That's my mother's father's family. My mother's mother's family is Solosolo so the Ilaoa. So that's my preference. Is there something about the change in the matai system in Samoa?

**My observations - multiple identities.** You go to one place, you're a tamaali'i or a tulafale in the same village. I can be the tamaali'i tapaa'u o le nu'u and also the to'oto'o o le nu'u tulafale. Depending on what you're doing at particular times you have all these identities. If not in practice at least in your head. Always in your head because you might be called to be a tulafale one moment and the next you are the tamaali'i. Multiple roles: I'm a tamaali'i, I'm a tulafale, I'm a sa'o but I also can be a pitovao. But I'm also a faiavā - matai faiavā. A matai faiavā you know where you sit, and if you're a pitovao you know where you sit. If you're a tulafale you're supposed to know where

you sit. If you're a tamaali'i you're supposed to know where you sit and what to say, when to talk and when not to talk. So, there are multiple roles and of course multiple responsibilities, Montaga le nu'u, montaga le lotu all these. You are here ae ta'u mai le maliu i le aiga lae te matai ai fo'i and you have to go. Tiga ga pisi i le Iunivesite if there's a maliu of my Aunty or someone of my extended families in Brisbane or Christchurch, I have to leave work and go if I'm the sa'o. Otherwise your family will say why are you the sa'o when you're not doing the sa'o stuff? Multiple challenges of course. Montaga this and that all those kinds of stuff.

Why many matais? Sometimes it's the reward or the tautua of your parents, your grandparents and great grandparents. Sometimes it's because of you. It's because it's Asofou. They want to see their son that has had the opportunity to have that education to be there and be involved in the affairs of the family in the village, to lead and so on. Ia that's my challenge even at the university. What title should I put after my name? You know there's an advertisement on the TV and the radio - the country wouldn't want to hear two lines of my names and so you have to choose. But if you choose one and not the other, if it's a family of your father. Your mother's family will say? "Pei e taua le ali'i lea lana tama ae pei e faigaelo i le aiga o lana tina". Even now my formal name at the university is Professor Fui Le'apai Tu'ua Lau 'Ilaoa Asofou So'o. If you come to NUS, to my door, they can't fit all the names in the small space of my door, and so they put the two first titles from my father's family, and the people of my mother's family who come to my office more often than anybody else don't see the name of their family on the door. So, they go back to the village and they say: "E le amagaia le ali'i la le matai o tatou aiga" so it's an ongoing challenge. After all they gave the title to you that you're the flag bearer for the family and the village - all of those things.

Now I'm a matai tausi aiga. I am selected as a leader. You're supposed to bring the family together and it's a challenge because of the many who are now in New Zealand and everywhere like Lupematasila was talking about - you do what you can to try and have the family together. Hopefully reduce all those disputes that end up in the Land and Titles Court. Of the nine matai titles that I have only three were not contested in the Land and Titles Court. The other three were all contested. When I was following my Uncle and the people who were the holders of the titles, they never agreed on anything. What I noticed then before I was a matai in some of those families - e nofo a le toaina i le mea e nofo iai, and the other one Uncle would live at the other side of the village, the other Uncle at the other side, the Aunty

somewhere else in Savai'i and the other four Aunties and Uncles in New Zealand and Australia. There has never been an opportunity to come together to discuss these issues, so when I became a matai, I made sure that I try and do something to bring the family together. Fortunately, so far after those years of holding those titles, my families have not taken any of those issues to the Land and Titles Court. I was responsible for conferring titles in one of the families, and no one contested anything because now everyone is together, and everyone feels they're all part of the discussions, decision-making, and that sort of thing. It's very hard but we have Facebook and all those sorts of things now, and we need to use all those things to bring the family together. With two of the families, we decided to have those to'ona'is on Sunday every third month. It's another attempt to bring the family together. In addition, the annual a le aiga, that's when people from overseas usually come and participate and then have family reunions. One family we had four family reunions and now everyone is tired of doing family reunions. A tou faiatu ai let's have people in Brisbane host and the people in Samoa complain "But we can't afford that. Why don't we have it here all the time" so there's all these issues.

**Village** - I'm a regular participant in three villages. You sit in the fono and that sort of thing. The Fui title I was talking about from village 1, the other one from Faleata and the other one Lotofaga, Safata. In the Fui family I am second rank. People don't say you are second rank, even people in the family. You just know you are second rank. Because when the first rank guy is gone you are the one who moves in and takes over. In terms of the village context you know you have the tamali'i is at the matuatala; even if there are many holders of the title one sits at the matuatala, and when that guy is gone I'm the next one to sit at the matuatala, so that's how you know you are second rank. No one complains of the other six holders of the same title. In the Tuua family I am first rank because the second holder of the title resides in New Zealand all the time, so I will always be first rank in Samoa as long as that other holder is in New Zealand. Ranking in the family, in the village is an indication of fa'aaloalo. You don't get it by force or anything. It's just fa'aaloalo that gives you the right and opportunity to be first rank in this particular time in your family. In two of the families I also have tulafale titles like I said before. However, I use ali'i titles because they are of higher rank than tulafale. Pei e le manaia - it's not nice to have a tulafale title and an ali'i title in the same village and you choose to be a tulafale. Although it's your freedom to take what you want to take. But once you are a tamali'i everyone expects you to be a tamaali behave like one. Have the wisdom that one should have as an ali'i and all those expectations.

Vā - e taua tele le vā. There's a need to understand the vā, the relationship between one tamaali'i and the other. Between tamaali'i and tulafale and between matai and non-matai. It's always the fa'aaloalo and the vā that's like a cement that holds things together. Once you lose that, then we are close to pure democracy, for everyone is the same. Vā also determines who speaks, what to say, when to listen. Challenges are not very easy as you're sitting there and one of the holders of the same title is saying something that you don't agree with, but you're not supposed to say anything because you're supposed to have one view. Always when you're sitting on the fono o le nu'u ae tupu mea fa'apena, personally, I find it very challenging; then my first rank holder of the title turns around and says to me: "Sei fai sou manatu" and I just look down the floor. O le a le manatu o lea fai? The moment I fai my manatu I'm going to keke'e his manatu so you sit there and be quiet and hope that when you're the first rank then you say what you think is right.

**Punishment** - You know now it used to be food and ie toga, and it's now sometimes a mixture of food and ie toga and money. Sometimes it's just money. Oga so'o selau tala mai le isi fono. So those are the changes.

Even at the village level we try and organise the village so that they are united and can be doing positive developments for the village. Talamua and the village of Savaia, Talamua ia o le mea fa'anamua celebrate the fruits of the land. It's a way of bringing everybody together and making sure that the au fai fa'atoaga faimaumaga are doing the maumaga (plantation) to feed the village. Aua ne'i o le nu'u leai ni meaai ia fai fo'i lotu fa'apena tamafanau.

Recognition of achievement; only in our last meeting it's going to be done for the first time of talamua. This is the village of Savaia. We've decided I'm a member of the three committee members of talamua. We've decided it's now, and agreed to by the whole village that we will celebrate as from next month silisili o le nu'u. Po'o fea e aoga ai le tamaititi as long as your parents are rendering tautua, monotaga of the village, you will be part of the prizegiving at the end of the year - the village prizegiving. Ia fa'apena fo'i le galuega a tina ma tamaita'i - lalaga le ie toga. E fa'apena fo'i le aufaifa'atoaga - there's a prize for the aumaga tele, o le talo pito tele ia ma le fai fa'atoaga e toto le fa'i, toto le ta'amu ma toto mea uma.

Observations show that the village is intact - those regular meetings and annual church services. Governance practices accommodate the old and the new pei o fa'asalaga, mea'ai ma tupe tumau pea le vā fealoa'i. But it's already a challenge, and more village members who had the opportunity to have

formal education sit in the village. I don't think they hold back now like I did. I think they would just say it whilst the highest-ranking chiefs are speaking or something.

Developments accommodate the modern realities and traditional practices *talamua ma aoga*. Another development there is that you have customary land *fanua o le aiga*, but I must have been the one that started the practice of fencing off my land that I live on. That happened about four years ago. There are more families from the village who are *toso le pa* (have a fence). The reason is that I commute to the village and go to Apia Monday to Friday and then Saturday *alu loa fai le maumaga* (plantation), so you need to fence it otherwise *e te alaku ua talepe le tagata a le tou aiga*; so, it's a common thing. And if the rest of the matais in the family agree for you to stay on that piece of land then you do what is best to protect *mea gae luga le fanua*.

Work at the National University of Samoa (NUS) - of course I acknowledge in a village if you have a matai title from another village you have *mea i le nu'u e failoa ai*. At NUS that doesn't happen, but that doesn't prevent me from acknowledging the matai titles of my staff. I feel it's not nice to be there, especially me as Vice Chancellor, and I don't acknowledge the matai titles of members of my staff because *o le fa'aaloalo lena ma le maualuga o le latou aiga*. *O le isi mea malie o le matou Iunivesite* sometimes and not so much now *e o atu Meleisea*, but before that we have had very heated discussions. Sometimes very healthy academic discussions. But sometimes those discussions can get very nasty and personal, and so that's when I bring in the *fa'atafatafa mai loa le fa'asamoa*. *Fa'asamoa loa matou mea*. For some reason *fa'asamoa loa matou mea* everyone gets themselves disciplined *ia ma uma ai fa'apena*. *Lona uiga o lae iai le mea taua totonu*.

We now have a *fa'alupega* for the university. It's published in the *measina* publication. *E fa'asamoa uma i togatofi a le Iunivesite e fai mo le latou fa'alupega*. The *fa'alupega* is generally a way of translating the university's set up, where there's bureaucracy and organisational kind of structure into a way that feels Samoan. Thereby bringing people together, and uniting the staff and the students, making them feel proud of their own university. *Ia e taumafai a e saili upu Samoa e latalata i le fa'asamoa ina o upu ia*. I suggested *tapaau* for Vice Chancellor. We've translated Vice Chancellor *o le tapaau*. *Afio mai lou Afioiga le tapaau o le Iunivesite*. Why *tapaau*? *Tapaau* literally to whom we seek assistance. Vice Chancellor *a iai se mea e manaomia ai le fesoasoani o le staff or students they go to the Vice Chancellor*. The Vice Chancellor is the last resort. So, the reason for choosing *tapaau* as the

Samoan translation of Vice Chancellor and presidents. Ua uma la Deans, Directors, right down to the cleaners and grounds men, they all have Samoan translations. Ia e tu'u fa'atasi le fa'alupega o le tatou Iunivesite.

**General conclusions** - I think the fa'amatai will still be there for quite some time. It's difficult to agree on one holder of sa'o titles. Ranking in villages will depend on fa'aaloalo and vā fealoa'i still intact, I think. Two of my families in particular, I remember the sa'o at the time the same title he held was conferred onto younger people that himself, he said to them: "You will not get a piece of land from the family to reside on until you come back to the family". A fa'apea o outou gae alala i Niu Sila ma fafo se'i vagana ua outou fo'i mai nei ia ona avatu fo'i se fanua e tautua ai le aiga ma le nu'u. I thought that was an innovation, and it was up to that point, once you're a title holder you're entitled to land and should be given land; it's still the practice in some families, but I think that was an innovation and that family of mine the old man at the time said: "Malilie outou o lo'o ala i fafo se'i o'o i le taimi e tou te fo'i mai ai nei ia ona maua ai le fonua e tautua ai le aiga ma le nu'u". Ia e iai le agaga fa'apena ia matou; that's what I'm hearing from people there pei e le fa'ataua tele avatu le mamalu ona o'u fa'amalulu atu. Pei e le fa'aago tele matou lae o ia outou le ala ma papaau nei. Ia e fa'apena le agaga o le mea. Muamua I think it's better if you are here and you want to maintain that connection of respect or whatever in Samoa. Fai pea se monotaga ona o lae iai tagata lae o o e fai le monotaga le igoa aua le fa'alupe le vao le suafa. Lana o le mea na e tupu e toe fo'i atu tatou e tatou toe saili se mea e nonofo ai ae o tagata moni o tatou ma le tatou aiga.

That's my other observation. One of my families conferred a lot of different titles - pitovao titles - last Christmas, and I overheard conversations from my sisters and the aunties, sons and daughters who had had titles conferred in that conferring ceremony. Aemaise o matou le nonofo i le nu'u pei o se auala e alo ese mai ai le tele o mea fa'a taulelea pe fa'aualuma fa'afafine e fai ona fai loa le matai. I thought that was interesting because that was the first time, I heard that as a reason for having titles conferred on our young people. I think generally now in Samoa there's more awareness than before the rule of law. Right now, I'm working on putting together; Meleisea and I are working on putting together a programme, a credited university programme for our land and title judges. Our law papers there, I think there's a general awareness around village matai now that the rule of law will in the end be the supreme law. Although there's a lot of conversation there - e ese a le tulafono a le palagi ese le nu'u. Ia always accomodating the new changes that was the other comment from Lupematasila. People are very money minded now. I have gai o'u galuega i le maumaga every Saturday - I go back



Saturday alu i le maumaga. I bring over my cousins from my mother's side, from my dad's side to do work for me. I'm the sa'o in both families and I grew up with that mentality a e alu e fai se galuega pei se tautua na i le matai. No longer I give them money, but did not think of that money as payment for the labour they had given me doing my work. Then I started hearing them talk among themselves tongtalate (contract) o tatou fo'i ua tatau ona si'isi'i luga le totoni. So, they're talking money, but I did not have that kind of thinking when I brought them over. A ave ai le tupe o le mea lea e faatau ai le suta a le tou aiga, but they see it differently always in terms of payment for labour.

Thank you.

## O A'U O LE MATAI SAMOA I NIU SILA – I AM A SAMOAN MATAI IN NEW ZEALAND

Hon. 'Aupito Su'a William Sio

### Abstract

This presentation follows a personal journey of a Samoan matai who is a current Member of New Zealand's Parliament who has learnt his fa'a-Samoa and the role of a Samoan matai through life experiences in both New Zealand and Samoa, and has used these life experiences in the conduct of his duties as a New Zealand politician, a Samoan matai in New Zealand, and a Sa'o or paramount chief of his family in Samoa whose members are spread across New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii and mainland USA. I will highlight examples of my own earlier learnings, learnings in the role, maintaining a balance in the role of a Samoa matai and its duties versus my role & duties as a New Zealand politician and the future challenges faced by a transnational Samoan family.

**Keywords:** Fa'asamoa, Samoan matai, sa'o, transnational Samoan family

Thank you. Can I join with the orators who welcomed all our special guests this morning and simply say e nga mana, e nga iwi, e nga reo, e nga hau e wha e karangahama tena koutou, tena koutou, kia ora tatou katoa. O manatu ona le o'o se matou fa'amatalaga i sa ma faigata o le tatou aso. Paia le popo ma mamalu ua o'o. O le tatou malo fa'aaloogia ua asiasi mai. Aemaise lou Afioga i le tapanu o le Iunivesite o Samoa taenane fo'i le Afioga i Ali'i Professa ae legata o Samoa, Hawai'i ae fa'apea fo'i Ausetalia; so greetings, and just welcome to Aotearoa New Zealand, land of the young and beautiful and gifted. Na'o Mangle (Mangere) lava e iai fa'alupega a haha. I've created honorifics for Mangere based on the Samoan honorific system and I've called Mangere since 2008 as the gateway to the nation in recognition of the airport, land of the young, beautiful, and gifted. In recognition of our high youth population and home of war champions in recognition of Joseph Parker, David Tua, Savage, Dame Vallery Vili, Sir John Kerwan, just to name a few of people from Mangere.

This presentation is firstly a personal journey of my life as a Samoan growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand, though I am born in Samoa. Secondly, being chosen by my family to become a matai, how I felt at that particular time, the learnings in how I've had to adopt very quickly in performing my tasks as a matai and then trying to balance all that out in the political arena

in my role first as a councillor, Deputy Mayor, Member of Parliament, and now a Minister.

Thirdly, it is about balancing all that out with my matai role living in New Zealand, but also as a matai for a family that is now an international family who live in Samoa, New Zealand, Australia, Hawai'i and American Samoa, and trying to look to the future about how do we support and sustain our extended family. So here it goes.

From the early days, my father was a staunch Samoan matai, so he said when we go to school in New Zealand, you must learn English, and when you come home you learn the fa'asamoa and speak Samoan. As a staunch matai living in New Zealand, he insisted that as young people, we should perform our roles and responsibilities with our Church; and that was fine for him, but for us it was really sort of scary. It was nerve racking trying to learn what a young taulealea (untitled man) needed to do. But the basics really was o le fa'aaloalo - be respectful, know how to sit, how to stand, the walk, how to talk. It was also confusing for some of our non-Samoan friends, to whom we would insist that if they visited us "look you can't speak while standing up, you've got to sit down while speaking. You can't just grab a cup of water and drink standing up, you need to sit down and drink the cup of water". We were constantly fed with these words by our parents - "O le ala i le pule o le tautua" (the way to power is through serving). "O fanau o tagata e fafana i upu ae o fanau o manu e fafaga i lau ma fua o laau" (people are fed with words, but animals are fed with the fruits of the trees) - meaning that we needed to be listening to those words constantly, and it was repetitious. We were also taught that service to others is the basic principle o le fa'asamoa, and because I was the oldest of nine children, seven of those were sisters. The brother and sister covenant (feagaiga) were repeated over and over again to the point where I hated some of my sisters. Respect and obedience were constant and my father was a staunch Catholic and still is to this day, and so o le mata'u i le Atua - having faith and fearing of God was constant. Family prayers were every day in the evenings. We don't practice that as much today but it's still in my psyche.

In 1989, the family started talking about the matais that would be bestowed upon a number of our family in Samoa, and I sort of had expressed an interest. Because in 1988, I went to Samoa, lost myself and ended up fully tattooed, and when the old people said to me "you know you should have tattooed your mouth first before you tattooed your body". Meaning I should've learnt how to speak Samoan properly and do the tautua. Then in

1990, I received the Su'a title which is a pitovao title on my father's side of the family in Letaupe Matatufu. It's an orator title that is used by the family. When I was bestowed that title, I really didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know what was expected of me. In fact, in the discussions prior to that, I was kind of reluctant. Part of me wanted it and part of me was like it was a really scary, nervous situation. But at the time this was happening I was already involved in the political arena as a member of the Labour Party in Otago in having leadership roles, and so a couple of old former ministers of the Samoan government pestered me and hounded me and continued to say, "you should get that. Get the orator title because you can speak in family events" and they basically gave me confidence. This is basically what they said: "E fa'amanuia mai le Atua ia oe so whatever you don't know at some stage God will give you the knowledge to be able to perform those tasks".

And so, the first thing I learnt was that, even though you're a matai, the tautua doesn't end. I know some matais I've seen, and some in my families, once they become matai, they seem to think that they can just sit there and the family does everything. But in my experience the tautua is never ending, and it's not just tautua by food or cash. It's also tautua about providing good decisions for the rest of the family; and it's tautua to the family, it's tautua to the village, it's tautua to the church. The biggest challenge for those of us living in New Zealand as the professor has said is: "how do you remain [maintain] the tautua back in Samoa?"

We depend on those in Samoa e fa'aaui le monotaga and sometimes I think they do it and sometimes I don't believe they do it. And what happens now in my life, every year I return to the village to be part of that village and that setting.

The advocacy of tautua was in 2000, when I was suddenly thrust into these court cases in the Lands and Titles Courts of Samoa. Our family had been in court cases every year since 2000, and, finally taking note of what was happening here in Aotearoa with the iwi settlements, I decided to try and adopt some of those tactics in bringing the family together, signing agreements and taking those agreements back to the Lands and Titles court and registering those agreements. I'm simplifying it, but it was really difficult and stressful. It's just a huge weight on your shoulders trying to bring people together, trying to accommodate the various desires. Recognising that not all desires need to be accommodated. But nonetheless in 2013, I was pleased to say that three factions of our family came together in a written agreement and signed in the Lands and Titles court case that will hold forever.

I also learnt that we have to be very clear about what those values are. I've often heard some of my elders and orators say "e tumau fa'avae ae sui faiga" - our foundational values remain the same but our practices change from time to time; and I always get suspicious of some of the orators, as if that's the way of trying to ambush you, or that was a way to try and fai se tonufiti; and now I need to stress over and over again that if we're saying e tumau fa'avae, if we're saying that those foundational values remain irrespective of time - What are those foundational values? We need to reaffirm and confirm those, and repeat those to the next generation. Which is tautua? Which is vā fealoa'i? Which is the faith in God? Which is the pule? And the pule is recognising that the matais pule comes from God. This is what I was taught. Ua vae lua mai le pule a le Atua i matai and that may be the purest view but it's a view which has been passed onto me and I'd like to pass that on to the next generation.

Our aiga of course is the immediate family i le matou tino - our own body versus the extended family of many bodies. Of course, the fa'asamoa - one thing I've learnt, is things have changed. In the old days I remember seeing families, and the elders would say: "Ia o le tatou fa'alavelave nei" - this is our crisis. You, you, you, \$1,000, \$1,000, \$1,000. You can't do that today. If I ask my sisters and my nieces and nephews, we have a crisis here and I'd like everybody to have a contribution and they all say yes, yes, yes. But it's \$10, \$20 or nothing and so you've got to balance that out now with what are the priority crises, and what crisis that you can basically take care of with a bunch of flowers or just a simple envelope. And fanua of course is a constant struggle because for those of us who live here and have responsibilities back in Samoa - how do you maintain the protection of those lands? Afai a e le ago le tagata lae nofo mai i Samoa e taute fo'i atu ua sui i tuaoi o fanua, and so that's a big challenge for me.

In the political arena I resisted being bestowed with other matai titles for a very long time. Because in the political arena it just confuses many of the voters, and so for many years it was just Su'a, and then as I got older, and the pressure from my father's side of the family, from my mother's side of the family, and also you change. I've now adopted the view ia fa'atino matai ia, and so in 2014 it was Tofae from my mother's side, and in 2016 my father bequeathed the title that he held onto me. I've become quite flexible in practices. There are certain practices that I believe e tatau ona fai fa'alelei, and then there are other practices which I think we need to adopt the fa'apalagi. There are a lot of expectations from our community, and from our family. Professor So'o talked about the names you use, and for a long time I debated how am I going to use these three names and still ensure that

the voters realise it's just one person, and how do I fit these three names onto the name tag in parliament? And so, I've come to my decision with the use of Aupito. It is the sa'o title of my father's family. With Tofae and Su'a my families will hopefully understand that it's too long to use in press statements and everything else, and I know that with some of the media it's either Aupito Su'a or Aupito Tofae or Aupito Williams - look I'm the same person. But in terms of when I'm sworn in, I use all three names - all three matai names.

The fa'amatai in New Zealand versus the fa'amatai in Samoa - I think when I go to Samoa, I try to inject some of my thinking into the village council meetings and, like the Professor, it gets thrown out quite quickly. It does require patience, but I think as matais with a responsibility to do the right thing for our families and villages, it's one of those things where you've got to be persistent. It's very much like the political arena here where it takes forever to change the course of the ship, but persistency and repetition is important.

Preserving and protecting Samoan language and culture in New Zealand - In my family we have now, like all of the families, and this is reflected in the statistics - 60% of our Pacific population are born in Aotearoa New Zealand. They know no other home other than Aotearoa New Zealand, and as a matai, you're constantly looking for ways to preserve and protect that language in passing it on to the next generation. And likewise, in the political role that I have, I'm looking now at ensuring that we provide some very strong land marks for protecting and preserving not just the Samoan language but other Pacific languages, going forward.

The genealogy - that's obviously something that each family has had to preserve and pass on to the next generation, and I was just very fortunate that when I spent time in Samoa, I spent time with the older sa'o of the family. The amazing experience for me is that when they speak to you, they repeat the same thing over and over again, and whilst I didn't have a record player then, I managed to be able to record a lot of things, and also do research in the Land and Titles Court which gave me that confidence in terms of protecting our gafa. And of course, like all families, we've got families spread across the world, so there are challenges of how do we maintain that? The other big challenge now is for those of us who are living in Samoa, and the changes that's happening in the Samoa laws - What does that mean? The professor said that the Samoan village council sort of looks at us in New Zealand as second class citizens. Yet o matou o lea fai le tautua i aiga. We send back about \$500 million on an annual basis, and so that makes

me quite nervous, also because when I'm in Samoa, the debate in Samoa is almost whether those living in Samoa will have the full rights and authority over the family and lands. It then means that for those of us who have sa'o titles here, are we then supposed to leave things here and go back to the islands? So that's sort of where my thinking is.

Preserving and protecting languages - The one thing that I have found valuable to families are those family reunions, except it's a really difficult job doing it on a regular basis. So, once every three years, or once every four years for one side of the family, and once every three years for the next side of the family. But they are valuable, and I know that for my young nieces and nephews and cousins having those in Samoa actually strengthens your identity. It reaffirms who they are, reaffirms where they've come from.

The next challenge that we have as a family since the death of my father, and I suspect the same challenge for all other families, is that as the eldest child dies off, it then falls on us to pick up the banner, and when information is lost and gone what do we fall back on?

When our family planned for the funeral of my father, and what that means for the next generation, some interesting issues arose. The first was that all of us thought that we would bury him here in Aotearoa New Zealand, but when we went to Samoa as a family last year, it was our nieces, our nephews, and our children who said to us "Grandpa needs to be buried in Samoa because of his love for the village, his love for his aiga I've now come around to the fact that, yes, that is going to be an important next step for us. But the second thing is about also talking to the younger generation. If Grandpa is going to be buried in Samoa, will you be travelling to Samoa on a regular basis? And now one of the things we're now planning as a family, is that we have to provide land marks for the next generation, and that is having tomb stones with the names and dates, and it almost feels like I've got to have a tomb stone for those buried in Australia, a tomb stone for those buried in New Zealand, a tomb stone for those buried in America, and a tomb stone for those buried in Samoa. Because, as the next generation comes along, and they want to know who is who, and who they are connected with - where will they go? And I would say, well hopefully they would go back to Samoa, and hopefully those landmarks will help guide and strengthen who they are.

But now, as the Minister of Pacific peoples, my own experiences mean that for Pacific people in New Zealand, we have to now develop a new vision. Because for those who arrived in the 1950s, and the 1960s, the migrant story factory worker has now changed into the university graduate, superstars on the sports field and in the arts, to professors, academia, CEO's, and politicians; and with 60% of our Pacific population born in Aotearoa New Zealand we now have to create a new vision for that next generation going forward 20-50 years.

Because most of us are the beneficiaries of the original vision - people leaving the islands coming here [to New Zealand] etc. But we now have to be planning for that journey in 20-50 years. What does it mean to be successful Pasifika peoples here in Aotearoa New Zealand? What is it that we're going to need in order to get to that vision? And then I believe that we have to start discussing the culture. What are our practices? What do we hold onto? What do we discard? What is so important that we must hold onto going forward? And what are the structures that we have to put in place in order to make sure the next generation are not lost?

Part of that vision has to be about us discussing and passing on the language and our customs. If you lose the language, we will lose so many things, and my idea is that we would, under this government, we will legislate that Pacific languages become official community languages. You know you've got your official national language of te reo Maori and sign language and others, but underneath that are your national official community languages, and I think it's sort of a constitutional landmark across all government departments that these are the languages that our communities use. In addition to that we do need to establish a Pacific language commission whose role is to be the guardian whose role is to research. Whose role is to advocate for the use of this language in Aotearoa New Zealand because this is now our home.

For the next generation, they will not be returning to the village. New Zealand is their village and so that's sort of my thinking now going forward about what we need to do to preserve language, to preserve culture. Fa'afetai. Manuia le aso.



## **Tofa Leituala Galumalemana Taiaopo Tuimaleali'ifano**

### **Abstract**

Leituala was educated at Vaiola Sogiatu in CCWS Pesega Samoa. She is the instructor of the Samoan language and culture at Farrington Adult School, Honolulu, Hawai'i. She is a member of the faasamoa committee and Samoa Mua Taeao Cultural Group. As a strong advocate for Polynesian communities, Leituala was appointed by the Governor General of the State of Hawai'i to the Commission of Housing and Community Development Corporation. She currently works as the liaison for the State and Federal Hawai'i Public Housing Department. She is currently living in Honolulu, Hawai'i where she is heavily invested and engaged in mobilising the Samoan communities. We met Leituala when we conducted our Marsden research for focus groups in Hawai'i and it seems ever so fitting that these voices are included in the Mamalu Taeave section of the Handbook.

Faatoa ou fo'i mai Samoa, na faaee le matou malaga I PagoPago Vaalele laiti e o i Apia. Na fai si malosi ole savili toe louloua le aso. Foliga ua taumalua le va'a, pei e taia pei a pau. na matua popole ma fefefe le matou pasese, u'umau a le nofoa ole tagata ia, ma moeiini, sa matou malaga faatasi male faifeau, sa ou tilotilo solo poo fea le faifeau o la e uu limalua le nofoa ae pei ua sili atu lona fefe ile pasese. Na tete'i le matou pasese I la'u valaau... "Faifeau, faifeau ole a saga e gofo a, ae le fai se loku"...na ea I luga le faifeau...pese leotele, Iesu tautai lo'u va'a ile vasa faigata...umi a le tatalo ale faifeau, e amene loa ae sese'e loa le va'a I Fagalii.

*I have just returned from Pago Pago on small aircrafts via Apia. The wind was quite strong and the weather was quite rough. It felt like the aircraft was either going to flip or fall from the sky. Us passengers were all afraid, each holding their seat tightly with eyes closed. We were travelling with a church minister and I was looking for him and he was holding his chair with both hands and he seemed more frightened than the other passengers. The other passengers were surprised when I shouted out to the minister "Minister, minister why are you just sitting there and not praying for us!" All of a sudden, the minister's head looked up and he started singing aloud "Jesus guide our vessel through the dangerous seas". Then he started to say a really long prayer, and as he concluded, the aircraft's tires touched down at Fagalii airport.*

O lea ua mae'a ona paepae ulufanua paia ole nei aso, I ona tulaga faalupelupeina Ou te faafetai atu I le ta'ita'i le Afioga ia Lupematasila Dr Melani Anae male mamalu ole komiti faafoe.

*The honorifics and the dignitaries of today have already been acknowledged as well as their salutations. I would like to thank the leader of this symposium, Afioga Lupematasila Dr Melani Anae and the organizing committee.*

### **Transnational Faamatai Symposium.**

It is my pleasure and honour to be part of this meeting discussion on a specific Topic – transnational faamatai - a collection of opinions, ideas, cultures and exchanges; increasing levels of knowledge and understanding of the social world; and promoting values of our citizenship and identity, and giving then a stronger voice across the Pacific and beyond. It's important to know your culture and lead by example.

Tulou. Faamolemole, Faafetai. O tama a tagata e fafaga upu lelei male malie, o tama a manu felelei e fafaga I fuga o laau.

*Tulou. The offspring of humans are fed with good and happy words while the offspring of animals are fed with plants.*

Taofi ua leva ona tou aoao manogi aua le Faasolo o lenei aso, O lea fo'i ua faafofoga maua le mamalu ua aofia ile Autu na tuuina mai e fai agai iai se manatu ole auauna vaivai.

*I believe you have all been made aware of the importance of this gathering. I am also aware that the honour of all present have been made aware of the theme of this gathering which my humble self will endeavor to speak on. O MAMALU TAUAVE.*

I also want to apologise to the non-speaking Samoans. I will deliver my message in the Samoan language as I don't want to lose any values or any deeper meaning if I do speak in English. But if you want to know what I'm talking about please see, Afioga Lupematasila Dr. Melani Anae or Afioga Loau, Tofa ia Tuiloma Dr. Fata Aumua Simanu.

“MAMALU TAUAVE Afai e mamalu tauave Samoa ua tatou ma onomea aua o Samoa ua uma ona tofi. O le atunu'u e taulagi ma fa'alagilagi o latou mamalu. Po'o fea lava e te afioa'i iai tupu ma e'e o Samoa e tau ave lava o latou mamalu e o'o a i le lautu laulelei. E o'o fo'i I le au faigaluega a le Atua e tau ave o latou mamalu fa'aleatua. E ui a ina fa'afagogo a tagiao ma eseese finagalo ona o le fetuleni mai o itu aiga aganu'u eseese ma latou tu ma aga, ae le mafai ai ona tatou alo ese mai ai ma fa'avae o le aganu'u o Samoa o le va fealoa'i. O mamalu e fa'atusa I le papa le gae'e o lona uiga o le papa e tumau ma mausali.

*“MAMALU TAUAVE” (Lit. TRAVELLING HONOURS). If Samoa ‘carries its honours’ then it is appropriate as Samoa’s honours and responsibilities have already been designated. Wherever Samoa’s paramount chiefs go, they always take their honours with them. This also applies to the orators and the church ministers. Even though there are differing beliefs of our culture, one thing that cannot be taken away from the Samoan culture is the importance of the respectful space between people. The honours that people carry is likened to a rock that is strong and sturdy.*

Ae e iai taimi ua maitau ina ai ua faaoga sese mamalu ia (used in the wrong way). E amata mai lava I Samoa I nisi o afioaga aemaise fo'i ma atunu'u I fafo. Faamalulu atu o le a ou le taua suafa ma afioaga ua iai ni suiga faamalosi ma ua ta'ai faafala ai paia ma mamalu o nisi alalafaga. E foliga mai ua fa'atau I 'ai paia ma mamalu o nisi o afioaga.

Faata'ita'iga...E masani ona faia feiloaiga a se tasi o Nu'u. E lua pitonu'u, e tofu a, le pito nuu ia ma le ali'i sili ile pou matuatata.

*However, there are times when one's honour has been used in the wrong way. It even starts all the way from some villages back in Samoa as well as from places outside. Apologies, I will not mention any particular matai titles or villages where there have been some major changes that have affected the honour and dignity of their villages. It seems in some villages, honour and dignity can be purchased. For example, there is a village that often has gatherings. The village has two sub-villages and each sub-village has a head pole (seat) in the meeting house for each of their respective paramount chiefs.*

O le isi matai e nofo ile pepe, ae na maitauina ele nuu lea, e oo loa ile aso gafua poo fono ale nuu lea ona sau loa lea ole taavale ale toeaina lea e nofo ile pepe.

Ia le tatou Nuu ole Manupalagi /povi male lua afe lea, aua se fofoga taumafa o lo tatou nuu.

E le misi a se fono ale nuu ma so se faatasiga ma sau le taavale ale toeaina lea, le gata I taumafa. O tupe fai lafo ole nuu alu le taavale.

*There is another matai who sits at a lesser pole and the village recognised that there was a time when the village council had a meeting; this other matai arrives in his car and gives out boxes of corned beef, and two thousand dollars for the village. Every time the village had a special event on, this matai would come in his car always bearing gifts for the village.*

Na sau le matai lea e aumai ai taumafa ma tupe ale nuu nofo ile pepe, ae lei sau le alii sili ole latou pito nuu o loo avanoa le pou matuatata. Na saunoa

mai le ali'i sili o le isi pitonu'u: "Afio ifo oe ile pou matuatata na e avanoa". Ae manatua e leai se sui momo'e. Afai e avanoa le pou lea pei ona saunoa iai afioga Fui le pule NUS o le number one ranking chief e avanoa le pou.

*One time this matai was at a meeting and the paramount chief of his sub-village was absent and therefore the head pole that was reserved for the paramount chief was vacant. The paramount chief of the other sub-village who was sitting at the opposing head pole then called out to this matai who was sitting at a lesser pole to go and sit in the head pole position. There was even no representative of the paramount chief there to represent him. According to Professor Fui from NUS, if there is no official representative of the paramount chief at the meeting, then his pole is left vacant.*

Na i'u a na sau le matai lea nofo I le pepe nofo I le pou matuatata. O lea le mea ua tupu? Ua sau le ali'i sili ole pitonuu lea nofo ile pepe. O le matai lea ua nofo I le nofoaga sese, pe a oo i aso gafua uma ale nuu, ua nofo sese ai a, ia la ua o sese ai lea nuu... O LONA UIGA UA FAATAU MAMALU I 'AI. Talofa, afai ua leai se tofa faatamalii ia fo'ia ai lea faafitauli, o fea le faautautaga I faleupolu ae maise le tu'ua ole nuu. Ua le manumanu I tupulaga lavovaoa o loo fai mai ae faatau I povi ma tupe mamalu o sia tamalii ma lona aiga talofa ua solo le falute, ua tafea pulu I vai, ua se'e faai'a-avai le tatou aganuu.

*Regardless, this other matai came and sat at the head pole, so what has happened? When the paramount chief came back to the meetings, he was made to sit at the lesser pole because the other matai was sitting in the wrong place. This continued to happen, and so the village continued on doing the wrong thing. WHAT THIS MEANS IS THAT THE MATAI WAS ABLE TO PURCHASE HIS HONOURABLE STATUS. While sadly, the chiefly wisdom needed to correct this was missing, where was the orator wisdom and the main orator chief who should have corrected all this? It seems as if they didn't care about the young people looking on and seeing the how easy it was for a matai and his family to purchase their status within the village. Sadly, our culture and customs are being eroded.*

O paia ma Mamalu tauave ole tatou aganuu, O le maniti a tamalii ae ona ole 'oa ole tatou gagana o loo atagia ai Paia ma Mamalu o tatou tagata. Oute le mailoa poo tupu I Samoa nisi suiga fou ia, sa ou faalogo ma vaai I posiva poo ni faafiafiaga I nisi o afio'aga...e tatala e se isi tamalii ae tualuga e leisi tamalii. I nei atunuu ua sili atu ile fia sefulu tualugaua fia tualuga uma a tagata ai ona o atunuu I fafo fai le loto ole tagata ia, O aso ia ole mamalu ia seasea vaai ini Tuiga/Lauao.

*The honours and dignities of our culture are the responsibilities of our paramount chiefs, and it is through the beauty of our oratory that we are able to paint a beautiful picture of the honour and dignity of our people. I am not sure if some of the changes that I have seen at fundraisers and events are happening in some villages in Samoa. What is happening is that the occasion is opened by one chief and closed by another. What we see now is that nearly every chief wants their family to be the one that performs the final dance (taualuga) to close off the event. This is because people overseas now all want to have their own view and say in everything. In the old days, we rarely saw the use of a headpiece (tuiga) in an event.*

O nei atunuu, ua Tuiga faasolo atoa soo se mea. E talalasi a Samoa, ole manatu vaivai a ia ole nei auaua e tasi a le tauluga e le lua pe sili atu. Aua e le tasi le a le tauluga ole fale. The Tauluga or Final Dance of FiaFia; this is always performed by the high-ranking chief / alii sili of the Villiage or his daughter or his son to end up any Fiafia event. Ua amata ona le toe mamalu o aso ia sei vagana ni tali-ga malo, faafiafiaga tetele, o ni taalolo, ona faatoo va'aia lea ose Lauao/Tuiga. E le faapea e tuiga uma ni tagata. O Samoa ua uma na tofi.

*Nowadays and in overseas countries, at a single event, many headpieces are being used at one event. Samoa has many stories, however in my humble opinion, in any event, there is only one final dance, and this is always performed by the high-ranking chief / alii sili of the village or his daughter or his son to end up any Fiafia event. The practice is beginning to lose its honour today, unless it is for important occasions such as hosting visitors and major celebrations. It shouldn't be that everyone wears a headpiece. Samoa's responsibilities have already been designated.*

Mamalu tauave, Ia tumua'ai tutusa le Tootoo ole paolo ma le isi paolo. Aua ole mea e tupu ua faanofo I lalo ele Tulafale taua ole malaga. Lona lua. E leiloa faalupega ole malaga. Poo le alii sili ole nuu male alii sili ole malaga, faafeagaiga a sega'ula. Tasi na o mamalu e fai ma pine faamau ile tataou aganuu; a saunoa mai le alii sili e tali le isi alii sili.

O tu'ua poo tulafale o afio'aga. E taua le va fealoaloa'i.

*Travelling Honours also means that the orators of the facing parties should be of same status. What is happening these days is that the most senior orators of a party are being overlooked. This leads to the less skilled orators forgetting the salutations of the other party, and the names of the important chiefs and ministers of the other party etc. What these young orators forget is that when a paramount chief from the other party addresses them, it is appropriate that a paramount chief from his party responds. It is important to have*

*that respectful relationship at all times.*

Ia malamalama I fa'alupega o nuu, e le fiafia se malaga ae sese o latou faalupega, o le atunuu o Samoa e tau lagi o latou paia ma fa'alagilagi. O latou mamalu. Aua fo'i e leai lava se Samoa e le fia tagata. E fia tagata uma o le mau fo'i lea e fa'apea "E tupu a le tagata ia i lona aiga" sa'o lelei this is absolutely right. Ae ia e iloa tauave le mamalu o lau aganuu. E iloa le teine male tama Samoa i lana aganuu, I lau tu, lau nofo, lau savali, aga faatausala, alofa, faaloalo male, Tausaafia.

*They must be well versed and fully understand the salutations of each village. Nothing displeases a visiting party more than an orator getting their salutation wrong. Samoans are well known for openly expressing their honours and dignities. Everyone wants to be a somebody, and everyone is a king within their own family. This is absolutely right. But make sure you know how to do it properly and appropriately, through the way you stand, sit, walk, love, respect, and show kindness.*

Ou te talitonu o lenei aso e pei lava ona taua I paia ma mamalu fa'amatai. Ona o a'u o se matai tama'ita'i. Ou te fa'atulou atu I matai I le itu pa o Ali'i. Ona oloo faatu tonu mai le fesili ile matou itu pa, sau ai I tua faamolemole tali mai Leituala Galumalemana T'aiapo. Manaia ma taua le fesili ae pei e maigi. Ha ha Aua ou te iloa e iai lava le va lea pei tou le fiafia ile matou itu pa vaivai. Pe ono tatau ona matai tina ma tamaita'i?

*Today is a very important day for the honour of matai. As I am a woman matai, I acknowledge all the male matai, even though the questions I have responded to today are aimed specifically at myself being a women matai. The questions are very important and at times very difficult to answer, as I know there have been some things said that have not sit right with you male matai, and the questions around whether women should be matai or not.*

Ua ou fiu e faitau tusitusiga poo tala faasolopito o Samoa poo iai se tulafono e le tatau ona avea Tama'ita'i ma matai. Afai na tafa'ifa Salamasina ole ulua'i tupu ma matai Tama'ita'ta'i, fai mai le tofa Aumua Papalii Samoatele, Mata'itusi Simanu. E au le Inailau a Tamaitai. E matua tatau ma onomea ona matai tina ma tamaita'i. E malolosi atu isi matai tamaita'i I matai alii.

*I have tried to look for any writings or stories from Samoa that says women should not be matai. If Salamasina was the first united ruler of Samoa, then why can't women be matai? Aumua Papalii Samoatele Mataitusi Simanu says that women have every right to be*

*matai. It is very appropriate for women to be matai, and some women matai are much stronger than their male counterparts.*

Tele tamaitai totoa pei o Nafanua, ole afioga ile laau na fausia Aiono Dr. Fanaafi ole afioga ile sa'o faapito Fiaame Mata'afa le gata ile suafa ole alii sili o lona nuu ae ose tamaitai muamua ua ausia le tofi avea ma Sui Palemia ole malo o Samoa. Male to'atele o tina ma tamaitai o loo avea ma pule ma tulaga maualuluga ole malo. Atina'e ma Pisinisi. O faailoga maualuluga e le gata I Samoa ma atunuu uma ole lalolagi. O suafa matai o mea totino a ia e pule ai le sa'o ma lona auai. Pule lava poo ai e matai e soalaupule le aiga ae maise e o loo tautua tuavae. Faata'ita'iga; afai o lo'u tama e to'a lima lana fanau o teine uma o lona uiga e matai a le teine.

*There have been many brave Samoan women throughout history like Nafanua, Aiono Dr Fanaafi, Fiaame Mataafa, who is not only the paramount chief of her village, but is also the first ever Samoan woman to hold the position of Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa. Not to mention the many other women who hold high positions in companies and government, not only in Samoa, but all over the world. Head matai and their families are in charge of their matai and who should hold them. This is a matter for the family to discuss. For example, if a matai only has five daughters, then they should all be allowed to become a matai.*

Pe tatau ona avea se tamaitai ose sa'o ose aiga? Ioe, afai na o teine le aiga. Pe iai fo'i ni tama ae fua le avea o oe ma matai I lau tautua, alofa, osi aiga, toa le loto, faamaulalo male faaloalo, 'aua le faailoga tagata. E aia tutusa uma tagata I suafa matai o latou aiga.

*Should a woman be the head of a family? Yes, if there are only women in the family. Even if there are males, it should be based on one's service to the family, love, bravery, humility and respect. Everyone has equal rights to the matai titles of their family.*

E le tatau ona iai ni matai tamaitai ini fono ale nuu- faatasi ma matai Ali'i laga e iai taimi e felavasa'i ai tala. E valea lea manatu, o matai tamaitai ia I totonu ole fono ale nuu. O tou tuafafine aua e leai ni fafine nofotane e matai ise aiga o saga nofoga tane. Tulou...? ole i'o I mata ole tama o lana feagaiga o lona tuafafine.

A HANDBOOK FOR TRANSNATIONAL MATAI (CHIEFS)  
TUSIFATTAU O MATAI FAFO O SAMOA

*Some believe that women matai should not be at the village council meetings alongside male matai as there are times when debates between them become inappropriate for women. I think this is a stupid opinion. The women matai in a village should be seen as their sisters and should be treated appropriately, i.e. treated as their own sisters. A sister is the brother's eyeballs as stated in the brother-sister covenant (feagaiga).*

I Amerika Samoa e leai ni matai I taualoa po'o matai mauaululuga e ave le itu pa o tama'ita'i. Fai mai le latou talitonuga e le tatau na ave ni suafa tetele I le itu pa o tamaita'i. O suafa matai o fanua e aia tutusa uma sulii tama ma teine aua o a latou mea totino.

*In American Samoa, high paramount chief titles are never given to women. They believe that women should not hold high ranking paramount matai titles. However, I believe that both male and women heirs have equal rights to all titles belonging to a particular land.*

E iai lo'u talitonuga there is a place and a time for a different matai and level pei ona saunao ai le Afioga i le Professor po'o le pule fo'i o le Iunivesite e sa'o lelei. O le isi vaega I really appreciate these meetings. We are all sharing and collecting our ideas lo'u manatu aisea e le ave ai I tatou nu'u I Samoa? So, we can implement and put these kinds of programmes that we're talking about? Manaia ia o nei a'oaoga ma metotia fou faatupu manatu-pe'i ole autu olenei aso.

*I believe there is a place and time for a different matai system, as the Professor from the University of Samoa alluded to. I really appreciate these meetings. We are all sharing and collecting our ideas, so why are we not taking this to the villages in Samoa? So that we can implement and put these kinds of programmes that we're talking about? These new thought-provoking theories are great and should be shared widely.*

TRANSNATIONAL FAAMATAI SYMPOSIUM ile FALE PASEFIKA  
Auckland N.Z.

E afua mai mauga tetele manuia, o aiga, Nuu, Ekalesia, Itumalo male malo. O loo I tou a'ao manuia male Lumana'i o alo ma Fanau a Samoa a Taea. Ua leva na I fafo ua le lelei le aganuu, ae faafetai ile fagufagu mai ale le tofa Aumua Mata'tusi Simanu o le sa taulalagaina ma faafoeina le gagana samoa male aganuu ile University of Hawaii ma le matou community a Samoa I Hawaii. Lagolago mai le afioga Loau / Tofa Tuiloma Dr. Fata Aumua Simanu.



TRANSNATIONAL FAAMATAI SYMPOSIUM at the FALE  
PASEFIKA Auckland N.Z.

*From great mountains come the blessings of families, villages, congregations and government. The wellbeing and future of our young Samoan generation of tomorrow is in your hands. Our people who have been away from our Samoan homeland for a very long time have been longing, and so thank you to Aumua Mata'tusi Simanu for reawakening and reviving our language at the University of Hawaii and within our Samoan community in Hawaii with the support of Tuiloma Dr. Fata Aumua Simanu.*

A special big Mahalo Afioga Lupematasila Dr. Melani Anae and Rev. Toleafoa ae maise le TRANSNATIONAL FAAMATAI SYMPOSIUM TEAM.

Faafetai tele, malo le tofa saili...ele tau sulaina pe tau faafuluina lau tou faaloalo.

Faafetai I nai o'u uso lau afioga Sula C. Miti Ah Fook, afioga ia Tamaliifaaeatumua Tuiga Schuster for your support and my beloved mother Taaitulagi Leniu Leituala Afoa Faalaga Te'o. Ou te faamalulu atu afai ua sala le gagana malu ave i fale i lau tou tofa faa lea Atua ae magalo ai le auauna Ia manuteleina le nei aso.

*Thank you very much. Thank you for your endeavor to search for wisdom. Thank you also to Sula C. Miti Ah Fook, Tamaliifaaeatumua Tuiga Schuster for your support, and my beloved mother Taaitulagi Leniu Leituala Afoa Faalaga Te'o. If I have said anything that has been inappropriate or out of line, I offer it up to God for forgiveness. Have a blessed day.*

Soifua. Leituala Galumalemana Taiaopo, Vaoau Tuimalealiifano Suatipatipa II.

## Asiata Ulugia Taofiga Snell Clements

### Abstract

Asiata was born in Samoa and grew up in Vaigaga, Vaiusu. He attended Apia Primary School, St. Josephs College and Samoa College. Asiata moved to Australia in 1988 for further education. He is the eldest of eight children and is blessed with four children of his own – two boys, and two girls. A proud and devout Catholic, he joins us from Sydney Australia.

Fa'afetai lava mo le avanoa. E muamua lava ona fa'atulou i le talaaga, le mamalu ma le aofia. Ia oute talitonu ua vevela fo'i le fala. Ae o le a topetope atu ia e le sefululima minute e tolu minute. You know, in every event, it always starts from light-weight, and then work it up to the heavy weights at the main event. Ae lea ua amata tatou i le main event ae futua mulimuli mai ai tatou light weight a? Ia sa iai le agreement iate a'u ma le professor from the NUS e amata naia le ma polokalame ae fa'a umu i a'u and this is the closing a? Ia o lo'u fa'amatalaga i matai o i Samoa. I believe that as Seulupe has told you some of how and where I come about.

*Thank you for the opportunity. I would like to firstly acknowledge everyone. I guess the “mat is hot” (meaning time is short). So, I will be quick, I will take three minutes instead of fifteen. You know in every event it always starts from light-weight and then work it up to the heavy weights at the main event. So weve had the main event and now it is time for us the light weights. We had an agreement with the professor from the NUS that he starts our session and I will close it so this is the closing. As for my life as a Samoa matai I believe that as Seulupe has told you some of how and where I come from.*

I was born, raised and educated in Samoa with the hope of migrating to Australia to further my education. But unfortunately, it wasn't the case because it was a family of nine that moved from Samoa straight to Sydney and I was the eldest at the time. My eldest brother was living in New Zealand so I was more like looking out for everyone and so I ended my education there and tried to find a job to look after my parents, brothers and sisters. So, sitting back right now while all my siblings are managers at banks, running RSL's and managers at the airlines, managing telecommunication I sit back and think that is my success. Now mum and dad are returning back to Samoa and leaving things to me to look after with regards to our fa'asamoa. There is no one else to do it because all my siblings are now married to Australians, Tongans and then I'm left. I think I am going to have to go back to Samoa.

Becoming a matai wasn't a choice. It was a necessity i totonu o le matou aiga. You know I have six brothers and two sisters, and no one was interested they were all fiapalagis and all that. So, I had to step up again. So, lea la ua fai nei le fa'amatai I basically travel every year - four, five times a year i Samoa e fai le nu'u, fai aiga ma fai fa'alavelave o si matou aiga. But it's okay because they paid for it and I fly. O le fa'amatai as we can see i le molimau le polokalama se fa'aluaina Samoan culture is very unique. It is very unique. That's what I've learnt.

*Becoming a matai wasn't a choice. It was a necessity within our family. You know I have six brothers and two sisters, and no one was interested - they were all fiapalagis and all that. So, I had to step up again. So now that I am a matai, I basically travel every year - four, five times a year to Samoa to serve the village, serve the family and to take care of all the family faalavelave (events). But it's okay because they pay for it and I fly. Our matai system and Samoan culture as we can see in our programme and presentations is very unique. That's what I've learnt.*

Oute manatua le talanoaga the conversation between an Asian a Chinese business man, an Indian business man and a Samoan matai. They were discussing about their culture and their traditions and their way of life. The Chinese man goes, you know us Chinese, wherever we migrate, it doesn't matter where, we always set up a business. Let's say a Chinese restaurant like the one we went to last night. The Indian says it's very much like us - wherever we go, wherever we migrate, we always look for opportunity to set up a business. Like dairy shops and stuff like that. They ask the Samoan matai: "What about you guys?" The Samoan matai says "But we're sort of like different. When we migrate, wherever we go the first thing we set up is a church. It's easy money". Ia ae lae o'o mai a le taimi nei e ese a tatou a? E ese a mea e popole ai tatou. A palagi would work and save all his money, invest it in the bank and put it there, and then he'll go on holiday and spend it. But with us Samoans we work hard and save our money in case of a fa'alavelave, and that's how we always have these gatherings in Samoa. It's always based on the fa'alavelaves. You run into our families and relatives, and it's the holidays or going out and enjoying ourselves. It's always fa'alavelave, and that's basically the life of a matai in Australia. Fly back and forth doing all these fa'alavelaves, and this is what I've learnt when I received my matai titles; I was still residing in Australia, but I had to fly back to do it. I've noticed that in the Samoa fa'amatai it's more basic, straight to the point. There's not much of this colourful words that the Australian matais are into. Let's say if a Samoan matai stands up and gives a speech, it will be like 2-3 minutes. If you give it to a matai in Australia, it will be like half an hour. I feel this competition, and it probably happens here in New Zealand as well.

This competition of the matais in Australia because in a church or a community of the Samoans in Australia. it's all matais from all over Samoa. So, no matai will want to be e pito ifo naia lalo ae si'isi'i ifo lesi matai.

*I remember the conversation between an Asian a Chinese business man, an Indian business man and a Samoan matai. They were discussing about their culture and their traditions and their way of life. The Chinese man goes you know us Chinese, where ever we migrate, it doesn't matter where, we always set up a business. Let's say a Chinese restaurant like the one we went to last night. The Indian says it's very much like us - wherever we go, wherever we migrate, we always look for an opportunity to set up a business. Like dairy shops and stuff like that. They ask the Samoan matai: "What about you guys?" The Samoan matai says "But we're sort of like different. When we migrate, wherever we go, the first thing we set up is a church. It's easy money". To this day we are different? We worry about different things. A European would work and save all his money, invest it in the bank and put it there, and then he'll go on holiday and spend it. But with us Samoans, we work hard and save our money in case of a fa'alavelave, and that's how we always have these gatherings in Samoa. It's always based on the fa'alavelaves. You run into our families and relatives, and it's the holidays or going out and enjoying ourselves. It's always fa'alavelave, and that's basically the life of a matai in Australia. Fly back and forth doing all these fa'alavelaves, and this is what I've learnt when I received my matai titles. I was still residing in Australia, but I had to fly back to do it. I've noticed that in the Samoa fa'amatai it's more basic, straight to the point. There's not much of this colourful words that the Australian matais are into. Let's say if a Samoan matai stands up and gives a speech, it will be like 2-3 minutes. If you give it to a matai in Australia it will be like half an hour. I feel this competition, and it probably happens here in New Zealand as well. This competition of the matai in Australia because in a church or a community of the Samoans in Australia it's all matais from all over Samoa. So, no matai will want to be e pito ifo naia lalo ae si'isi'i ifo lesi matai. - So, no matai will want to defer to another matai.*

E lē fia toelalo le isi matai i le isi matai. So ae o tatou back home in our villages like the professor was saying, there is always a sa'o, there's always a tuua that does all the talking, and the little matai just sits and behaves, but not in Australia. If I'm from Vaiusu, Faleata or from Satupaitea, I don't want a Falelatai to get up and talk. I want my turn. I'd rather be talking and everyone be listening. O le fa'amatai lena o le oute experience i Ausetalia which is good sometimes. Sa fai le matou fa'alavelave, it was my brother's unveiling na fai a couple of years ago, so I was doing the fa'aaloalo, and I sort of like did the Australian style alu ai a alu ai a alu ai a. But by the time I sat down, all the Samoan matais were next to me, and were asking me "do you live here or from overseas?" I said, I'm from Australia and you know what they all said? Everyone goes "you guys are better than the ones we have

here". That's why because we like to be colourful ae o matai lae Samoa e straight to the point, fa'auma le mea ona ave ai loa lana lafo. Ia o se fa'amatalaga pu'upu'u lena. Oute talitonu o le a o'u le pai'a le outou latapi o le outou latapi liti [league]. Ia toko uso a seki a Tonga [haha].

*One matai will not defer to another matai. But back home in our villages, like the professor was saying, there is always a sa'o, there's always a tuua that does all the talking and the little matai just sits and behaves - but not in Australia. If I'm from Vaiusu, Faleata or from Satupaitea, I don't want a Falelatai to get up and talk. I want my turn. I'd rather be talking, and everyone be listening. That is the matai system that I experience in Australia which is good sometimes. We had a family faalavelave in Samoa, it was my brother's unveiling a couple of years ago, so I was doing the speech, and I sort of like did the Australian style going on and on and on. By the time I sat down all the Samoan matais were next to me and were asking me "do you live here or from overseas?" I said, I'm from Australia and you know what they all said? Everyone goes "you guys are better than the ones we have here". That's because we like to be colourful whereas matai from Samoa are straight to the point, finish the speech and then give the gift. So, this is a brief explanation.*

I think it was last week or a couple of weeks ago that we just passed that yes vote in Australia. The same sex marriage that we're having now. Lea la ua vaai atu ua tele o nai fafine lea i le tatou tū pa lea ua fia matai fo'i i Ausetalia. Last week I was attending one of the funerals sa iai la le toeaina matua lava e always lava malo naia ona e fa'aaloalo mai ai. O le upu a le toeaina "e leiloa a po'o lo'u lasi lauga lea", and then another maliu, he will be doing the same thing over and over again. E ave ai la le fa'aaloalo iai e fai lana lauga lea. E ona o'u fa'apea maimau le taimi e le maua sa'u avanoa oute laititi tele as you can see. Ia o'u alu lea savalivali le mū lea ma o'u fa'alogologo. Ae tasi a le matai fa'afafine i le li'o lea ae lae fai le fa'atau. Na o'u sure lava e lauga le toeaina ae o'o loa i lo'u taavale oute fa'alogo mai ua amata le lauga. Faimai le lauga: "Le paia le aso" [high pitched voice] ua malo le fafafine. Ia le tatou matai ia fa'ataua. We people are very unique with our fa'amatai. Lea lava ona o'o lava i le NUS o lea lava o tau liliu lava e fai le fa'ataua o le tatou matai aua le tatou va fealoa'i. Ia o se tala pu'upu'u le na tamaiti i le nei taeao. Ia ae toe maua se avanoa ia toe logo mai. Ia fa'afetai tele lava.

*I think it was last week or a couple of weeks ago we just passed that yes vote in Australia. The same sex marriage that we're having now. Now we see that are a lot of our women who want to be matai in Australia. Last week I was attending one of the funerals and there was this elderly man. He always lava wins the debate over who says the speech as people often pay respect to him for being elderly. He always says "who knows but this might be my last speech I make" and then we see him at another funeral and he will be doing the*

A HANDBOOK FOR TRANSNATIONAL MATAI (CHIEFS)  
TUSIFATTAU O MATAI FAFO O SAMOA

*same thing over and over again. We always give him the respect to speak. I always think it's a waste of my time to compete because I am young, as you can see, so I go and just listen. But there is this one female matai and she is challenging this old man. I left as I was sure the old man would win the right to speak but when I reached my car, I heard the speech begin. The speech started with "To the honour..." [high pitched voice, the woman had won]. We people are very unique with our fa'amatai. Even at NUS they are continuing to promote our fa'amatai for the wellbeing of our people. That is just a brief talk about my experience as a matai. Thank you very much.*

## Tonumaipe'a Peter Po Ching

### Abstract

Tonumaipea Peter Stephen Po Ching was born in Auckland 67 years ago. His parents, Edward and Nancy Po Ching, were amongst the first lot of migrants from Western Samoa as it was once known. Tonumaipea is a title he has held for 27 years. He works in consultation with the head of his family, former Head of State, Tuiatua, Tupua Tamasese Efi, on family matters and projects relating to the genealogy of Auckland relatives. He does not consider himself an academic and considers his most significant achievement to be the mastering of the Samoan language.

Ota ota lo'u fiafia i tamali'i ia sa saunoa i le tatou lapotopotoga i lenei taeao. Ae malilie finagalo, olea ou tautala i le gagana fa'aperetania, ona ua galo lata lauga lea na saunia, o le umi ia o lenei lauga. Ae leai se afaiga pei ona saunoa le susuga le Masters of Ceremonies Seulupe ia aemaise fo'i Organisers sa latou fa'atunu'uina lenei fa'amoemoe, guests aemaise fo'i le paia o le au potopoto i lenei aso. Pei ona saunoa le MC o le olaga atoa o a'u o Aotearoa nei. O o'u matua o Niulevaia Edward Po Ching e sau mai Vailu'utai ae o lo'u tina o Nancy Lulu e sau mai Vaimoso. Sa omai matua mai Samoa i le tausaga 1947, ia vaai la ile leva ona omai. Fa'ato'a maua ai lea o a'u i Aukilani i le 1952. Sa ou fanau ma aoga i Aukilani ma Mangakino. sa iai fo'i le vaitaimi sa faifai mea ai i Victoria i Wellington, ae pei o le tele o taimi/tausaga sa aoga ai a'u i le Civic Tavern i Queen Street. Ua feololo le tautala i le gagana samoa ona o lo'u alu i falepia i aso o talavou, ma sa taumafai e talanoa fa'asamoa i tagata samoa.

*I am very pleased with the discussions we have heard from various matai this morning. But please dont be upset as I will be speaking in English, as I have forgotten my very long Samoan speech I had prepared earlier. As the MC Seulupe has already mentioned, I was born and raised here in New Zealand. My father Niulevaia Edward Po Ching comes from the village of Vailu'utai, and my mother Nancy Lulu comes from Vaimoso. They came from Samoa in 1947 a very long time ago. I was born in Auckland in 1952. I grew up in both Mangakino and Auckland. I also spent some time at Victoria in Wellington; however, a lot of my learning was done at the Civic Tavern in Queen Street. I guess that is why I was able to pick up the Samoan language as it was through meeting up and talking with Samoan people at these bars. It was a good learning experience as it allowed me to make mistakes and to better understand the language I was hearing from other Samoans.*

O se mea e taua tele ia a'u i tausaga ua iai i lenei taimi ole iai o le suafa, aua, sa ou le fia matai i le taimi na faimai ai le sa'o a le matou aiga Tupua Tamasese. Na manao oute matai ae ou tali iai "oute lagona e le fetau'i a'u ise suafa matai. Oute le agava'a. oute iloa mautinoa oute le nofo i Samoa, ona o Niu Sila o lo'u nofoaga tumau ma o iinei sa ola mai ai i lenei olaga. Ia, pei o tala ia sa fai i na taimi. Sa ou fa'avaivai ona oute iloa e faigata le olaga o le matai pe a fa'apea e fa'amaoni i le tauavega o tiute fa'amatai. O saunoaga a le toeaina ia a'u i lea taimi: "Peter aga ou iloa e te le mafai'a, oute le faiatu e te matai. O nae te alofa i aiga, fai matua, ou galuega sa e iai i le Ofisa o femalagaiga i le tele o tausaga. Matautia le toatele a tatou tagata ua nonofo mau, i ou galuega fesoasoani i tausaga e tele. Lou galuega fo'i o le fa'amatala upu i ADHB po'o le District Health Board i Aukilani." Fiafia tele a'u, a ua o le olaga fa'amatai, e tautua, e ta'ita'i mae o tiute e tumau i le olaga fa'amatai.

*My life as matai is very important to me because I had initially declined to be a matai when our head of our family Tupua Tamasese requested I become one. He wanted me to be a matai but I said "I don't think I'm made out to be a matai. I don't have the knowledge and I don't ever see myself living in Samoa because I have been born and raised here in New Zealand and my life is here". Those were my excuses at the time. I refused because the life of a matai is a difficult one if I chose to take on the life of a matai. But this is what the old man said to me: "Peter if I didn't think you can handle it, I wouldn't have asked you to become a matai. You love your family and I can see that in your work" – You have worked for immigration for many years and certainly you have tried to help many people during this time. Currently I also help with translations for the Auckland District Health Board ADHB." I am happy to be a matai because the life of a matai is about serving and leading our family.*

Ua ia a'u fo'i le agaga fiafia, ona a o'o i tausaga oute nofonofo ai ma valevale matua ai i le fale, a lae'iloa sa ola aoga [lived a useful life]. Ae o le mea lea oute fiafia ai, manaia a mea sa ou fa'alogo ai i nisi sa fai saonoaga muamua. Ua tele matai ae le'o tutusa le galulue i totonu o aiga. O lo'u talitonuga, e leai se aoga ete suafa ai pe a e le alu e ave se si'i. Aua e pei o le mea lea ua mau ai isi matai i Niu Sila, fiafia tele e ta'u a latou suafa ae e le'o o e fai fa'alavelave o aiga. Ia o lea fo'i oute popole ai ona o le toatele i le matou aiga e fananau iinei i Niu Sila. E le tautatala ile gagana toe fa'alelava ni agaga samoa.

*I am also very happy that when I get to a point in life when I am old and my mind starts to deteriorate, that I am content in knowing that I have lived a useful life [as a matai]. I am very happy at what I have heard others speak on about the fa'amatai. There are plenty of people who are matai however not everyone puts in the same work as matai within their families. I believe that there is no use being a matai if you are not prepared to go and give*



*help to your family. This seems to be what is happening here in New Zealand, people are more than happy to be called a matai yet do not get involved in their family obligations and events. I worry about this because a lot of my family are born here in New Zealand. They don't speak Samoan and don't quite have the Samoan spirit.*

Sa fai le maliu a lo'u tina lua tausaga taluai. Matou talanoa ai lea ma o'u uso ma tuafafine to'aiva ia a'u. Faimai ai lea o le uso ma leisi tuafafine "none of that Samoan nonsense". Ia ou faiatu lea "olea le uiga o lena nonsense? O le tatou tina e samoa ma sa ola fa'asamoa, e osi aiga. E leai se na mea ole le faia o se fa'asamoa. O lae omai lona aiga mai Samoa ma e tataua ia tatou ona tali lelei. Se'i o'o outou i taimi e malaga ai ona faitalia ai lea o outou ma toalua po'o le a le faiga e fai ai tou maliu. Ona o le tatou tina, malilie, e leai se finauga e faia". Na faifai lo'u tala oute tautala i le gagana fa'aperetania a lea ua gagana fa'asamoa pagupagu hahaha. O le toatele o matou fananau i Niu Sila ma le'o mau le gagana fa'asamoa.

*My mother passed away two years ago. We discussed her funeral, us nine siblings. A couple of my siblings said "none of that Samoan nonsense". I said "what do you mean by 'nonsense'? Our mother lived the fa'asamoa and she dedicated her life to serving her family. There is no way that we are not going to do the fa'asamoa. We have family coming from Samoa for the funeral so we have to look after them properly. And more importantly, this was the type of life our mother lived. Wait till you pass away and we will leave it up to your spouses to run your funerals the way you want them to. Please for the sake of our mother, will be no further discussion on this". I said earlier that I was going to do my talk in English yet here I am doing it in broken Samoan hahaha. A lot of us born here in New Zealand have not learnt the Samoan language.*

It's challenging getting the majority of family members to engage in fa'alavelave because of how folk interpret the word and its' relevance, its priority and what's to be gained/in it for me.

Family members who have little income see fa'alavelave understandably as a non-option.

Family members living with their own daily fa'alavelave like rent, mortgages, utility bills, car and car related expenses and church money contributions etc.

I've had titular responsibilities now for about 28 years, and whilst it's been sleep depriving at times, there has been much pleasure, because it's always been about involvement in the good and bad days of people who are more often than not, near and dear.

A HANDBOOK FOR TRANSNATIONAL MATAI (CHIEFS)  
TUSIFAITAU O MATAI FAFO O SAMOA

The greatest joy for me is reflecting on jobs I've had to present day, and being a matai is the realisation of quality service to so many family members, people from so many countries over so many years. I believe in living a meaningful life that one can be proud of. *Viia le Ali'i i fa'amanuiaga matautia i le olaga a lenei auauna.*

Soifua.

## 2 CHAPTER

### MATAI TAMAITAI (SAMOAN WOMEN MATAI)

### MATAI TAMA'ITA'I AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF FAMILY, FA'ALELOTU, AND FA'AMATAI IN DIASPORA: MYTH AND MEANING FOR A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER AS CHIEFS IN HAWAI'I

Loau Luafata Simanu-Klutz

#### Abstract

It is one thing to be a matai in Hawai'i; it is quite another to be a female one. This presentation interrogates the invisibility of matai tama'ita'i, hence unequal gender relations at the intersections of church, family, and chiefly politics. I posit that for tama'ita'i to have visibility in this triangle, we should become genuine students of oral traditions and institutional governance in order to actively participate in spaces such as the church where, while a matai title is not a prerequisite to serve, being one especially of the tulāfale rank is the most effective weapon to counter male hubris. Aumua and I are mother and daughter respectively, and while she is a tulāfale, I hold an ali'i title from a different village. Our stories as matai in Hawai'i are quite different, and they beg a couple of questions: first, should more women become matai? Second, should a tulāfale title be required to becoming a deacon in church?

**Keywords:** matai tama'ita'i; gender intersections – church, family politics

It is one thing to be a matai in Hawai'i; it is quite another to be a female one. I stand before you today to share the experiences of a mother and daughter as matai residing in Hawai'i. I apologise in advance if any or all of this sharing appears self-serving and has the smell of self-aggrandisement, se'i tulou, but this is in line with the request from the symposium program committee to share our stories from Hawai'i. This morning, you heard from Tōfā Leituala Galumalemana Taia'opo Tuimaleali'ifano.

With her permission, I would like to weave her story into this lagaga in order to illustrate three principles which I use to frame this telling:

- I. E tamali'i le potu.
- II. E au le ina'ilau a tama'ita'i, 'ae le'i au 'ato'atoa.
- III. E mafai mea ia e lua pe 'a lototele, alofa, ma fa'amāoni.

Fa'atalofa:

Before I continue, 'oute fa'atalofa atu i le pa'ia ma le mamalu ua aofia mai i lenei fonotaga. O pa'ia lava ia o Tumua ma Pule, Itu'au ma Alataua, Aiga i le Tai ma le Va'a o Fonoti; i le afifio o āiga fo'i ma a latou tama po'o tama fo'i ma o latou 'āiga; fa'apea fo'i pa'ia o le Faleagafulu ma le Manu'atele ua tātou fa'atasi i lenei fa'amoemoe.

*Before I continue, I would like to greet you all, the honour and the dignity of all at this symposium. I acknowledge the honour of Tumua ma Pule, Itu'au ma Alataua, Aiga i le Tai ma le Va'a o Fonoti; as well as the four royal houses and the Faleagafulu and Manu'atele who are all represented here today.*

'Oute fa'atalofa atu fo'i i le Afioa a le ta'ita'i o Mata'upu tau Pasefika ma mamalu o faia'oga ma e lagolago, ae maise o ta'ita'i o lenei fono, i lau afioa Lupematasila Misatauveve Melani, ma lo tou Ofisa i Aukilani nei. Fa'afetai mo le amana'ia o i matou mai Hawai'i e auai i le talanoaina o lenei 'autū taua. E le faigofie lenei galuega ae ua taunu'u ma le manuia i le alofa o le Atua. Tatou te fa'afetaia fa'atasi ai la tatalo ma tapua'iga a le ufaigaluega a le Atua, fa'apea nu'u ma 'aiga o Samoa olo'o soifua i so'o se itulagi o le kelope.

*I also greet the Head of Pacific Studies, and lecturers. I acknowledge the lead of this Marsden programme Lupematasila Misatauveve Melani, as well your organising committee here in Auckland. Thank you for considering us from Hawaii to be part of this very important discussion. This undertaking is not easy; however, it is through the love of God that we have arrived at this event. We therefore give thanks and pray for the support of our clergy, village and families from all over the globe.*

Ia avea fo'i lenei avanoa e fa'ao'o atu ai alofa'aga o le tina matua o 'Aumua olo'o tu'i mai le mulipapaga i Hawai'i, ia ma popole mai po'o a a'u tala ia o le a fai ia te ia. Ia magalo lenei sui pe afai e pā'ō papa pe fa'avevesi mafaufau ni manatu ma lagona fa'aalia. 'Oute fa'amalulu atu pe 'afai o lea; ua na o ni mafaufauga na 'o a'u. Talosia ia fa'atupumanatu i nisi talanoaga o i luma.

*I would like to also take this opportunity to pass on the love and well wishes from my mother Aumua, who is supporting me all the way from Hawaii. She is worrying what I might be saying about her, so please forgive me if I say anything that is not appropriate to your hearing. They are just my humble thoughts and pray that we get good thoughts to have good discussion moving forward.*

## Context

I contextualise this presentation in the tensions in gender relations at the intersection of the Lotu (Church System) and Fa'amatai (Chiefly System) in Hawai'i. I use my mother's journey as a tulāfale tama'ita'i in Hawai'i since the late 1980s as an illustration of this tension, and her emergence as a voice, not necessarily for women, but for a Fa'amatai in search of a fit if not a soul in diaspora. Evidently, such tensions interrogate whether it is suitable for women to deliver lāuga or oratory, particularly during church fa'alavelave. Obviously, the jury is still out on whether women should become matai, despite the fact that it is becoming more commonplace for sisters and daughters to be titled. In the case of the Lotu Ta'iti, the number of women matai as members of a congregation is insignificant. In fact, for the Malua-affiliated congregations in Hawai'i, the only matai tama'ita'i I have heard perform lāuga is my mother, 'Aumua. If there are others, they are most likely ones with ali'i status.

In Hawai'i, as in other locales, the ti'akono, or deacons, are the gatekeepers or managers of the secular needs of the church, and that includes the protocol for hosting visitors or functions which involve Fa'asamoa hence Fa'amatai. Historically, the ti'akono spoke on behalf of the church regardless of whether they held matai titles or not.

Today more and more women have become ti'akono, but what I have noticed is that none of them have ever delivered lāuga or an opinion during fa'alavelave or church meetings. Would this change if they had titles? Would it be likewise if they had titles and executive positions?<sup>2</sup>

Unquestioningly, male deacons with oratory skills have always had the privilege of facilitating speech events in the absence of tulāfale. Generally, women continue to assume that such a responsibility belonged to the men; thus in the 1990s in Hawai'i, it was quite phenomenal to find a deacon who was not only woman, but a tulāfale at that. This is 'Aumua's story which I

---

<sup>2</sup> Presently, most of the women in the Malua-affiliated district are from American Samoa; it is the case that women in this United States territory are not keen or encouraged to become matai. It is also the case that title splitting is against the law there.

will return to later, but first, let me locate myself in this tension.

### **My journey in Mataihood**

My journey in mataihood began serendipitously in the middle months of 2006 when the American education system was on its summer break. ‘Aumua and I traveled to Samoa for two reasons: first, to do doctoral research on the past, of the Nu’u o Teine of Saoluafata—she was my key informant, since she had been an active member of the Nu’u as a young woman - second, to participate in a family reunion held at Matareva that July.

We started at the Lands and Titles Court in Samoa with a meeting with the Sa’o of our family, Susuga Tagaloa Donald Kerslake, who was then the president of the Court. I was seeking his approval and blessing; ‘Aumua was more interested in reconnecting with Tagaloa about family titles and other affairs. He received us happily, and approved my research proposal. During that meeting, however, my mother revealed an additional reason for being there, and that was to request on behalf of certain relatives, the return of the title Loau which they had lost during a court case a few decades earlier when his father had held the Tagaloa title. He was receptive and suggested that these relatives should come and see him. When we told him that we would return in December for the second phase of my research, he suggested that the Loau title could be bestowed around that time. Unexpectedly, he ended by saying, “Sau fo’i Fata ia e fai sona Loau.” ‘Aumua thanked him. I said nothing, but I knew then that it would be a huge disappointment to her if I turned down the offer. No-one from her faletama or side of the family had ever held this title although we were certainly its sulii, or heirs.

The Loau title is of ali’i status and part of Tagaloa’s Usoali’i in the men’s council at Saoluafata, not the Nu’u o Teine which was my research subject. Those of you who are familiar with this village know that Saoluafata was founded by a mother and her daughter approximately in the 12th or 13th Century. Until perhaps the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when more papālagi arrived in Samoa, the village was controlled by the women.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Faga’ese Bay along the Eva plain became a harbour for European boats. Records in the Goethe library in Frankfurt reveal German ingenuity as they engineered the entrance and exit at the bay according to tidal changes. This development is memorialised by the title Nu’ualiu, or the village that turned, and marks the moment when the women decided to share their power with their brothers and sons. Today, two chiefly councils govern the people; however, without strong leadership at the women’s institution, their power has diminished substantially; there is word that the wives have more power.

I was bestowed with the title Loau in January when I was there for the second phase of the dissertation research. When I asked some of my informants about whether that meant I was not allowed to violate the gendered space between them and the men, I was told that the choice was mine to make, and that they would always welcome me in their circle. I have been back a couple of times since the saofa'i, and I have contributed money for school facilities.

I have therefore been a matai for about ten years; yet I have not been formally initiated as one at the church, the only place where matai protocol is frequently employed. 'Aumua could not understand my reluctance to do that, but here are my reasons:

1. I am not totally convinced that having a title in Hawai'i works for me. The context does not invoke a commitment to perform my duties as a chief.
2. As a woman, I am convinced that if I were to exercise mataihood to the extent that people like my mother would want me to do, I would not be able to afford living in Hawai'i.
3. Perhaps most important of all, 'Aumua and I are both matai, but our household is not able to support that level of commitment. She is a tulāfale; I'm ali'i. The implications would be huge if we were to both sit in our respective cultural spaces at church or during an 'ava ceremony. Illustratively, since I am ali'i, I would more likely receive a cup, but not 'Aumua, unless she came under a different title. 'Aumua would probably not have minded, but our relationship as mother and daughter demanded generational respect. 'Aumua would want nothing more than to have people notice and treat me as they would a chief; she has often warned those of us with academic credentials that there was no credential that would give us more respect than that of being matai.

Yet, historically, she was a highly respected educator without a title in the villages where she worked as a teacher, head teacher, and school inspector. When I challenged her on this fact, her response was that, and this brings me to the first point I mentioned earlier, e tamāli'i le potō.

I. E tamālī'i le poto:

I grew up at a time when becoming a matai was not the ubiquitous aspiration that it has become. At least not for women. Colonialism promoted this and we internalised the attitude that becoming a chief meant returning to agrarian traditions which had very little to no place in a modernising society. In other words, anything to do with Fa'asamoa would be a hindrance to the dream of owning a pālagi house, getting a car, and eating bread and butter. For women, moving from the aualuma to the faife'au's household was preferable to a return to planting laufala for ietoga, u'a for siapo, or tolo for the lau. A return to ancient-based practices meant the family was mativa. Western education on the other hand meant one was poto and atamai, and women in leadership positions meant that they were chiefs in their own careers, and did not need traditional ones to push colonial agendas in education and other professions.

'Aumua became the first woman in all of Samoa to become a pule ā'oga (head teacher); New Zealand was still banning women from such positions at the time. 'Aumua also became the first woman in Samoa to become a school inspector. She would also have been the first woman to be a judge in the Lands and Titles Court had she changed her title from 'Aumua to something higher. Except for the latter where being a chief was a requirement to become a judge, the former two did not require being one; yet, there would be many eye witnesses who would testify on her behalf, as a well-respected leader who was treated as a chief given her professional credentials. I remember, having followed her around, that school councils comprised village chiefs who, perhaps out of respect if not fear of the colonially controlled education department, did her bidding for better physical facilities, better teachers, and better support of her teachers. When asked about this acceptance of her by the chiefs, her response was: e tamālī'i le poto. I translate this as "knowledge or wisdom is power."

The women pioneers in education in Samoa did not have titles. They did not need titles to penetrate male hubris which was, unfortunately, the reason for the male inspectors to reject her appointment to become a school inspector. Five years later, when the first woman to become the director of education took office, she approved 'Aumua's appointment finally. I'm talking about Afioa a le Lā'au na Fausia, the late 'Aiono, Dr. Fanaafi Le Tagaloa. At the time, she was Dr. Fanaafi Larkin. She did not need a matai title to become director, although I am sure she was given it as someone who has earned that power to lead, and thus gained consequential pride for her parents and extended family. Here, we must acknowledge how meritorious



our Fa'asamoa has been, and one must remember "o le ala i le pule o le tautua." 'Aiono and 'Aumua had certainly earned their titles by working hard and elevating their families, villages, and nation. 'Aumua's knowledge of her profession was sufficient to guarantee her the respect that she has earned, the wisdom with which she had facilitated disputes among her peers, relatives, and congregation. Again, her story suggests that for Samoa's women, e tamāli'i le poto. In other words, to be knowledgeable and wise are critical for being chief.

This brings me to my second point:

II. E au le ina'ilau a tama'ita'i although I may add, 'ae le'i au 'ato'atoa!

I don't think that the original ina'ilau is lost on anyone in this audience. Obviously, in using my mother's story, we have evidence that with service, commitment, and courage, our itūpā can reach the heights of power in order to continue our tautua, our service; that our thatching will always reach the rooftop of any fale, depending on how we go about it. It appears that at this point for our Samoan people, women are still denied the rooftops at the Lotu and Fa'amatai. When I talk about the Fa'amatai, I am looking at both traditional and modern governance. Again, let me use 'Aumua as an example.

The suggestion that her title 'Aumua was not high enough for a country expecting the paramount titles to judge their cases did not sit well with her. Anyone else would have gladly sought a paramount title, but she held on to her principles and denied the court's request. To add insult to injury, she was then offered a lesser role which annoyed her so much that she told the bearer of the news to keep their job and that she was moving to Hawai'i.

In Hawai'i, she was ready to enjoy retirement and help us look after my children who were quite young at the time. However, when she and dad realised that my husband and I did not have money to spare for the church, 'Aumua looked for a job and landed one at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa where she taught and developed courses and curricula for Samoa's respect language and oratory. Here, with recognition from her pālagi boss, Susuga Lasei Dr. John Mayer, her experience as a teacher, head teacher, and school inspector working in the rural areas where active Fa'asamoa occurred, was paying off. She attracted the young and restless from American Samoa, who were finding out for the first time why certain traditions existed, and that faigālāuga was not the nightmare that it had once been. She and I co-authored the Samoan Wordbook; she compiled, and I typed all the lessons

she had taught at UH Mānoa in the texts, *O si manu a ali'i* (UH Press, 2002) and *Fāiā Fa'atūmua* (NFLRC, 2011). She also facilitated a local radio program called the Ina'ilau a Tama'ita'i on which she and Leituala Taia'opo informed the women of their roles and responsibilities. At times, their stories would sound so bizarre that callers would call and challenge their authenticity.

Perhaps where we saw the power of knowledge at work was in her oratory, and in her leadership style, and her convictions; for example, that our tama a 'āiga were worthy of an 'ava fa'atupu, a ta'alolo, and a demonstration of protocol befitting royalty when they visited Hawai'i. To 'Aumua, e lē ta'ia i fale o tatou tamali'i. That when they came to Hawai'i, they were the tamā o le atunu'u, father of a country needing revalidation that it was okay to be Samoan. At different times within the last twenty years, she led the community in hosting the heads of state, Susuga Mālietoa Tanumafili II and Afioa Tui Atua Tupua Efi to royal ceremonies and gifting.

'Aumua is often frustrated when I raise the issue that in the church and government (here I refer to both American Samoa and Samoa), no woman has become faife'au or Prime Minister/Governor respectively. To that, 'Aumua's thinking is unclear. At 96, she does not see the promise of women at these rooftops happening any time soon, although American Samoa now allows women to become a'oa'o or lay preachers; however, there is still no sign that pastorship was happening soon, and here I'm emphasising what is happening in the lotu Ta'iti, my own denomination.

'Aumua worked as cultural leader and ti'ākono in her church, Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS), and in the wider community until retirement in 2012--old age had finally caught up with her. She and I have been members of the Waimanalo congregation and the Honolulu pulega. Soon after the start of this membership, the faife'au told 'Aumua that she would be the tulāfale for the congregation. This did not sit well with the other deacons, none of whom held a title. When they eventually confronted her, 'Aumua softly told them that when Fa'asāmoa protocol was activated at church, only matai spoke. Not long after that a male deacon was given a title by his wife and 'Aumua shared the oratorical space with him. He swallowed his pride and learned how to compose and deliver the oratory. He's been dead for almost 20 years. In the mid-nineties, a new group of members arrived at Waimanalo. Three of the men were registered chiefs—two in Samoa and one in American Samoa. The latter held a tulāfale title. It was now obvious that 'Aumua would not be the only orator. Unfortunately,

these tulāfale did not possess genuine knowledge of the culture, especially the honorifics of visiting dignitary, particularly chiefs and pastors from Samoa. ‘Aumua insisted on acknowledging the pa’ia and mamalu, since that was the respectful thing to do, and it was also a benefit for the younger generation. This group dispersed one by one, and two of them have passed away. Today, a younger generation of deacons have been bestowed titles and ‘Aumua eventually handed over the reins while she continues to advise and mentor them. There are almost as many women deacons as there are men in our church; however, none of the new ones holds a matai title. I am sure she is hoping I would become one and become a leader. All the same, she is happy that she can now retire and be the guide on the side.

As far as the bigger ina’ilau—ao o le malo, palemia, kovana, faife’au--are concerned, she feels that it’s time will come, and that she does not see the need to rush it. The challenge she will be leaving behind is: When will women become pastors, and when will they become head of State, Prime Minister, or Governor? This brings me to my last point:

III. ‘Afa’i e matai, ia fai ma le lototele, alofa, ma fa’amaoni— courage, love, and honesty

In a YouTube presentation on Feagaiga, ‘Aumua talks about how these three values helped her survive male hubris during the colonial and postcolonial periods in both Samoa and Hawai’i.

**Lototele**, courage, as far as ‘Aumua is concerned, is the result of kindness and in-depth knowledge of one’s culture and faith; the recognition that obtaining a matai title is so much more than being a sulii; that without poto and atamai of respect and ceremonial registers, a sulii finds no courage to lead. Additionally, until recently, tautua was the strongest criterion upon which succession to titles was determined. Today, the sulii criterion appears to be the monkey wrench thrown in to deny other aspects of Samoa’s constitution governing lands and titles: for example, the constitutionalisation of tautua by a non-blood relative validates the reward or gifting known as igāgato and matūpālapala. In my view, tautua or service as a determinant of power, should be reemphasised. Today, those of us in diaspora can be confident that our service continues regardless of place of birth; our fa’alavelave economics continues as we speak. The courage to put things in perspective and say “No” when expenses are high and two or more relatives pass away at the same time, is a lāuga that we, as matai wherever we reside, must be constructed so that all the parts are equitably treated and delivered

with the best that we know how.

**Alofa** for ‘Aumua means unconditional love of her family (and it’s a huge one), church, and atunu’u. She is an extremely patriotic citizen of the Samoan nation (the borderless entity that has become global), and of her new country, the United States of America. While some Samoans dilly dally about becoming American, ‘Aumua saw the pragmatics of becoming a citizen in order to avoid the unkindness of immigration and airline workers at the airport. Lotonu’u requires courage and love, therefore, the need to speak truth to power cannot be overstated when the principles and values of Fa’asamoa and Fa’alelotu are compromised through an unnecessary reinvention of customs and traditions, nepotism, and corruption. Here, I agree with ‘Aumua: basically, she believes that while change is possible, not everything needs to be changed simply because the practitioners cannot be bothered researching and asking about what makes sense, or works for everyone at a certain location/time, and what is of lasting benefit.

Finally, **fa’amāoni**, honesty—a sensible partner to lototele, courage, and alofa, love—is that commitment to reach the rooftop, and as ‘Aumua elaborates, it is what made her very successful in her career as an educator, and later, in securing her faith in her Lotu and God. Her optimism that things will work out has largely proven true although it has, at times, challenged the vafealoa’i between us.

‘Aumua has a couple of expensive brands for medication. They total more than \$300 every month. She receives enough benefits to help me pay the mortgage; but that is after she puts aside a certain amount for the Lotu. Most of the time, she sacrifices her health for this and it is often a contentious discussion between us. Her health becomes my problem; it is not a juggle for her, but it can be very frustrating for me who wants her around for a few more years. The obligatory genes which dictate what daughters should do with their dependent parents, keep me in a perpetual state of komumu. Is it courage if I speak up and say to ‘Aumua, “Your health is more important than your Lotu and Fa’amatai.” Or is it courage when I continue to keep her happy and stress free in her old age, while I struggle with my own health issues? For ‘Aumua, the Lotu and Fa’amatai are her obligations. She has demonstrated throughout her life how service to both is possible with love, courage and honesty.

**Concluding thoughts:**

For ‘Aumua, Leituala Taia’opo, and me, these are the principles which guide us as chiefs in accommodating our obligations to Fa’amatai, church, and family. As women, they give us the protection, perhaps fill a vacuum, as care of feagaiga shifts more to the faife’au, and service or tautua is being replaced by the right of sulī, heirs which has resulted in a massive and ridiculous splitting of titles; here, brothers and sisters are pitched against each other in the struggle for power. FOR WHAT?

A iai se upu na sala i lau fa’afofoga’aga, ia lafo i nu’u le ‘ainā. Talosia e iai se aoga o nei mafaufauga mo le aofia ae maise tupulaga talavou. A ta’ape le filiāli’i, ia manatua le māvaega a le tuagane ma le tuafafine: “O manū ta te tete’a ai, o manū fo’i ta te toe feiloa’i ai.” Manuia fa’asausauga o lo’o totoe o lenei fonu; manuia le ‘aufaipepa o lo’o sauni mai. Ia ola le faipepa. Soifua! ©

## MATAI TAMAITAI: SAMOAN WOMANIST AGENCY AND REFLECTIONS ON NAFANUA

Lupematasila Misatauveve Melani Anae

### Abstract

This paper is my personal position paper on transnational matai tamaitai. It is written in response to the legend of Nafanua. It is well known that Nafanua was ancient Samoa's war goddess, and that amongst other things, such as her being the product of an incestuous union – a blood clot – she is known for her fierce prowess as a warrior. It was she who prophesied the coming of Christianity to Samoa. This paper endeavours to create a new intellectual/spiritual space where we as Samoan women can celebrate our Samoan femaleness; to propel us to an empowering space; and to expose the agency of women as women, as mothers, as sisters, as wives; and, since the 1960s, as matai tamaitai. The ancient scripts of womanist agency have come down to us today from time immemorial - through the stories and experiences of our matriarchs – our mothers and grandmothers – and the story of the war goddess Nafanua, and Queen Salamasina. A matai tamaitai, today it seems, now occupies a 'new' space, but I argue that these ancient scripts, while being subsumed by the forces of colonisation, Christianity and neo-liberalism, are in fact still being embodied, enacted and performed by Samoan women today, and in the context of this paper, by transnational matai tamaitai.

**Keywords:** transnational matai tamaitai, Nafanua, Salamasina, women agency, womanism

This paper draws on my Marsden research data<sup>4</sup> which spans transnational matai qualitative data across Australia, Hawai'i, and the USA mainland; and a quantitative survey<sup>5</sup> about transnational faamatai experiences which incorporates almost 100 matai tamaitai responses. This paper explores Samoan matai gender scripts anchored in Samoan values and current debates about not only women as matai in Samoa, but also in this transnational space. It uses the symbolism, approach and action of Samoan womanist agency as not only a counterforce to the disempowering impacts of colonisation, Christianity and neo-liberalism for women and matai

---

<sup>4</sup> 'Samoan transnational matai (chiefs): ancestor god avatars or merely title-holders' project. Funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand in 2015.

<sup>5</sup> *Transnational Faamatai Survey* 2016, which elicited 550 global responses.

tamaitai in Samoa, but also as a re-empowerment force for matai tamaitai in the transnational space – thus continuing Nafanua’s journey through Samoan women’s lives.

Two important research publications by Samoan Studies at the National University of Samoa ring some alarm bells. The Studies are: *Political Representation and Women’s Empowerment in Samoa* (Meleisea et al., 2015); and *Women and Political Participation: the 2016 Election in Samoa*, (Fiti-Sinclair et al., 2017).

These publications highlight two areas of concern. The first is that much of Samoa’s social stability rests on the continued effectiveness of village councils and churches in village government, areas which are predominantly led by men. The second is that there is a definite exclusion and marginalisation of women’s voices in the governing of Samoa’s villages, as well as at national level.

These concerns were raised at an ASAO<sup>6</sup> international conference in 2017 during a session on *Women and power in Polynesia*.<sup>7</sup> It was at this session that a colleague shared that she had been very distressed by an event – which was a community discussion about a certain documentary on gender-based violence and the status of women in Samoa. What was alarming at this discussion between women, men, matai and village pastors was that women were blaming themselves – not the men – for domestic violence – that it was the victim’s fault that they were being abused. So...it had reached this crisis point? That women themselves had become their own misogynists? Of course, the nature of public discussion may not have included private ideas and thoughts, but there was no doubting the powerful influence of the male-dominated village councils and the Church’s religious teaching in the professed piety accompanying the discussion.

I witnessed this Christian misogyny first hand at the Measina Conference in Samoa in 2016, when a male matai stood up and professed very proudly that he did not believe that women should be matai because in the Bible it says “God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Not woman.”

---

<sup>6</sup> Association of Social Anthropology of Oceania.

<sup>7</sup> Formal symposium held in 2019. Publication of papers from this session will be published as ‘Women, power and place in Polynesia: articulations from Samoa and Aotearoa, New Zealand’, forthcoming in *Special Issue, Pacific Studies Journal*.

The other thought I had, was how far away this kind of thinking was from the Samoan women that I knew and grew up within my aiga, Church and community. Growing up in Auckland, New Zealand as the youngest daughter in a family of eight, I was always surrounded by intergenerationally strong Samoan matriarchs – grandmother, mother, aunts. Probably the strongest matriarch in my life was my grandmother Ane McKenzie and the influence she had on her son, my father, Lupematasila Afaue Liliva Anae. But not only that, it was also very far away from the stories and experiences that I and my Marsden research team had spent the last three years listening to and talking about...and also very far away from the survey data of the 88-transnational matai tamaitai who had shared their experiences with us.<sup>8</sup>

Yes. The lightbulb went on! Something new but old, same but different, amongst transnational women i fafo<sup>9</sup> was happening.

### **Nafanua**

Depending on a person's sex, politics, age, ethnicity and class, mention of ancient stories such as the legend of Nafanua can elicit a range of responses. One extreme – Nafanua, the war goddess – cemented the four paramount papa titles and prophesied the coming of Christianity to Samoa. The other extreme – the legend of Nafanua – is a myth, a pagan instance of Samoan indigenous reference involving cannibalism, incest, blood clots, demi-gods, sexual debauchery and violence. Whatever one believes will be between those two extremes. In order to understand the implications of the legend of Nafanua for contemporary Samoan sexual scripts, it is more important to consider the range of possibilities than to pinpoint an exact ideological location.

Historically, Nafanua as fierce warrior and the paramount political strategist of Samoa is described by Tuimaleali'ifano, who tells us that 'According to traditions, the inaugural gathering of the highest titles of the western islands was initiated by the warrior-priestess Nāfanua of Sā Tonumaipē'ā, who appropriated the four pāpā titles in the fifteenth century, after a victory in war' (2006: 6; Henry, 1980: 47-52; Schoeffel, 1987: 181-182). Tuimaleali'ifano also notes that Nafanua may be regarded as the first effective tafa'ifā, as for approximately the next three and a half centuries (1550–1900) that title became the locus of political struggles for the Samoan people (2006: 7). The four titles, the paramount titles of A'ana and Atua, and the two new ao, were, from the time of Nafanua, called pāpā, and outranked

---

<sup>8</sup> Marsden Research project 'Transnational Faamatai global Monkey Survey' carried out in 2016.

<sup>9</sup> In the transnational space.



the other great titles of Samoa.

“The whole process of constructing the tafa’ifā took almost three hundred years from the time of the Tongan departure in 1200 AD, to Nāfanua’s offer and Salamāsina’s accession in the early 1500s AD. After the tafa’ifā office displaced the Manu’a and Tui Manu’a, the reconstituted power structure was reflected in the new charters (fa’alupega), which affirmed the new orthodoxy for each village” (2006: 9).

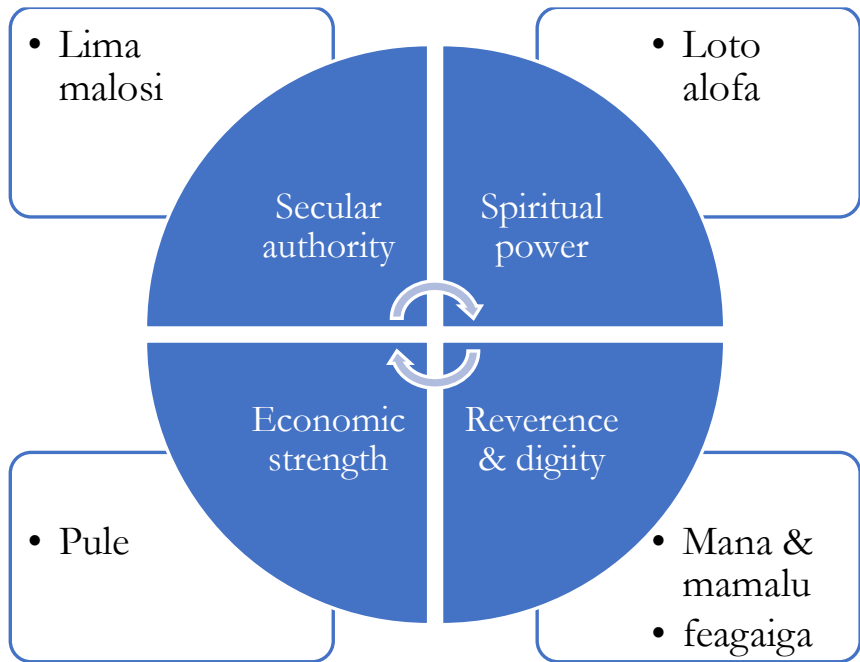
In Samoa, the matai who greeted the first palagi missionary is also a named character in the legend of Nafanua. According to Tcherkezoff, the legend tells us that the goddess Nafanua reigned on earth, carried off victories, established a measure of order, and then, just before she disappeared, announced to this man, Malietoa Vainu’upo, that he would soon be a great chief and that his ‘kingdom will come from the sky’ (Tcherkezoff, 2004: 143).

Thus, the legend of Nafanua and the political/historical accounts of her achievements are stories of celebration and survival. From a blood clot and as the result of an incestuous union, to becoming a renowned war goddess and paramount leader, her legacy opens up a space which shifts excluded/inferior identities to more empowering and entitled identities.

In 2016, I presented a paper at the Measina Conference in Samoa, ‘E sui faiga ae tumau faavae’, meaning ‘practices may change but the foundations remain’. That paper (Anae et al., 2016) and its reiteration at the New Horizons in Samoa History Conference later that year, examined the faavae o matai expressed by pioneer and younger matai tamaitai as the ability to be ‘lima malosi ma loto alofa’ (Anae, 1998: 183-193) literally, to have strong hands and a loving heart’, which translates to ‘effective action being driven by affective ties’. This research provides evidence that being overseas in the transnational space has opened up new opportunities for matai tamaitai not available in Samoa. For some of these women, one of these opportunities is the overt exertion of lima malosi - her pule (secular authority and economic strength), and loto alofa – her mana (spiritual power) and mamalu (reverence, dignity and social power) in the absence of a traditional ‘village’ and thus male dominated village councils and churches. In essence, the Samoan womanist agency energised by Salamasina and Nafanua, and our Samoan matriarchs recently documented as being stifled in Samoa is re-emerging in the transnational space as a more empowering and entitled identity.

I consider that the faamatai 'lima malosi ma loto alofa' indigenous paradigm, or what I refer to as 'Samoan womanism'<sup>10</sup> (see Figure. 3), is an apt reference to use in the context of the vast historiographical literature on faamatai in Samoa, which reveals that ancient Samoan socio-political organisation is ideologically ordered along genealogical and gendered lines. Its saliency is that it decentres dominant male-centred Western epistemologies concerning faamatai and power relationships between men and women in society.

**Figure 3** Samoan womanist agency



Samoans maintain that men and women have shared a bilateral relationship that manifests itself as the feagaiga, sacred covenant, between tamatane, male relatives, and tamafafine, female relatives, in a family, and in the rights of suli, heirs, to family titles and lands (Simanu-Klutz 2011: 1). Within the va, space and time, of feagaiga, men and women share pule

<sup>10</sup> Womanism is an African-American alternative to Western feminism and manifests 5 overarching characteristics: it is anti-oppressionist, vernacular, nonideological, communitarian and it is spiritualised. Phillips 2006 'Introduction' in *The Womanist Reader*. Phillips, L (Ed.) New York: Routledge Taylor Francis Group, p.xix.

(secular authority), and a complementarity of roles. Survival or life is the most powerful symbolism to describe the complementarity and the harmony which must exist in the relationships between men and women, who must co-exist together. Rather than the hierarchical, androcentric structures, systems and framings of gender relationships in the west.

### **Matai tamaitai Survey Data**

This online survey commenced in 2016 and consisted of 550 completed surveys. Of these 88 were completed by matai tamaitai which provided the following data:

- 97% have matai titles from Western Samoa and their saofa'i primarily took place in villages in Western Samoa (95%) however 2 matatamaitai had their saofa'i overseas (One in New Zealand, the other in Australia).
- 60% are Alii titles.
- Residence primarily in New Zealand (66%)
- Majority are between the ages of 36-60+
- 61% are married and their husbands are full Samoan
- Primarily fluent in Samoan language (70%)
- About 50% born in Western Samoa, the other half in New Zealand
- They represent a number of different religious backgrounds with the highest being Catholic at 26% followed by EFKS at 18%
- About 90% are employed
- Main reasons to travel to Samoa in the last 5 years have been to visit family (71%) and attend a saofa'i (63%) or funeral (53%)
- Close to half choose to stay with family in the village (42%)
- 92% report having a connection to the village(s) of their title(s) through their family. According to the survey, 96% of these participants still have family living in the village and 83% report their family still owns land in the village
- About 50% are considering to return permanently to Western/American Samoa in the future
- Close to 70% always contribute to, or participate in faalavelave or family obligations
- Participation in faalavelave are based out of their belief that it is part of being a matai (70%), they've been brought up in faalavelave and continue to practice it (64%) and out of their own desire to participate (58%)

- In the last 2 years 92% of Samoan matai tamaitai have contributed/participated in local faalavelave through giving money (97%)
- Participation in overseas faalavelave was over 70% with majority of tautua coming from New Zealand (75%) and Australia (55%)
- Participation in Samoa/American Samoa faalavelave was 88%. These faalavelave were primarily based in Western Samoa only (88%). Almost 90% of these faalavelave were funerals. All respondents contributed money (100%)
- 70% of mataitamiatai feel that the faamatai system will contribute into the next century

The comparisons between matai tamaitai and men matai reveal the following data:

- There are more women (60%) with alii matai titles than men (40%)
- There are twice as many Samoan male matai who have a 2<sup>nd</sup> matai title than women (men 25%, women 13%)
- All women with 2<sup>nd</sup> matai titles personally attended their 2<sup>nd</sup> saofa'i whereas 10% of male matai didn't attend, and 17% of male matai had someone receive their 2<sup>nd</sup> title on their behalf
- Both male and female matai primarily understand the faamatai system as being about serving your family. More women (73%) feel that it is also about protecting family land (59% of men agreed)
- Top 3 qualities of being a good matai:
  - Male: Be respectful (87%), be a good decision maker (86%), be understanding (86%)
  - Female: Be respectful (94%), be understanding (92%), be humble (90%)
- Male and female matai both had the same top 3 reasons to choose to be a matai: 'my family wanted me to be a matai', 'to serve my family', 'for the love of my father'

Reasons for becoming a good matai:

- Both male and female matai consider the respect they have for their family to be the main reason they are a good matai
- More men feel they are good matai because they are orators
- More women feel they are good matai because they attend family events and gatherings

Reasons respected as matai i fafo:

- Highest response is the same for both male and female: ‘I respect my family’
- More male matai are fluent in the matai language than women (30% men; 10% women)
- New Zealand is the primary residence for both genders
- More married men (74%) than women (45%)
- Both primarily full Samoan (67% men; 64% women)
- Both men and women are primarily Catholic and EFKS
- Most men and matai tamaitai are employed (breadwinners)

Main reason to visit Samoa/Am. Samoa is to visit family members

- More female matai travel to Samoa/American Samoa to attend: a saofa’i, unveiling, wedding, or graduation than male matai
- Connection to the village is the same for both male and female matai. Many stay both in the village and in hotels during visits. Some do not: ‘I don’t stay in the village when I’m in Samoa’ and ‘I have no immediate family living in the village’
- In the last 2 years, more men (16%) than women (5%) contributed over \$10,000 in total to local faalavelave

The matai tamaitai in the multi-nodal (Australia, Hawaii, mainland US) qualitative component of the research expressed strong views about difficulties being recognised as ‘real’ matai. They themselves believed that their titles reflected “ability” and “because the elders have faith in me”. The main obstacles were from male matai who were “ignorant” about why female matai existed, and from those who did not believe female matai should exist at all. Living overseas had provided ways to challenge such attitudes that would perhaps be unavailable in Samoa. In Hawaii, for example, a matai tamaitai used her Samoan radio programme to challenge a male matai who had told a female tulafale she could not speak at a wedding.

Some of the matai tamaitai were acknowledged by their male counterparts for their leadership and strong service, particularly for promoting Samoan language and customs. A pioneer matai said opponents of matai tamaitai would do well to remember Salamasina, and Nafanua “some of the greatest traditional leaders in Pacific history” whose era marked “a moment of peace [and] the flowering of our [people] in voyaging and building fales and all of the art forms and the medicine”.

Some matai were pessimistic about the future of faamatai. One younger male matai feared that the faamatai was “tottering on the edge” because of arrogance by some matai. One pioneer<sup>11</sup> matai suggested faasamoa would be overwhelmed by “the American life” and “after the old generation is gone, the children will not have anyone to listen to”. But most believed the faasamoa and faamatai would survive outside Samoa, because “we are the faaSamoa...that’s part of who we are”. One younger matai felt it would survive but “require much more to maintain it...financially”.

Reinforcing that the faamatai could not be separated from duties to Samoa was important for some pioneer matai. It was essential to maintain Samoa as the “sacred place”, the spiritual source that would sustain faasamoa “wherever we go and no matter how many generations we move”. Among the younger matai, there was more emphasis on the need to respect elders in the aiga and church, and to know that despite hardships - the constant demands on money, time and services, this was the path of a chief. Most felt giving was central to maintaining faamatai overseas and “if you don’t give, then you won’t get blessings...matai i fafo need to realise this”.

Some pioneer matai suggested changes to the way transnational matai were chosen and trained. Aiga should define the qualities needed to be a good alii or tulafale, then identify a young person and “shape and mould” them for the role instead of “conferring to somebody in his eighties and then you know five years later...it’s all over”. It should also be the “best Samoan not the best male Samoan...gender is irrelevant”. As well, young overseas matai or matai-in-waiting could be sent back to Samoa “to do the village life, to learn”.

The best way forward agreed by all research participants was to teach younger generations born overseas about Samoan aganuu (customs) and language and, especially, the faamatai – to “implement the power of the matai, that’s the power of the matai [to] develop your family”. The need to teach Samoan language from pre-school age to university level was stressed by several matai, as was the need for parents to “force” their children to speak Samoan.

Criticism of matai outside Samoa for eroding faasamoa and not practising ‘real’ faamatai drew differing responses. One younger matai recounted shaking with anger on overhearing criticism from matai in Samoa, which he

---

<sup>11</sup> Pioneer matai in the study refer to the pioneer generation -the first Samoan migrants who settled in western metropolises and who received their titles in the host countries.

put down to them being “jealous because we were able to sustain the culture outside of Samoa”. One pioneer matai observed he had seen “more erosion in Samoa than I saw outside of Samoa...so I see more integrity trying to preserve our faasamoa away”.

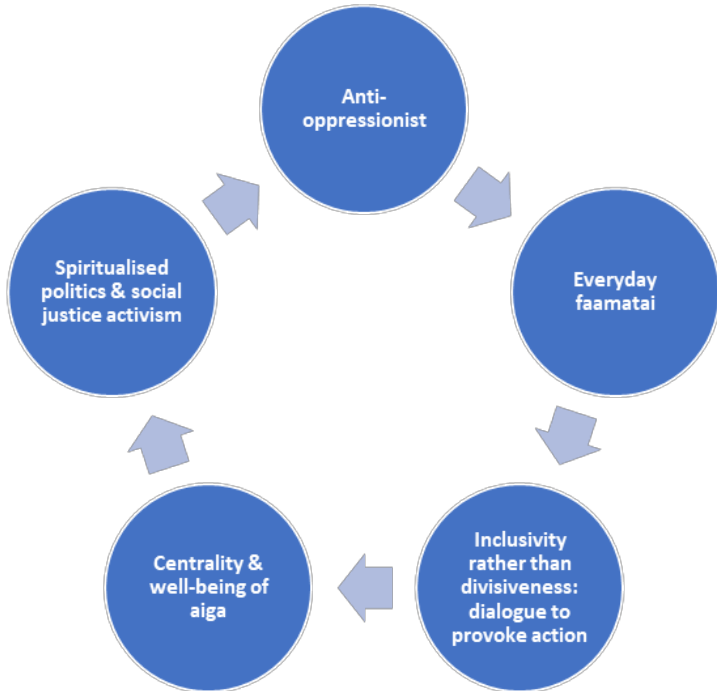
As evidenced by our research findings, the methods of social transformation and Samoan womanist agency that these matai tamaitai in their everyday practice of faamatai, are driven by Samoan womanist agency which coheres around the activities of harmonising and coordinating, balancing and healing.

These overlapping methods work in and through the va of relationships, rejecting violence and aggression but not assertiveness, and include, but are not limited to dialogue, arbitration, mediation, spiritual activities, hospitality, mutual aid and self-help, intergenerational ‘mothering’ and ‘sistering’ in the feagaiga.

Agency is defined as action, activity, effect, influence, power, work, intervention, intercession, mediation, arbitration, interposing, mechanism, instrumentality, auspices, and aegis. In the context of this paper, Samoan womanist agency refers to all of these and how they are contextually embodied, enacted and performed through the thoughts and actions taken by matai tamaitai that express their individual powers.

The womanist faamatai that these women practise are based on five characteristics in which they incorporate their pule, malosī, mana and mamalu to affect change or effective action (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Womanist faamatai



- It is aggressively anti-oppressionist in any shape or form –by men, by the Church, by matai in Samoa, by anyone who transgresses the faasamoa protocols;
- It is based on everyday people and life devoid of status and position in unifying imbalances and indifferences in power and resources for Samoan people/communities. Thus, multi-level tautua was integral here – tautua to Samoa, the village, to parents, to their church and communities and the need to teu le va of relationships;
- It is based on inclusivity rather than divisiveness and uses dialogue to provoke action, especially the hosting of dignitaries, e.g. Samoa’s Head of State or Governor from American Samoa;
- It is completely and wholly based on the well-being of their aiga (in Samoa and abroad), and their communities in the transnational space and faasamoa; and
- It is based on spiritualised politics – social justice activism and perspectives informed by spiritual beliefs and practices which undergird any political action (Phillips, 2006: xxvi).



### **Contemporary Scripts of Nafanua**

A contemporary visual portrayal of Nafanua came from the Oceania Dance Theatre at the University of the South Pacific's (USP) Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture, in their 2005 dance/drama production of *Na-fanua – Spirit of the Land*. The production touched on social issues by referencing traditional values such as sacred taboos and interrelations among people that are built on a strong Pacific platform of an environmentally sensitive identity. The production thus drew on Nafanua's chthonian powers. It endeavoured to highlight current issues that reflect the exploitation of the environment, causing social problems within the Pacific context such as poverty, alienation, discrimination and social degradation. 'Apart from environmental problems, issues of prostitution and drug abuse are also briefly addressed in the production, and we tie it to the importance of Mother Nature and the lack of respect of it' (Alo, 2005: 176).

The production was in two parts, and targeted the youth of today, who have become increasingly affected by the current trends of urbanisation and globalisation. The production took its title from *Na* – meaning 'hidden within' – and *Fanua* – meaning 'land' – and highlighted the importance of the motherland and nature to human life as the source of sustenance, identity, inspiration, and a sense of deep attachment to one's culture. These themes were told through the story of a young woman who encounters numerous challenges, searching for her true identity after being exiled and removed from the place where she once belonged. *Na* introduces, from the beginning, the Polynesian myth of creation, highlighting the importance and beauty of nature. The presentation traced the origin of Nafanua as the warrior goddess who grew from a clot of blood, as the result of an incestuous union between her parents, that violated the age-old sacred taboo regarding the relationship between the creator and the 'created' (Alo, 2005).

The second part of the production, *Fanua*, localised the myth in a contemporary situation where the struggle for redemption continues today, with Nafanua reincarnated as a young woman who grows up in a village. Tragically, she was forced by the despoliation of the land through extensive exploitation to relocate to the harsh realities of life in an urban squatter settlement. Her struggles against poverty, alienation, discrimination and social degradation elicit assistance from *Tagaloa* – the God of creation who sent a mighty cyclone to cleanse the land and give Nafanua another chance to effect reconciliation between heaven and earth and help heal the wounds of the land (2005).

*Sā Nafanua.*<sup>12</sup>

*For my sisters*

high-stepping in pink  
patent leather boots  
arms linked, we march together  
in raggedy-assed lines, holes in our  
sequined stockings/crooked at the seams  
under rainbow-colored tights and feather  
cloaks/this band of warriors/your  
frisky daughters, my dear/  
at your service/our weapons slung  
across shoulder & hip/paintbrush & camera  
Zenith laptop & law book/your freckled daughters/  
after-jets burning away illusion/attachment/  
clearing the channel for the birth  
of ourselves & each other/your  
gypsy daughters.  
we move down to the sea;  
our sons carry the boat  
bringing coconut, breadfruit,  
taro and papaya to plant the new land.  
babies chortle at the breast  
the bigger ones chasing sand crabs  
back into their holes/our sons  
hoist the sails and festoon us  
with *maile* garlands/*pua* & *avapubi*  
flower-scented aura of our people/  
protect us mother/we follow your  
ocean path to the world above  
the dark cave/guide us mother  
the sea serpent lurks beneath the waves  
monster ego/demons gnaw on the rigging  
steady us mother/your eye lights the way  
your heart moves our blood  
your hand steers our boat  
and plants us like seeds in the new  
land/sing for us *tinā*.

---

<sup>12</sup> Sinaviana (1993).

This poem by Sinaviana (1993: 227-228), and our transnational research data aptly portray Nafanua's continued journey through Samoan women's lives. They portray female Samoan matai tamaitai agency discussed here as *lima malosi ma loto alofa* navigating its way through the Samoan and Western realities to its arrival, with the help of Nafanua, and the stories of our transnational matai tamaitai leaders, at a harmonious sustainable relationship within the environment/context of Samoan faamatai in general.

As girls, we must treasure our *faasinomaga* and the importance of 'o' le ala o le pule o le tautua' as 'instructionally taught' to us by our mothers, grandmothers and matriarchs. As women and mothers, we must enjoy who we are as carrier of life and *gafa* – this is our female strength and power. As women and sisters, we must live harmoniously in the *feagaiaga* and *va* with men, in the land of men – this is our spiritual strength. As women, we must understand that we will have negative experiences as matai as well as good ones – this is our strength of resilience. As women, we must understand that we have the power to instil great fear in men – as warriors and tamaitai toa this is the strength of our power to lead. Finally, as women – mothers, aunts, grandmothers and matriarchs – we must pass on our stories, our experiences and knowledge to the younger generations of Samoan women and men yet to come.

In this paper I have signalled the importance of considering discourse analysis and issues of identity formation for current scholarship and struggles around how Samoan women and matai tamaitai may perceive themselves, how male matai may perceive them and how Samoan society perceives them. This cohort, and women in general, represent women in Western discourse, and by Samoan men and the Church in Samoa and abroad which increasingly emphasises excluded/inferior identities. This analysis has explored how the legend of Nafanua and study research data provide a space for an alternative, more empowering and entitled identity than the widespread stereotype of women as powerless and subservient to men. Samoan womanist agency thus creates a complex identity and realistic subject to restage Samoan women as legitimate matai as well as the carriers of life and the life force of genealogy. More importantly, it is hoped that such analysis will encourage a younger generation of matai tamaitai to examine the possibilities of this discourse as a site of resistance struggle.

## Acknowledgements

I have based some sections on my own work from the following sources: Nafanua and reflections on Samoan female sexual personhood' published in *The Relational Self: Decolonising Personhood in the Pacific*, Vaai, U.L and Nabobo-Baba, U. (Eds.), Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific and Pacific Theological College, 2017, pp. 203-222; 'Faamatai: A Globalized Pacific identity', published in Ratuva S. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity*. Palgrave, Macmillan, Singapore, 2019, pp. 1-25. 2019. I wish to thank the Marsden Fund, Royal Society of New Zealand for their assistance, without which we would not have been able to conduct our research. We also wish to thank our research participants who kindly agreed to be interviewed by the team – Lupematasila Misatauveve Dr Melani Anae, Seuлуpe Dr Falaniko Tominiko, Malepeai Dr Ieti Lima, Muliagatele Vavao Fetui, and Pacific Studies, Te Wānanga o Waipapa, University of Auckland for supporting this research project. We also thank Tiresa Poe for collating the data from our online Samoan Transnational Matai survey questionnaire. Faafetai lava!

## References

- Alo, A., 2005. Centre for arts and culture, choreographer and artistic director. USP News. Retrieved from <http://www.usp.ac.fj/news/index.php?id=9058&page=176>.
- Anae, M., 1998. Fofoa-i-vao-ese: The identity journeys of NZ-born Samoans. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland.
- Anae, M., Toiniko, F., Fetui, V., and Lima, I., 2016. Faavae o matai: Transnational women matai voices. In *Measina a Samoa*, Conference Proceedings, 7:185-204. <http://samoanstudies.ws/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Measina-a-Samoa-Proceedings-21.6.2017.pdf>.
- Fiti-Sinclair, R., Schoeffel, P., Meleisea, M., 2017. Women and Political Participation: The 2016 election in Samoa. Centre for Samoa Studies, National University of Samoa, Apia, Samoa.
- Henry, F., 1980. *History of Samoa*. Apia: Commercial Printers.
- Meleisea, L., M., Meredith, M., Chan Mow, M., I., Schoffel, P., Lauano, S.A., Sasa, H., Boodoosingh, R., Sahib, M., 2015. *Political Representation and women's empowerment in Samoa* Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa.
- Phillips, L., (Ed.) 2006. *The Womanist Reader*. New York: Routledge Taylor Francis Group.
- Schoeffel, P., 1987. Rank, gender and politics in ancient Samoa. *Journal of Pacific History*, 22: 174-93.

- Simanu-Klutz, F., 2011, 'A malu i fale, 'e malu fo'i i fafo. Samoan women and power: towards a historiography of changes and continuities in power relations in le nu'u teine of Sāolufata 1350 – 1998 C.E. Unpublished PhD Thesis, History Department, University of Hawai'i.
- Sinaviana, C., 1993. Sa Nafanua. *Manoa*, 5(1), 227-228.
- Tcherkezoff, S., 2004. 'First contacts' in Polynesia: The Samoan case (1772–1848): Western misunderstandings about sexuality and divinity. Christchurch and Canberra: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies and *Journal of Pacific History*, ANU Printing Service.
- Tuimaleali'ifano, M., 2006. O tama a 'āiga: The politics of succession to Samoa's paramount titles. Suva: IPS Publications, University of the South Pacific. Samoa, Apia, Samoa.

## **WOMEN MATAI: A CASE OF THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME?**

**Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop**

### **Abstract**

This chapter explores women's agency as matai using gender-based violence (GBV) as the vehicle for study. It captures a particular moment in time, namely the period of Samoa's National Human Rights Inquiry (NHRI, 2017-18) which, with one ground-breaking stroke, placed the Global Database on Violence Against Women (GBV) directly into the public domain and national space. The NHRI aims to 'lift the veil of silence on GBV', and was an acknowledgment that the increase and severity of GBV cases could no longer be ignored, nor the intergenerational impacts on children who witnessed or experienced acts of family violence. This chapter asks, how many women are matai, and do women matai participate in village fonofono; and it concludes with a brief discussion about whether the inclusion of women matai in these forums would make a difference. Fiamē Naomi's reminder that women's participation is impacted by both structural and attitudinal factors sets the chapter tone.

**Keywords:** GBV: violence against women matai; village matai fonofono; structural and attitudinal issues.

An 8-year-old girl was seriously molested in a rural village by friends of members of the child's extended family known to the child. The incident occurred during a family gathering at the alleged perpetrators' village. In the evening when the children were left alone to sleep in a house, which was in full view of the extended family, this young girl was abducted from her bed by the perpetrator, taken through bushes to a nearby grave and sexually assaulted. According to her mother, her daughter woke to find herself being carried by the perpetrator, and when she tried to scream, he held his hand over her mouth. Her daughter was awake the whole time of the assault. Later, a male family member recalled hearing a scream around the time of the incident but had dismissed it as he was not sure where it had come from. After the assault the perpetrator left, and the bleeding child stumbled through the bushes back to where her family was gathered. She was rushed to the village hospital and quickly transferred to Apia General Hospital where a full medical examination took place: these papers were filed at the

hospital. The parents approached the police and were told the police couldn't intervene because this was a village matter i.e. under the domain of the village fono (council of chiefs). So, the family took this matter to the village fono, which at the time comprised male matai. However, no disciplinary action was issued upon the alleged offender. The mother was unsure why this was so but thought this was because the alleged offender did not live in their village. The parents did not challenge the ruling of the fono. The matai in the village blamed the mother for not supervising the children on the night.<sup>13</sup>

My response on hearing this account was 'why were there no women at this Village Council fono?' I was sure that there would have been a vastly different outcome if women matai had been present. There were also questions about how an incident such as this had been moved from the national legal/juridical realm to be heard in a family and kinship-based institution. Did traditional institutions, whose operation is largely determined by 'social relationships and unwritten custom' (Waring et al., 2013: 43) have the capacity to deal with social issues such as GBV?

Anderson's thesis of nationhood as an imagined community, conceptualised in terms of disinterested love and continuity (factors usually associated with family and community) has value on this point (Anderson, 1983). As does his proposal that in the first patterns of social interaction, the power and authority of some groups was based on sacred knowledge and divine right, and the centripetal and hierarchical power structures which developed from this base, and which became set or fixed, were built on personal ties of blood and affiliation. Had these been the mores which influenced this Village Council to prioritise harmonious village relations over the well-being and the rights of this young girl? Or were there other patriarchal and gendered attitudes at play? And also, is the fusion of traditional faamatai and democratic processes in Samoa's institutions of modern government today impacting on the integrity of both institutions and in doing so, the rights of women and girls to live lives free from violence?

---

<sup>13</sup> abridged from Karanina Siaso Sumeo (2004) [n.b](#) Some time later it was found that the 'alleged' perpetrator had a history of similar acts.

This case demonstrated to me the seemingly absolute power of the faamatai as the dual arm of government today, and that for just outcomes to be achieved, women must be sitting at these decision - making fono. It can be said that the structures are in place to support women's aspirations to be a matai, because in the faaSamoa, both male and female heirs have this right. However, as articulated so eloquently by Fiamē Naomi almost 30 years ago, women's' expectations for this leadership role have been dulled by 'layers of attitudinal bias' including the widely held view that being a matai is male work and prerogative and women have their own informal domains of leadership and responsibility. Fiamē Naomi said:

...although there are no laws preventing women from participating fully in all political levels, there are layers of attitudinal bias that ultimately break a women's ambition to research higher levels in political activities (Fiamē Naomi, NCW WIP Conference, 1988).

Fiamē Naomi's comments are a salient reminder of the importance of taking account of structural and attitudinal factors when critiquing women's agency as matai.

### **This chapter**

The faamatai has responded quickly to changing times such as the monetisation of the economy (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2009), urbanisation (Yamamoto, 1994; Fairbairn, Dunlop & Makisi, 2003), and the proliferation of matai titles as in the matai palota (Soo & Frankel, 2005) and Anae (this book). However, the attitude that women should not be matai has not been seriously challenged, nor have there been challenges to how the absence of impacts on faamatai processes and outcomes.

This chapter explores women's agency as matai<sup>14</sup> using GBV as the vehicle for study. It captures a particular moment in time, namely the period of Samoa's National Human Rights Inquiry (NHRI, 2017-18) which, with one ground-breaking stroke, placed GBV directly into the public domain and national space. The NHRI aims to 'lift the veil of silence on GBV', and was an acknowledgment that the increase and severity of GBV cases could no longer be ignored, nor the intergenerational impacts on children who

---

<sup>14</sup> For this paper matai is treated as a generic term. See Serge Tcherkezoff, The Samoan category matia ('chief): A singularity in Polynesia? Historical and etymological comparative queries, by p 151-190 Volume 109 200, Volume 109, No.2.



witnessed or experienced acts of family violence.<sup>15</sup> This chapter asks how many women are matai, and do women matai participate in village fono; and it concludes with a brief discussion about whether the inclusion of women matai in these forum would make a difference. Fiame Naomi's reminder that women's participation is impacted by both structural and attitudinal factors sets the chapter tone.

My approach is rights-based: that women and girls have the right to live lives free from violence, and for this to be achieved, women must be sitting at GBV decision making tables; women are the experts on their experiences, and their participation will increase the pool of knowledge from which appropriate and relevant solutions can be decided. Women's participation is fundamental to the well-being of families and communities and national development. It is also important that women experience and see themselves as leaders and decision makers:

...women's perceptions of themselves, their position in production and distribution and their exclusion from public participation often have a high degree of congruence. So, on all levels, the way in which women are enabled to see themselves and their positions reinforce each other (Edhold et al., 1987).

In contrast to global studies where political participation (WIP) is commonly used as a marker of women's agency, the primary focus of this chapter is on family and village level because these are the places where women's aspirations to be a matai are nurtured, and these learnings set the foundation for women's participation through the life-cycle. In an attempt to bring Samoan thought, philosophy and ethics to the fore as a way of addressing the contemporary issue of GBV (Huffer and Soo, 2005), the chapter features a mix of contemporary and historical materials. For the contemporary picture, materials are drawn from national reports, including: Government of Samoa (2016), Samoa's Legislative Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women; Government of Samoa (2017), the Samoan Family Safety Study, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development; and the final Report 17/16 of the Samoa Law Reform Commission, and materials from the NHRI. I was one of the four Commissioners in Samoa's NHRI, the first

---

<sup>15</sup> The NHRI featured a community research phase (2016) followed by almost two months public and privately presented submissions in Apia and rural villages (2017) and the launch of the national NHRI strategy (2018).

in the Pacific. Global responses to Samoa's CEDAW and other reports are also included here, and these serve as a timely reminder of the complex contesting of universally held and local ideals. Earlier materials such as those from NCW's pioneering Women and Politics Conference (Apia 1988) are used to add a historical perspective. As will be seen, questions raised at that germinal conference remain unanswered today.

The chapter is in three parts, beginning with a brief account of the faamatai to set the context. This is followed by the presentation of the latest available data on women matai and the participation of women matai in meetings of the village fonofono. The focus of part three is on GBV, and whether the village fonofono in its present form has the capacity to safeguard women from acts of violence. How women's participation would make a difference in the ways GBV is understood, treated and addressed is also discussed. The givens for this chapter are that in the faaSamoa, being a matai is the avenue to social economic and political participation through the life-cycle; male and female heirs have the right to be matai and, matai are selected by their family through a process of consultation and consensus.

This Samoan study has relevance for other Pacific countries where traditional family based custom decision-making agencies prevail and intersect with modern democratic processes. In doing so, this chapter raises more questions than it offers answers.

### **Part one: To be a matai**

To set the context, the journey to being a matai is presented in two parts so as to highlight the fusion of traditional faamatai and democratic ideals in Samoa's legal frameworks and the gendered attitudes reinforced and sustained within these processes.

### **The faamatai – everyone a place**

The faamatai, which is the heart and pulse of the faaSamoa, has been described as a hierarchical, highly gendered and rule-based system. Peoples' identity, place, roles and expectations are set in the faamatai, as are the approved processes and behaviours by which members tautua (serve) the family. Kamu describes the ideological basis of the faamatai as its divine origins as ordained by the creator Gods. He writes that Tagaloa provided Samoans with the directions for organising and living life (and) through its structures and rituals the faamatai preserves and perpetuates the core values of society (Kamu, 1996: 36-37). In line with this belief the faamatai features

a number of sacred/ secular separations. For example, between the matai (sacred, matai represent and mediate with the creator Gods) and non-matai' (who serve the matai) and between sisters (sacred, whose virginity must be protected)<sup>16</sup> and brothers (who have a duty to protect their sisters as set in the feagaiga sister/brother covenant). A further sacred/secular separation is between sisters (the aualuma or daughters of the village<sup>17</sup>, often thought to be the highest-ranking group in the village) and in marrying wives who have no rights in their husbands' village but must serve their husband's family just as he does. This group are commonly referred to as nofotane.

Aiono (1992) likened the faamatai to a sociological wheel featuring the matai at the hub and the groupings as inter-related in concentric connections of blood ties and marital reciprocity, (and while) there is significant independence within each domain, these domains depend on each other for the family and village to function smoothly (Aiono Fanaafi, 1992: 118-124) (see Figure 5). Membership of these groupings signify status, labour contribution, expectations, and access to resources, knowledge and information.



**Figure 5 The faamatai.** Adapted from *E au le inailau a tamaitai: Women, education and development – Western Samoa* (p.72) by Fairbairn-Dunlop, P., 1991. Macquarie University, Sydney.

<sup>16</sup> Sisters were regarded to be valuable resources in marriage alliances aimed at increasing the family prestige and support bases (see Schoeffel, 1979).

<sup>17</sup> By way of contrast, anthropologist Karen Sacks (1982) describes the sister/ wife separation she observed in African kinship-based societies as driven by economic motives: to maintain ownership of family land and labour resources. The applicability of Sack's view to the Samoa situation warrants further study.

Meleisea states that matai hold a leadership role in two equally important spheres of authority. ‘The first level is authority within the family and lineage. The second, is the authority of the village council in which every participating matai has a voice’ (Meleisea, personal communication). It is the duty of the matai to ensure family well-being, including the enhancement of the family status in the national system of matai rankings.

Matai are the public face of the family – they represent the dignity and honour of the family, mediate disputes, and ensure the rightness of family presentations at ceremonial and other events.

Female and male heirs have the right to hold the matai title, and reference is often made to powerful but also high ranked women matai of the past, such as Nafanua who held the four tafa ifa titles. Generally, however, the matai leadership role has been viewed to be a male honour and, in this vein, the aumaga learnt the chiefly protocols and family genealogies as they served the matai at the meetings of the village fonos. Studies indicate that sisters tended not to activate their right to be a matai, for to do was tantamount to them declaring that they had no respect for their brothers or, that their brothers were not fulfilling their feagaiga role. However, while sisters held honoured positions as feagaiga, the feagaiga also restricted women’s activities to certain domains, and taught women to depend on and to defer to their brothers as seen in this comment ‘I know I would make a better matai than my brother. But I would rather my brother had the title. For him it is important. I am so proud to see my brother mixing with the other matai and he is proud to be our matai (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991: 89).

### **Matai and modern government systems**

While the integration of the faamatai into democratic governance structures in Samoa’s independence years extended the mana, power and prestige of the faamatai, these actions (consciously or unconsciously) also reinforced the mindset that being a matai was a male prerogative. Samoa’s introduction of matai suffrage (1962) by which only matai could vote and stand for parliament<sup>18</sup> was a first step in this process. Matai suffrage was hailed globally as an example of the successful integration of democratic and traditional forms of government. Further adaptations in Samoa’s legal framework in the 1990s accelerated the consolidation of matai in national

---

<sup>18</sup> The underrepresentation of female matai in national government has led to a special measure under the *Constitutional Amendment Act 2013 to increase the election of women matai*. Despite strong opposition, a 10 percent quota for female parliamentarians was set. (CEDAW/C/WSM/ 6 page 4).

governance institutions. For example, universal suffrage was introduced in 1990, however the rule that only matai could stand for parliamentary office remained. Next, the Village Fono Act (1990) legally entrenched matai leadership at village level as well:

The Village Fono Act 1990 recognises that decisions on village administration are made by the Village Fono, which consists of alii and faipule (matai) and is governed according to custom. Those who are not matai cannot participate in the Village Fono (Samoa's Legislative Compliance with the CEDAW, Final report 17/17: 55).

Not only did this Act limit participation in the village fono to matai, it also gave the fono sovereignty for village well-being, which was to be achieved by rules 'according to custom' (The Village Fono Act 1990). By doing so, this Act instantly opened the way for village laws to differ by village, from national laws, and from international mandates to which Samoa is also a Party. Village Fono were required however, to lodge their constitutions with The Internal Affairs Division, of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. This act also raised a third point of importance namely, the meaning, interpretation, and scope of the term 'village administration'.<sup>19</sup>

Somewhat against the tenor of the times (Samoa's CEDAW discussions were underway), the newly instituted Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development Department (MWCSDD) didn't apply a gender equity or human rights framework to vision its role and function. Instead, it chose to reinforce women's traditional roles as set in the faamatai ideals and processes, thereby promoting again the mindset that the matai is a male institution. The Women's Affairs Act (1990) states:

The function of ministry of women, community and social development is to encourage and promote the work of women's committees in relation to primary health care, village and district sanitation, childcare, handicrafts, community work including gardens for the growing of vegetables and training and promoting and assisting women with their home economics including cooking, nutritional diets, sewing and matters of a like nature (Womens Affairs Act, 1990).

---

<sup>19</sup> See Village Fono Amendment Act 2017 Provides lists, but is still open to interpretation.

Samoa acceded to the CEDAW in 1990, and still takes great pride in being known as the first Pacific nation to do so. Samoa has ratified five of the nine human rights core goals required to fulfil its legal obligations to give effect to CEDAW.

The Women's Affairs Act (1990) is unchanged. It continues to reinforce a stereotypical picture of women's place, aptitude and knowledge, despite the realities of women's lives today e.g. women's equal access with males to education (98% girls; males 99.1%) that girls are more successful in school and have fewer dropouts than males at secondary level, and that 60% of government scholarships are awarded to girls. Women also play lead roles in the modern sector as will be discussed. So, while women have the skills, knowledge and experience to justify their inclusion in village decision making, are they still constrained from doing so by 'layers of attitudinal bias?' (Fiame Naomi: personal communication).

### **Part two: Women matai**

Being a matai is the pathway to participation in family, village and national decision-making today. As discussed also, male and female heirs have the right to be a matai, a right which is affirmed in Samoa's Constitution, which guarantees equal rights before the law, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. To capture this picture of women's participation as matai, part two is presented as a mix of available data, local and, external voice. Data on women's status as matai is outlined first. This is followed by a discussion of 'who will protect women and girls from violence?' Is GBV the responsibility of family and village, or a national and legal responsibility?

### **Women matai 2017**

The data.<sup>20</sup>

While the number of female matai has increased in recent years, the latest available data indicates that the attitude that being a matai is male work prevails:

- 11% of matai titles are held by women (this does not include the number of women matai who reside overseas) (Samoa Census Report 2011).
- Women comprise 5.5% of all village-based matai (55 Law Reform Report).

---

<sup>20</sup> Note the data is not disaggregated by factors such as age, rural/ urban locate, economic security or disability.

In addition (and despite this being against the Constitution), 21 out of Samoa's 275 villages or sub-villages do not permit women to hold a matai title. This situation directly impacts women's right to sit at Village Fono and to stand for election in 16 out of 41 constituencies (Samoa's CEDAW Report, 2016: 57).

### *Local voice*

Findings from the Women and matai leadership survey (MWCSD, 2013) were that women were confident with the systems at the moment as 'they see their matai brothers as their voice in the village council meetings and they feel that the women's committees are the place for women to voice their opinions' (MWCSD, 2013: 3.2.1, 59). The words 'at the moment' warrant further research.

#### My village

My village does not allow female matai - a ruling introduced almost 40 years' ago by my mother's brother. In the 1990s, a national statement was made that villages must not discriminate against women matai. Soon after, this question was discussed in our village fono. An estimated 50 male matai attended this meeting (two of whom were MPs), and each took their posts as is the custom. I sat with women and children around the fringes of the meeting. Each matai spoke to this matter, and contributions supported the status quo. There was no mention of women's service to the family/village or whether this was valuable or valued. Only one matai referred to the CEDAW, and he urged the fono to abide by the national edict. This matai was an MP, his wife was Fijian, and they have two daughters. After almost an hour of discussions, the focus was suddenly directed to me with the words 'in this case should we allow Peggy to be a matai because she's the only member of her family living in Samoa so she should be allowed to speak for them'. This statement brought a mix of silence and a power protection element to the meeting, by the matai but also, I felt, by the women and youth present. Recently I asked a family member why my uncle had made this rule. Their answer was that he had done this in the spirit of protecting women from the 'burly roughness' of the village fono. That this had been an act of love and respect for women, not of discrimination against women or, devaluing of women's knowledge.

### **Do women matai participate in Village fonofono?**

Available data indicates that membership of the Village Councils is largely male, which is not surprising given the small number of women matai noted above.

#### *The data*

The data indicate that:

- Most village councils have no women in their fonofono or only one or two;
- In 36 villages women matai are recognised but are not allowed to attend and participate in village councils; and
- Almost all village-based matai are older men – 92.5% are over 40 (Meleisea et al., 2015: 24. Also see Samoa Law Reform Commission 2016).

However, a gender slant is applied whereby *nofotane* (in-marrying) women matai cannot join this deliberating body while in marrying male matai are permitted to join:

- *Nofotane* (in marrying wives) who hold chiefly status cannot sit in the village council in their husband's village. However, in marrying male matai can sit in the village councils in their wife's village.

Almost a third of the women matai indicated they didn't activate their right (and responsibility) to sit in meetings of the village council because they didn't see this to be women's role. Others said that male negative attitudes had deterred their participation:

- 30.91% of women matai said they choose not to attend village council meetings as they either do not see it as within their role as a woman to participate or do not feel comfortable attending meetings due to negative male attitudes and the male dominated environment (Meleisea et al., 2015: 55).

#### *Local voice*

Comments from earlier years indicate that women did not fully understand the importance of their place and contribution in village decision making or the need, as Edholm (1987) describes when pointing out the need for women



and girls to value themselves as decision makers. From other research:

- Many women have made the comment that there is no need for women to sit at the village council meetings because these are but the formalising stage of family-based decisions where women have a considerable ‘say’ (see Meleisea et al., 2015).
- In her presentation to *the National Council of Women’s WIP fono*, Filifilia Tupua Tamasese outlined women’s role with these words: ‘in terms of real power, women are the dominant influence in the village...ask anybody about a village project. It is the Women’s committee that provide the energy, the drive and the staying power which ensures the completion and success of a village project (NCW, 1988).
- Oft heard comments by male matai (usually accompanied by laughter) are that ‘having women matai at the fono changes the nature of our discussion’ (ibid.).

Even though women matai may be a minority in the fono, women are highly visible and hold major leadership posts in the modern sector. At May 2017, 12 of 38 Government Ministries and Corporations were headed by women. Of the 128 Level Two Assistant CEOs, 79 are women and 49 are men<sup>21</sup>. Samoa’s judiciary comprises 27 judges, seven of whom are women. Three oversee court proceedings in Samoa’s Lands and Titles Court, two are Supreme Court judges, and two are District Court Judges. Women head up more than 40% of small businesses, mostly in the private sector, and mostly with the [assistance of micro-finance initiatives](#) <sup>21</sup>

[Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat \(2016\) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016](#).

[The question remains - Why are women not exercising their right to be a matai and in turn, contributing their knowledge and experience into family and village decision making? Is this women’s choice](#) or, are women not chosen by their families for this honour due to the prevalence of the attitudes and assumptions that being a matai is the domain of males?

---

<sup>21</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (2016) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016).  
[https://www.aidsdatahub.org/sites/default/files/publication/Pacific\\_Leaders\\_Gender\\_Equality\\_Declaration\\_2016.pdf](https://www.aidsdatahub.org/sites/default/files/publication/Pacific_Leaders_Gender_Equality_Declaration_2016.pdf)

### **Who is protecting women and girls from GBV?**

There are differing views about who, or which agency has the responsibility to ensure protection from family and GBV. On this point, the NHRI placing of family violence squarely in the public domain is at odds with findings from the 2017 Samoa Family Safety Study (SFSS) that:

- Violence was a family matter to be dealt with within the family. (However, if need be) there was an overwhelming preference for the village council to be the authority to handle matters relating to family safety (rather than the police);
- Village Council members also viewed violence as a private matter pertaining solely to the household sphere, involving and affecting parents and their children only. There was a strong belief that the Village Council would only intervene in matters where peace and harmony for the whole village was under threat (SFSS 2017: 92). How the threat was conceptualised was not discussed.

Anecdotal reports abound that in some villages, families may not take matters to police until these have been sanctioned/allowed by the Village Council.

In her presentation to the NHRI, practising lawyer Maeva Betham Annandale drew attention to women's differential access to legal support generally, and in cases of GBV with these words 'all my domestic client are young, professional women, mothers and older who have money. Never a young or old woman from a village or a young or old woman with no money' (Maeva Betham Annandale: personal communication, 2017).

#### *Global voice*

Samoa's CEDAW and other global reports openly stress that women's agency through the life cycle is constrained by their lack of access to family titles, and this in turn, increases women's vulnerability to acts of violence. These reports capture the tensions between customary and human rights ideals:

**CEDAW Samoa Report 2012**

This report noted Samoa's 'harmful norms, practices, traditions, patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles responsibilities and identities of women and men in all spheres of life. These include, women's limited access to family chiefly titles (matai), discrimination against women married to untitled men, and the practice of banishing families from the village by village councils. The Committee is concerned that such customs and practices perpetuate discrimination against women and girls and that they are reflected in women's disadvantaged and unequal status in many areas, including education public life and decision-making, and in the persistence of violence against women'. (Committee on the elimination of Discrimination against women, 2012: W/C/WSM/CO/4-5p.5)

**The US Department of State 2016 Country Report**

Human rights problems listed in this report include the lack of accountability and poor adherence to the rule of law by village "fonos" (councils of matai), abuse of children, discrimination against women and nonmatai...(United States Department of State, 2016).

**Part three: Is the Village Council protecting women and girls?**

*Reflections from the Village Fono, NHRI*

Presentations to the public hearings of the NHRI demonstrated the significant refining of Samoa's legal and juridical processes relating to GBV in recent years, such as, *The Family Safety Act 2013 Crimes Act 2013*, and the establishment of the Family Court in 2014. These will not be discussed here. Instead my focus is on views (attitudes) expressed in the over 20 rural meetings held as part of the NHRI which I attended.

The NHRI team had made a point of requesting, and suggesting that women be present at these village meetings. However, few women participated. Instead, women and girls were at the fringes attending to hospitality tasks, listening, but not voicing their views. This was a contrast to the urban sittings where the gender ratio had overwhelmingly favoured women. When I raised this point with a number of male matai, their responses were 'this is fono businesses, indicating this was how these villages had classified this NHRI community meeting. Ministers from a range of religious organisations participated in most of the community meetings.

With few exceptions, the tenor of most community discussions was that ‘there is no (or little) GVB in our village’. This was usually followed by a listing of the penalties which would be incurred for any infringements – comprising largely foods / monetary compensation to be paid by the family rather than the individual. For the worst-case scenarios, punishment was a banning from the village. Our team was not able to ascertain whether the villages we visited had lodged their Constitution (a requirement of the Village Fono Act), nor whether there were records of GBV or other violent incidents having been brought to the attention of the Village Fono.

As I listened to the submissions and the many discussions, I couldn’t help thinking ‘how do these male matai conceptualise GBV? Do they genuinely not see GBV? (GBV had become normalised). Or was this a case of intentionally ‘not seeing’ acts of GBV spurred by their desire to maintain the belief that their village was fulfilling its role to protect women and girls? Or did they believe that GBV was not a responsibility of the village council? Two accounts below, from women’s privately presented submissions, suggest these male matai do not ‘see’ GBV.

### **Seeing and not seeing**

1. In his public presentation to the NHRI, a male matai argued eloquently that everything was fine in his village. No reason for concern. The next presentation was by an elder woman matai from a neighbouring village who had listened to his presentation. When he departed, she voiced quite graphically her concerns about the increasing incidence of violence in her village. Her story was one of unease, almost despair. When she rose to leave, she said, ‘my daughter is married to a man from his (previous speaker’s) village. My daughter came home a couple of weeks ago with no teeth. She is not going back’ (Savaii).

2. In her private submission to the NHRI, a female matai shared how she been battered quite severely by her first husband whom she had divorced. She had remarried and now lived with her husband (a prominent matai) in her husband's village. Although she was a matai, she did not attend Village Council meetings – she was nofotane. As she neared the end of her story we asked: 'does the village council in your village talk about or have any cases about family violence or GBV?' She paused for a moment, paused and then replied 'I asked my husband that question... whether the Fono looked at GBV. His reply was 'what...is something happening/going on in the village?' (Apia).

Another story shared indicated that changing mindsets is possible. In her private submission, a nofotane explained how, with the support of an NGO, she had gained strength and the knowledge to 'respectfully' protect herself from violent acts by her mother in law. This process had raised her own feelings of esteem and confidence, and she has become a trainer in NGO GBV forums.

### **Working for change**

X had suffered years of verbal and emotional violence by her husbands' mother who had treated her as a slave for many years... she would hit x over the head with pots and threaten to hit x a crowbar'. X loved, and was loyal to her husband and children, and together they served her husband's family. Her husband couldn't stop this behaviour. X had felt she had nowhere to go because her own family now lived in New Zealand. When X went to visit her parents in New Zealand, they had said 'don't go back'. But she always returned. She said that one day she heard the NCW were running a training course in the village on family violence. So, she decided to attend. She said 'that fono changed my life'. She had learnt forthright ways and skills to address her situation, and to state her rights - with respect. X is now a training officer for the NCW Violence programme (NHRI private submission).

In another example, drawn from a newspaper report, a *nofotane* described the steps she took to ensure the GBV *Nofotane* training offered by the Victim Support Group (SVSG) was carried out in her village.<sup>22</sup>

**Samoa's *nofotane* assert their rights and independence (Nov 1 UN report 2017)**

Like many other *nofotane* women, Salamō had no say in any decisions made in her home or in her community. The suppression of her voice and choices started early, and continued in her marriage, in her relationship with her husband's extended family, as well as in the village and the church. *Nofotane* women were not expected to have any agency or influence in her village. For the longest time, Salamō had accepted this as her fate. However, When the NGO Samoa Victim Support Group (supported by UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality) first offered advocacy training in her village, Salamō saw this as the opportunity to reshape the future of *nofotane* women. Her husband is one of the high chiefs of the village, and she said it took her days and weeks to convince him to support and facilitate the presence of the Samoa Victim Support Group in the village. During the final village council meeting in December 2016, Salamō had sat in the Sun under her umbrella outside the meeting *fale* just to make sure her husband would bring up the issues, as promised. To her amazement, he did, and what's more, he was supported by other village leaders. Salamo said "I am a *nofotane* woman. I am a strong advocate of equality for all women in my village. I am the living proof that a *nofotane* woman's voice can be heard in the village council. This is a victory for all the *nofotane* women of Fuailolo'o Mulifanua, and a milestone achievement for Samoa Victim Support Group and the *Nofotane* Project."

**Concluding discussion**

This chapter has argued that rights of women and girls to live their lives free from violence and that for this to be achieved, women, and women's knowledge must be included in decision making forums. This brief account has indicated that it unlikely that these goals will be achieved in the present context. First, and as an outcome of the integration of faamatai and democratic ideals in Samoa's legal frameworks in modern times, only matai

---

<sup>22</sup> The *Nofotane* project is sponsored by UN Fund for Gender Equality programme.

can participate in village and national decision-making forums. While in the faaSamoa male and female heirs have the right to the family title, currently a small 11 percent of matai are women who have taken this step, and one in three of this group participate in meetings of the Village Fono. The majority of village-based matai making judgements over GBV and other matters are older men, and 92.5% are over 40 years of age. Whether the low number of women matai is due to women not aspiring to this leadership role, or families not supporting the selection of women cannot be said. However, women are extremely visible in leadership roles in government, business, civil society agencies, and in the informal sectors - in fact everywhere except the faamatai. Clearly, while there are no laws preventing women from being a matai, women's aspirations for this leadership role continue to be blunted by layers of attitudinal bias – expressed by women as well as men. As a result, the capacity of the faamatai kinship -based and male dominated institution to deal with social issues, such as GBV, is highly debateable. Changing and addressing the deeply ingrained attitudes that matai is a male prerogative, and that women have their own domains of influence, will be a long-time process, and one which must begin in the early formative years. On the other hand, changes to the prevailing structures may be a quicker and easier strategy, such as by adapting the ruling that only matai can participate in Village Fono, sure that cases with 'even a hint' of GBV are decided in Samoa's legal and juridical systems. Second, and related, in granting villages sovereignty to decide their own rules and organisational processes, the Village Fono Act effectively opened the way for village rules and processes to differ by village, from national laws and from global mandates to which Samoa is a Party. An outcome of village sovereignty was evident in the account which opens this chapter. Currently there is a fuzzy confusion between what GBV issues must be dealt with in Samoa's national legal frameworks, and which belong at family and village level.

This chapter concludes with these challenging excerpts (UN Human Rights Mission to Samoa (2017)).

One of the most important steps in addressing the root causes of violence against women involves creating a wave of mind-set change with regard to cultural perceptions about women and their place in society. Much effort has already begun on this, but major leaps are necessary. Open dialogue on matters deemed taboo and alternative narratives on the meaning of the 'Samoan way' need to occur at a massive scale. This cannot happen without the leadership of government and the church, alongside women and men at

all levels of society, titled and untitled.

In a hierarchical and patriarchal society such as Samoa, the impact of opposition from the most powerful actors will be significant. The National Human Rights Institution should develop mechanisms to ensure protection for those who are speaking out against strongly held beliefs. Changing mind sets and ensuring women's right to equity within the family is not without challenges and resistance.... some (participants) conceded that they were still uneasy to speak about certain aspects of Samoan tradition for fear of being stigmatised as 'not being good Samoans or good Christians. In a hierarchical and patriarchal society such as Samoa, the impact of opposition from the most powerful actors will be significant. The Human Rights Institution should develop mechanisms to ensure protection for those who are speaking against strongly held beliefs that undermine human rights, including in relation to acts of reprisal.

### References

- Aiono, F., 1992. *O motugaafa*. Apia, Western Samoa: Le Lamepa Press.
- Anae, M., 2017. 'Transnational Sāmoan Chiefs: Views of the Fa'amatai (chiefly systems)' *Journal of Samoan Studies* 17(2): 38-50, ws › wp-content › uploads › 2017/03 › Vol7\_no.1\_.
- Anderson, B., 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Annandale-Betham, M., 2017. Paper presented to Samoa's National Human Rights Conference, Apia.
- Asofou, S., and Jon F., 2005. The role of ballot chiefs (matai pālota) and political parties in Sāmoa's shift to universal suffrage *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*. Volume 3 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662040500304973>.
- Edholm, F., Harris, O., and Young, K., 1987. 'Conceptualising women.' *Critique of Anthropology*, Vol3, No 9/10 pp 101-30.
- Fairbairn-Dunlop, P., 1996. *Tamaitai Samoa: their stories*, USP Suva.
- Fairbairn-Dunlop, P., 1991. *E au le inaa ilau a tamaitai: Women Education and Development*, Western Samoa, unpublished doctoral thesis, Macquarie University.
- Fairbairn-Dunlop, P., Savai, K., and Puni, E., 2016. *What makes for a good Marriage or Partnership Samoa case study*, Pasefika Proud, Ministry of Social Development NZ.



- Fana'afi, A., 1960. 'Western Samoa: The sacred covenant. (pp: 102-109). In Land Rights of Pacific Women, Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific.
- Fiame, N., 1988. Presentation at the Women and Politics Regional Meeting, Apia, National Council of Women.
- Filifilia, T., T., 1988. Presentation at the Women and Politics Regional Meeting, Apia, National Council of Women.
- Government of Samoa, 2016. Samoa's Legislative Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, Final Report 17/16 Samoa Law Reform Commission.
- Government of Samoa, 2017. Samoan Family Safety Study, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development.
- Government of Samoa, 2018. Papers from the Public Hearings and Public Submissions, National Human Rights Inquiry on Family Violence, Office of the Ombudsman.
- Huffer, E., and So'o., A, 2005. Beyond Governance in Samoa: Understanding Samoan Political Thought, Contemporary Pacific 17.2 pp: 311-333.
- Lagaia, V., A., 2017. A brief Study of Individual Reactions and Domestic Violence in Samoa, Paper Prepared for the NHRI.
- Kamu, L., 1996. Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel, Apia Methodist Printing Press.
- Macpherson, C., and Macpherson, L., 2009. Warm winds of change: Globalisation and Contemporary Samoa, Auckland University Press.
- Mead, M., 1966. Coming of Age in Samoa, Penguin edition, New York.
- Meleisea, M., 1988. The making of modern Samoa, IPS, USP, Fiji.
- Meleisea, L., Meredith, M., Schoeffel; P., Lauano, S., Sasa. H., Boodoosingh, R., and Sahib, M, 2015. Political Representation and Women's empowerment in Samoa, Volume 1, Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa.
- National Council of Women Samoa, 1988. Women in Politics, Proceedings of the regional Seminar, Samoa NCW & Hans Seidel Foundation.
- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2016. Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016).  
[https://www.aidsdatahub.org/sites/default/files/publication/Pacific\\_Leaders\\_Gender\\_Equality\\_Declaration\\_2016.pdf](https://www.aidsdatahub.org/sites/default/files/publication/Pacific_Leaders_Gender_Equality_Declaration_2016.pdf).
- Sacks, K., 1982. Sisters and Wives: The past and future of sexual inequality, University of Illinois Press.

- Samoa Law Reform Commission, Samoa's Legislative Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Final Report, 2016.
- Samoa Office of the Ombudsman, 2018. National Public Inquiry into Family Violence in Samoa, O te le lafi I le ata o le la'au' National Human Rights Institution.
- Samoa Office of the Ombudsman, 2018. Papers from the National Public Inquiry into Family Violence in Samoa, National Human Rights Institution.
- Schoeffel, P., 1979. Daughters of Sina: A study of gender, status and power in Western Samoa. Unpublished Ph D thesis, ANU Canberra.
- Siaosi Sumeo Karanina Siaosi (2004). A research on processes used to address the physical and sexual abuse of children in Samoa: Unpublished Masters in Social Policy, Massey University.
- Tcherkezoff, S., 2000. The Samoan category matai ('chief'): A singularity in Polynesia? Historical and etymological comparative queries. *The journal of the Polynesian Society*. Polynesian Society (N.Z.) 109(2).
- UN Women, 2017. Samoa's Nofotane women assert their rights and independence <https://www.unwomen.org › news › stories › 2017/10 › feature-samoa-nof>.
- Yamamoto, M., 1994. Urbanisation of the chiefly system: Multiplication and role differentiation of title in Western Samoa, Vol 103, now 2 pp 171-202.
- United States Department of State, 2016. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Samoa, 3 March 2017 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/58ec89d713.html> [accessed 29 July 2019].
- Waring, M., Mukherjee, A., Reid, E., and Shivas, M., 2013. Anticipatory Social Protection: Claiming dignity and rights, Commonwealth Secretariat.
- W/C/WSM/CO/4-5 2012. Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Samoa 1. The Committee considered the combined fourth and fifth periodic report of Samoa (CEDAW/C/WSM/4-5) at its 1055th and 1056th meetings, on 19 July 2012 (see CEDAW/C/SR.1055 and 1056).

## **STRUCTURE, AGENCY AND WOMEN MATAI: A POST-COLONIAL CONUNDRUM?**

**Penelope Schoeffel**

### **Abstract**

This paper suggests that the bestowal of matai titles on women is a post-colonial social innovation. The new practice accompanied many other changes in the ways of choosing and bestowing of matai titles and the role of matai, as well as the decline of Samoa's ancient logic of duality, mutual obligation and respectful social distance inherent to the brother-sister feagaiga. Women matai may be extended family leaders, but in the village context women matai are still largely excluded from village governance because their status is still anomalous to prevailing norms of gender roles. This paper examines the structural impediments in cultural contexts that limit women's access to traditional leadership roles, despite women's achievements and leadership in modern contexts such as in education, the professions, the civil services and in business.

**Keywords:** structural impediments for women matai; feagaiga; women leadership

### **Introduction**

When Samoa became an independent state fifty-five years ago, there was little ambiguity in popular understandings of cultural principles, whereas today there is much contestation about what is, and what is not fa'a Samoa. In the 1960s, most Samoans lived in rural villages (nu'u) and migration to urban areas and overseas was just beginning. In Figure 6, a set of contrasted statuses characterised by vā fealoaloa'i (respectful social distance) or vā tapuia (sacred social distance) as feagaiga (mutual contract) are schematised. These contrasting statuses are reflected in the seating arrangements in churches, in village council meetings, the meetings of untitled men, and in meetings of women's associations (see for example Keesing and Keesing, 1956).

**Figure 6 Dyads in Samoan Social structure**

	“ <i>Feagaiga</i> ” (mutual contract)	
“sacred” <i>tapuai</i>		“secular” <i>fa’auli</i>
	Matai/leaders (vā fealoaloa’i: respectful social distance)	
Ali’i (chiefs)		Tulafale (orators)
Matai		Taulele’a
	Siblings (vā tapuia: Sacred social distance)	
Tuafafine (sisters)		Tuagane (brothers)
	Sister and wives (vā fealoaloa’i: respectful social distance)	
Tamai”tai (Daughters of the village, who marry outside the village)		Faletua, Tausi, Avā (wives of matai and untitled men who are from other villages)
	Ministers and Congregations (vā tapuia)	
Faife’au (ministers, pastors)		Aulotu (congregations)

Samoan village polities were structured by dualities in the sense suggested by Giddens (1984: 377) as rules “...that were recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems.” However, social changes arising from migration, urbanisation and monetisation of the rural economy have progressively undermined Samoa’s ancient logic of duality and respectful social distance; which, as I will show, has been somewhat to women’s disadvantage (see also Schoeffel, 1979, 1987, 1995, 2011, 2017). I suggest that in the village context, but not in the family context, women matai are somewhat anomalous. The inherent sanctity possessed by chiefs, sisters, daughters of the village, and pastors in their passive roles shed dignity upon

the active executive roles of orators, brothers, wives and church congregations. Although the relationships originated from an underlying pre-Christian belief system that is no longer precisely remembered, its resonances informed the practices of the generation who came of age in Samoa the 1960s. In villages these relationships were maintained by rules of exogamy which, regardless of the customary variations within Samoan village polities (nu'u), were observed throughout the archipelago of Samoa (see Tcherkezoff, 2017). Men and women of the same village did not marry or have sexual relations with one another, as though they were a family; but married 'out', always taking a spouse from another village and, in the case of women, living there with him. These relationships and their respectful distances were mirrored by the appointment of church ministers who were always outsiders from another village, and are referred to as lau susuga le feagaiga (your honour, the contracted). Similarly, the term feagaiga was appropriated by the Christian faith in the 19th Century, so that the New Testament is represented in Samoan as 'O le Feagaiga Fou' – in referring not to a testimony, but to a sacred contract between God and humanity (see Schoeffel, 1995).

### **Women matai.**

Research done by the Centre for Samoan Studies (Meleisea et al., 2015) found that older Samoans believe that in the past, women never held matai titles, and this may be true, despite the fact that there have been many famous and high - ranking women in Samoan history. It seems likely that when educational opportunities were opened up for Samoans in the 1960s women began to receive formally bestowed titles in increasing numbers to honour their achievements. Few Samoans had access to higher education until the late 1950s, when selective government secondary schools were first established. Before that time, intermediate-level schooling was mainly only available to the children of foreign or mixed-race townspeople. Before the selective national colleges established their senior secondary levels in the late 1960s, the top-performing students were sent to senior secondary schools in New Zealand, and later to teachers colleges, schools of nursing and universities.

In the 1970s, when I conducted my first research in Samoa, there were very few women matai. I identified ten of them in 1978 of whom most said they were given matai titles by their families to honour their educational or career achievements. The conferring of titles upon women from this time onwards became increasingly common.

However, according to census data (SBS, 2011) only 9% of all matai were women, and the research previously cited found that of all village - based matai only 5.5% were women, which implies that close to half of women matai did not live in villages (Meleisea et al., 2015).

Samoa custom has worked in favour of girls because it has placed no cultural barriers to their education, with the effect that gender relations have been revolutionised in certain respects. More girls than boys complete secondary school, and more women have tertiary qualifications than men. Although about twice as many men than women are employed for wages, women hold the majority of skilled and professional jobs. Educational achievement is still a common factor among women who hold matai titles and those who have stood in parliamentary elections since 1962. For example, of the 24 women candidates in the 2016 elections nearly all had tertiary educational qualifications as well as backgrounds in business or professional employment (Fiti-Sinclair, Schoeffel & Meleisea, 2017).

For men, education is only one criterion to become matai; other traditional criteria such as seniority in age and skills in leadership, and in public speaking are just as important as education and income. In contrast, women are most likely to be given a title because they have high educational attainments and access to wealth through employment. Bestowing a title upon a woman honours her, but it does not necessarily carry the expectation that she will become a leader in her village. In effect most women matai hold their titles on an honorary basis; they may have authority in their extended family, but typically they have limited opportunity to exercise authority in the village. There are some exceptions, such as Samoa's deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa who is a leader in her village and has represented her district in Parliament for over 30 years, and others among the five women parliamentarians.

A 2014 survey found that in 17 villages, representatives of village councils said that the village does not recognise titles bestowed upon women by their extended families ('aiga) (Meleisea et al., 2015).

In 34 villages it was reported that women matai may be recognised, but they are not allowed to sit in village council meetings. Accounting for the overlapping villages, this means women are explicitly excluded from leadership roles in approximately 53 villages.

Although in many villages women matai are not formally barred from sitting in the village council, they are discouraged from doing so by informal conventions, so few attend. A common reason for non-participation is said to be that the male matai make sexual jests amongst themselves that should not be heard by women. The taboo is said to emanate from the Samoan cultural requirement that a sacred social distance (*o le vā tapuia*) should be maintained between brothers and sisters. Few Samoan women formally participate in village-based political decision making. In elections, despite universal suffrage, village matai play a central role in choosing and electing members of Parliament. Matai also choose members of management committees of villages, and in district schools 85% of school committee leaders are male. In conversations surrounding research on women's subordinate position in village government it has rightly been observed that Samoan social structural is highly patriarchal, but this is not something that can be swept away with a change in public attitudes, as it has been to some extent in affluent modern societies, because of the structured gender relations in Samoan villages and the *vā fealoaloa'i* associated with the respectful spaces between formal roles.

### **The marriage factor**

A significant impediment to women taking matai titles and assuming leadership roles is this expectation that a married woman should take her status from her husband. Married women are expected to join their husband's church if they had belonged to a different church before they were married. In village life there is a defined role for a married woman. Traditional values encourage men and women to marry outside their own village and for women to reside with and serve the family of their husband.

In many villages today marriage within the village is common, and this interferes with the appropriateness a *va fealoaloa'i* between families; it diminishes the *vā tapuia* of brothers and sisters, and diminishes the status of daughters of the village if they marry within the village, to the extent that some villages no longer have acknowledged *aualuma* (society of daughters of the village). When a woman's husband becomes a matai, if his title is one of local importance, she becomes a leader in the women's committee and in the women's group in the church. But when her husband dies, she loses her status and, in the past, was expected to leave the village in some situations. There is no role for the husband of a matai, and the unequal status of a woman matai with an untitled husband is socially problematic.

When women bring a husband to reside with their own families and in their own villages, they may ask for family titles to be given to their husbands.

For these reasons, women matai and women deacons are more likely to be widows, unmarried, or married to husbands outside the cultural 'fa'aSamoa' system, which is why most of the women who have been elected to parliament over the past 50 years were (or are) unmarried, widowed, or married to non-Samoans (Schoeffel, Meredith & Fiti-Sinclair, 2017).

The Catholic Church does not ordain women anywhere in the world, but in Samoa neither do the Congregational nor Methodist churches, even though their mother churches in other parts of the world have long done so (for example, the Congregational Church in the United States began to ordain women in the 19th century, and the Methodist church has ordained women since the 1950s). Yet paradoxically, Samoa's Methodist and Congregational churches resist the ordination of women because it goes against the 'traditional' order which they assisted to create in Samoa over a century ago.

### **Conclusion**

I have made three main points. The first point is that bestowing titles on women is a recent innovation arising from the wish of families to honour high achievement by their sisters and daughters. This is part of a wider Samoan practice of bestowing matai titles as honorifics, without associated political authority. The second point is that religious authority in Samoa has merged with fa'aSamoa, prescribing that a married woman should take her status from her husband, which makes it difficult for a woman to be a matai. The third point is that over the past century, the brother-sister feagaiga has all but disappeared, due to social and economic changes and the common practice of people marrying within the same village.

Thus, the bestowal of matai titles upon women in post-colonial Samoa may be understood as a compensatory mechanism for the traditional status that has been lost. There is now a growing practice of bestowing sa'o tama'ita'i titles on older and married women. These titles were once reserved for the virgin daughters of high chief, held only before they were given in marriage.



Samoa village society still has resonances of the deep structural duality that prevailed in ancient times: a *vā fealoaloa'i* which accords secular leadership and political roles to men, and a *vā tapuia* that has given the sacred roles to male church ministers; it has been difficult for most village councils and congregations to accommodate contemporary changes in gender roles and to accord women matai equal authority with male matai, let alone to ordain women, or elect women to parliament.

## References

- Fiti-Sinclair, R., Schoeffel, P., and Meleisea, M., 2017. Women and Political Participation: the 2015 Election in Samoa. Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa.
- Giddens, A., 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- Keesing, F., M., and Keesing, M., M., 1956. *Elite Communication in Samoa: A Study of Leadership*. Stanford University press.
- Meleisea, L., Meredith, M., Chanmow, M., Schoeffel, P., Lauano, S., Sasa, H., Boodoosingh, R., and Sahib, M., 2015. *Political Representation and Women's Empowerment in Samoa*. Volume 1: Findings and Recommendations. Volume 2: Research Methods and Results. Centre for Samoan Studies. National University of Samoa. [Online] [http://samoanstudies.ws/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Centre-for-Samoan-Studies\\_Final-Report-Volume-2-English.pdf](http://samoanstudies.ws/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Centre-for-Samoan-Studies_Final-Report-Volume-2-English.pdf).
- Schoeffel, P., 1979. Gender, Status and Power in Samoa. *Canberra Anthropology*. Vol.1, No. 2. pp: 69-81.
- Schoeffel, P., 1987. Rank, gender and politics in ancient Samoa: the genealogy of Salamasina, O Le Tafaifa. *Journal of Pacific History*.22, no.3-4, July-Oct 1987, pp.174-193.
- Schoeffel, P., 2011. Sexual Morality in Samoa and its Historical Transformations. In A.P. and D.H. Lyons (eds.) *Sexualities in Anthropology*. Maldon MA. Wiley Blackwell. pp. 222-231. (First published in: *A Polymath Anthropologist: Essays in Honour of Ann Chowning*. (Eds.) Claudia Gross, Harriet D. Lyons and Dorothy Ayers Counts, eds. Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland. pp: 63-69).
- Schoeffel, P., Meredith, M., and Fiti-Sinclair, R., 2017. Women, Culture and Politics in Samoa: Tradition versus Modernity. *Journal of Samoa Studies* 7:3. pp: 5-19.

A HANDBOOK FOR TRANSNATIONAL MATAI (CHIEFS)  
TUSIFAITAU O MATAI FAFO O SAMOA

- Schoeffel, P., 1995. The Samoan Concept of Feagaiga and its transformations. In: J Huntsman (ed.) *Tonga and Samoa: Images of Gender and Polity*. Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies. University of Canterbury.
- Tcherkezoff, S., 2017. 'The Samoan Village, the Brother-Sister Relationship and the Rule of Exogamy ', *Journal of Samoan Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2. pp: 6-36.

### 3 CHAPTER

#### MATAI TAUTUA (MATAI WHO SERVE)

#### “TAUTUA AI TAUMALELE! SERVING FROM AFAR!”

Fonomaaitu Tuvalu Fuimaono

##### Abstract

This paper examines *fa’asamoa* in New Zealand from the author’s personal experience as a transnational matai. It focuses on the Samoan traditional customs of ‘*si’i alofa*’, which is a presentation of love, and the traditional exchanges through a ‘*Sua tai*’, the most appropriate response to the ‘*si’i alofa*’. The author provides insight into the modern changes of the ‘*sua tai*’, specifically at funerals in New Zealand, and the discourse of how it will impact the landscape of the *fa’asamoa* moving to the future. I share my personal experience of the calling to be a matai, and my research into the belief held by both ancient Samoans and those living today, of the divine connection between God/gods and a matai. I draw on examples from my personal experience of the usage of his matai name within the context of the workplace, and present a snapshot of a broader issue encountered by Samoan matai living overseas. Lastly, I touch on the vital role that transnational matai holds in the preservation of Samoan culture, family genealogies, and the value of understanding one’s matai title, its meaning and expectation.

**Keywords:** *si’i alofa*, traditional exchanges, *sua tai*, divine connection

As a young *matai* living in New Zealand, you are faced with many challenges of not only acceptance from your family in Samoa and New Zealand, but also from the realities of the constant obligational pressures of being a *matai*. These obligations vary from financial ones, to the delicate balancing of one’s time devoted to work, family and church commitments, and the fear of degrading one’s family at a cultural event due to inability to perform a cultural speech. The fear of lacking knowledge of *fa’asamoa* or *fa’amatai* protocols, values and ways of doing things is an ongoing challenge.

It is with this challenge in mind that I humbly present this paper, which explores the role of a matai and conveys some of my personal experiences of growing up in Samoa, then moving to New Zealand as a teenager for schooling, and finding family *fa'avelave* (events) as a place to continue my exposure to the *fa'amatai* system.

Before sharing my experiences as a transnational *matai*, I would first like to explore the meaning of the word “*matai*” from a traditional point view, with a comparative discussion of the views of leading academic scholars about the meanings of the word *matai*.

### **The word *matai***

Tcherkezoff (2000: 151) suggests that the word *matai* is an ancient word in the languages of the region, with a direct reference to being “the best”, whether it is through a person possessing personal skills or having mastered a craft. I think he gives more precision in his presentation for this symposium, insisting on the connotations of being “first” or “leading person”. He goes further to suggest that the word *matai* cannot be decomposed. Although I agree with Tcherkezoff, I would like to expand on his view by seeking clarity into the *fa'asamoa*, to understand how the word *matai* is related to the spiritual beliefs of Samoans, and how it has continued to influence the hierarchical social system of ancient Samoa.

Meleisea (as cited by *Sualii-Sauni*, 2007: 36) states *fa'amatai* is a hierarchical system with a hierarchical apex starting with the Supreme God or God, namely *Tagaloa-a-lagi*; Aiono Le Tagaloa states (as cited by Tcherkezoff, 2012: 318): “God is said to be the *mataisau*, the chief-creator”. Saleimoa Vaai (as cited by Fa'amatala, 2007: 208) draws on this idea by stating, “Structured in hierarchical networks, matai forms the governing elements of the whole of Samoa, districts, villages and families”. Based on the role of the *faiifeau* in the *nu'u* (village) today, where they are “*suli vaia o le Atua*” (the embodiment of God), the connection with God is very much alive. Schoeffel (1979: 286) argues that the relationship between the *faiifeau* and the community is also playing the role of “*feagaiga*” at the village level, where the village considers the *faiifeau* as their “*feagaiga*”.

The *'feagaiga'* is the sacred relationship between brother and sister. Huffer & So'o (2005: 322) and Tcherkezoff (2017a: 24) allude to the role of the descendants of the brother and sister, which is to ensure the *'feagaiga'* is preserved and practiced. An assumption could then be made that the word matai is therefore aligned with God or *Mataisau* (Chief-Creator) as Aiono Le Tagaloa and Meleisea have alluded to. This suggests that the statement by Tcherkezoff is correct, the word matai was in fact set aside to mean "the first" or "leading person."

Focusing around the meaning of matai as being "the first" or "the best", the elders of my family have pointed out that the word matai could also be interpreted as "*mata -i- ai*", meaning "look to" or literal meaning "eyes towards". Refiti (2009: 10) also refers to the word *matai* being connected to the word *a-mata* which means "to begin" or "to become". Independent of any specialised historical linguistical discussion, we can note that the *matai* is viewed by the *Aiga* (family) as someone they look to for guidance and is divinely inspired. This also creates an expectation or (if I may suggest the expression) a "code of conduct" of how a matai should behave.

Therefore, it will be fair to say that in the minds of many Samoans, the idea of an appointment of a *matai* as being a divine inheritance is well embedded within Samoan society. Thus, it has created a guideline of how Samoans think towards, relate with and offer *tautua* (service) to their matai.

### **My calling to be a *matai***

My dear Uncle Laulusamanaia Fuimaono Atanoa Ativalu (from here onwards "Uncle Fui") called me one evening and said, "It's time for you to become a *matai*; and the bestowment is next month."

When I respectfully objected to my Uncle's decision and pointed out the credentials of my other cousins who hold seniority in age and service in comparison to me, he shrewdly put into action the Samoan art of oratory. He did this by sharing his story of how he became a *matai*; and I would like to share this with you all.

My great grandparents *Fuimaono Manulua* and *Fa'anenefu* wanted Uncle Fui to take the *Lanlusamanaia* title of *Moata'a*. They nagged him for seven years whilst he was living in Samoa. In the early 1970s, he decided to bring his family to New Zealand for a better future. On the eve he was due to leave with his family, my great grandfather made a final plea: "*Ativalu, o lea tapa lau*

*ipu i le Laulusa e alu ai!*” which translates to “Ativalu, take your kava cup to become the Laulusa before you leave!”

By way of a brief explanation, the family of the title *Laulusa* had already met and agreed on Uncle Fui to become the *Laulusa*. The process of “*tapa le ipu*” allows the title to be reserved for a particular person, until the bestowment is formalised through a “*Saofai*” (bestowment ceremony). Uncle Fui replied: “*Malie oulua Matua, sei ou alu muamua e fa’aaoga lau fanau*” which translates to “My dear parents, please allow me first to take my children to be educated.”

My great grandfather replied: “*Ua lelei, ia oulua manuia ma si fanau. ‘A’o lenei, po’o fea o le lalolagi e te alu i ai, a fīngalo le Atua e te foi mai e tansi le aiga, e te foi mai lava, a’e talofa e, e te sau ua u atu o ma tua*”, which translates as: “May you and your family be well! Take heed, wherever you may go in this world, if it’s the will of God for you to come back to look after the family, you will come back; but I take pity on you my dear son because when you do, we will be gone.”

When I heard my Uncle’s story, I became speechless. I bid farewell to him and requested some time to think over his offer. That night in the lounge, I looked up at the hanging pictures of my great grandparents. I thought about my grandparents and my parents, who are forever supportive of my interests in the *fa’asamoa*. I reflected on Uncle Fui’s story and decided to accept his offer. I called him a few days later to give my positive answer and to let him know of my intention to go to Samoa. This was his reply to me: “*Atali’i e filifili tagata, a’o le tofi e mai le Atua*” which translates to: “People can select a matai, however an appointment of a matai is a divine inheritance.”

Uncle Fui did go back to Samoa in 1979, when his parents were still alive, to be bestowed the *Laulusamanaia* title, at his parent’s delight; and again in 1989 to be bestowed the *Fuimaono Atanoa* title, as his father passed away in 1988 and the family demanded he take the title.

One could say that Uncle Fui experienced the same struggles as the transnational matais of today; he was trying to do right by his immediate family and, at the same time, balance his commitment to his parents, and to the wider extended family. However, for him, this provided foresight to share his knowledge with the younger generation of his family to ensure that

the sacred gift from the ancestors are maintained and preserved. He also recognised that being a matai is not only to protect the inheritances from our ancestors, but also to preserve it for future generations. Hence, he mentored a few of us (cousins) that were fortunate enough to engage with Uncle Fui in translating court records, and helped him compile submissions for some court cases.

### **Looking back to some of the events that have prepared me to become a *matai***

I grew up in Samoa and from an early age I observed the *fa'asamoa* through the system of "*Si'i alofa*", an exchange of love. I am not an authority on *fa'asamoa* in the Samoan system, nor can I claim to be, from an academic point of view, an expert of *fa'asamoa*. I would however, like to touch on the changes to the *si'i alofa* from a transnational *matai* perspective. Tamasese (as cited by Suaali'i-Sauni, 2007: 49) elaborates on the system of *si'i alofa* by saying "*si'i alofa* is an act of presenting a gift to someone or some group (family) out of love (*alofa*)."

As a young boy, my grandmother would take me to cultural exchanges, and I would watch how the *matai* exchange speeches, and witness successive moments and protocols of the *si'i alofa* ceremony. The host family would *fa'atulima* to the visiting family; *fa'atulima* literally means to "offer a hand of welcome". Once both parties have taken their positions on opposite ends of the house or of the *malae* (sacred residence or meeting place), then the visiting family orator would start his speech.

The visiting family will give their *si'i alofa* – as a presentation of fine mats, *palapalamalo* (kegs of salted beef, boxes of tin fish and corned beef), and usually a sum of money which can reach thousands of dollars. In ancient times, the family of the deceased was charged with bringing together resources in the form of food, such as fish, taro, pigs and so forth. The family of the spouse of the deceased would come to support the funeral with fine mats, hence the two families invest in each other. Still today, if you listen to the speeches of the host and visiting family orators, you can hear them talk about the importance of different roles of the two families.

This concludes the *si'i alofa*. The host family will respond through their orator, and will reciprocate with a presentation of *alofa* through the *sua tai* custom. This action will showcase one of the most beautiful Samoan values: *fa'atau alofa* (reciprocity). The term used by Samoans when they reciprocate

a presentation of love is “*ten*”. Once the orator responds to the visiting side, he then turns to his side of the family and says “*sauni mai o lea ten le paolo*”, which means “be ready we are going to reciprocate with a presentation”. Reciprocity is extremely valued as previously noted. *Ten* literally means to “set aside” (and thus became also to mean: to deposit in a bank account: *teuga-tupe*); hence it confirms my previous statement. In a way, we can conclude that from immemorial times to the present, with the gifting of fine mats and money, and even the modern example of saving accounts in banks (*tengatupe*), Samoans do *invest* in their families.

To elaborate briefly on the concept of “*ten*”, one could say that the space between the host and visiting families is considered as the “*va*”, meaning “sacred space”. When the cultural exchanges occur between the two families, where one presents a “*si’i alofa*” and the other responds with a “*sua ta’i*”, this could be interpreted as “*tausi le va-nonofo*”, meaning to “nourish and maintain the relationship” between the two sides. As previously noted, the reason why these two families have come together is because they have a *faia* (connection). The Samoan saying related to these specific exchanges is “*ua mutia le ala*” meaning the grass is smooth; this refers to the space (*va*) in between, as grass that has been walked on back and forth; it portrays a mental picture of the grass being smoothed due to the constant exchanges.

Hence it could be suggested that “*ten le va*” is a concept of not only nourishing the existing relationships, but of maintaining generational connections with other families. The “*si’i alofa*” and “*sua tai*” is a channel through which Samoans continue to “*tausi*” (nourish) and “*ten le va-nonofo*” (maintain relationships).

### **Sua tai, an act of reciprocating the presentation of love**

*Sua ta’i* is a presentation of food; *sua* is a formal word for food, when addressing a *matai*, and *ta’i* is derived from the ancient way of how the presentation was done. It was presented outside in the *malae* (sacred meeting ground) or in front of a *maota* (traditional residences of a chief). *Ta’i* literally means to “lead”; however, in this case the reasoning is to showcase to the village community who is the person or family receiving the “*sua ta’i*”. The *sua ta’i* is the highest honour one can receive in these reciprocal exchanges. To avoid confusion, it should be acknowledged that there are many occasions and reasons as to why a *sua ta’i* should be performed, but for the purpose of this paper, we will focus specifically on the role of *sua ta’i* in funerals, particularly in New Zealand and from my own family experience.



Simanu (2002: 258) explains, there are two stages in the *sua ta'i*. Firstly, there is the "*sua taute*," which she describes as food that is cooked and ready to be consumed; and the second stage is the "*sua talisua*", food that can be taken away to be eaten later. Although I agree with Simanu, I would like to offer a suggestion that the opening of the *i'e o le malo or maniti o tamali'i* (fine mat) should be separate from the other two stages and therefore be considered as marking the *taualuga* (final) stage of the *sua ta'i*.

### First stage

The first stage begins when a *taupou* (maiden of the village), or nowadays a young girl, will walk with her hands held up high, holding an open can of coke or another soft drink with a dollar note clipped to it (Fuatai, 2007: 176). This is the first stage of the *sua tai* process in a New Zealand setting. In ancient times in Samoa, a virgin girl would hold up a young hatched coconut with a stick (*tuaniu*) pushed into the top of coconut at one of the three points, to pierce an opening and making the coconut ready for consumption. Tied to the girl's waist was a long tapa cloth or *vala*, that was dragged along the ground as she walked across to the visiting party. Nowadays in New Zealand, it is a long piece of colourful material. The long piece of material or *vala* is called *ufi laulau*, "the cover of the food presented".

This would be a matter for discussion on the fact that the gifts reciprocated are said to "cover" the initial gifts. When looking at the 19th century narrative collected by Kramer, this expression and others are constantly mentioned (see Tcherkezoff, 2017b: 22-23, 125-26). The author adds that the language of "covering" manifests that these gifts, typically fine mats and also *siapo*, are encompassing in value the initial gifts; and are concluding the exchange. Once the young lady returns to the host side, then a *taulealea* (young untitled man) would bring forth a tray with a large can of tin corned beef and a box of cabin dry biscuits. This is also a change brought with modern times; as our ancestors used a *laulau* (tray made out of coconut leaves) and placed on it cooked chicken, taro and other readily available cooked food.

I would like to suggest that perhaps one purpose for this part of the process was to ensure that the cooked food was available for the visiting family as nourishment for their journey home. As in ancient times, people travelled by walking (*e sopo*) and in canoes (*tolula ma fantasi*), hence it would sometimes take hours, and sometimes days to return home. This was still the case in the 1940's and 1950's. I recall Uncle Fui retelling a memory he had

of my great grandfather *Fuimaono Manulua* in the 1950's packing his suitcase. He would travel by bus to somewhere near *Lotofaga*, and then the old man would (*sopo*) walk from there to his village of *Salani*, which is a distance of over 11 kms (2.5-hour walk). Hence the system of *sua ta'i* was a great tradition and custom with dual purpose: to honour the guests and to cater for the needs of the journey back home.

### **Second stage**

This part of the *sua ta'i* is called the "*Sua talisua*". According to Simanu (2002: 259), a *sua talisua* is food prepared to be eaten later. In ancient times, pigs were baked in an *umu* and set aside for the *sua talisua*. Nowadays, a young man (*taulealea*) will bring a *pusa pisupo* (a box of canned corned beef) or *pusa apa* (box of canned fish) as a *sua talisua*, and some are even using cattle for this process. In New Zealand, I have observed my family using this on many occasions, where an envelope of \$1000 will be given in lieu of cattle.

### **Final stage: The *taualuga* of the *sua ta'i***

According to the elders of my family, the final part of this ancient presentation is the opening of the fine mat, which is the highest honour in the *fa'asamoa*. The fine mats are called "*O le maniti o tamali'i*" meaning "the pride of sacred chiefs". In today's *fa'asamoa*, this practice is usually followed by offering an envelope of money, which is given the name "*pasese*," which literally translates to a "fare", and one could assume that it is given to help the visiting party with the expenses of their trip back home via bus, plane ticket or for petrol. An assumption could be made that this practice of *pasese* could be a new addition into the process of *sua ta'i* due to the modern way of travelling to and from a *fa'alavelave*.

### **What are the changes and effects of the way *sua ta'i* is now performed in New Zealand?**

The first change as noted by Fuata'i (2007: 176) is the use of the "*apa innu*" (a can of soda) as an initiating point of the *sua ta'i* and the clipping of a dollar note.

The second change, from ancient days but considered now as traditional, is the use of corned beef can and box of cabin tin biscuits as the "*amoamosa*"; of all the parts of the process this is one that has remained unchanged since it was introduced.

The third noticeable change is the *sua talisua*; it is usually a box of corned beef, which now costs well above \$100 NZD. For high ranking chiefs, this part is nowadays upgraded to a gift of cattle, considered the most appropriate *sua talisua* and, as previously noted, it is now transferred into monetary value of usually \$1000.

Finally, the fine mat is now the finale of the *sua tai*, and I have also witnessed the usage of a \$50 dollar note in lieu of a fine mat; but is still said to “*ufi* (cover) the presentation”.

This poses the question, is there a possibility to have only one *sua ta'i*? I will let you decide; however, I would like to share with you what I observed at a family *fa'alavelave*.

My *Faleasiu* family of Sa *Leaupepe Talamatavao* have an annual family *lotu* (church service). When we celebrated a few years ago, our centennial jubilee of the family *lotu*, there were well over 30 *sua tai* prepared as our family have many “*faiifeau*” (church ministers. At the church service, the Tama aiga Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese attended, due to being genealogically connected. *Tupua* is a descendant of *Usipua*, who is the *feagaiga* of *Leaupepe Talamatavao*. When it was time for the cultural presentation, our Sao, at the time *Leaupepe Uili*, enquired with the family members who were preparing the *sua ta'i* why are there was so many? Their response was “these are all the *sua ta'i* for the *faiifeau-s* who have attended.” The old man *Leaupepe Uili* sternly said: “*Fa'alogo mai outou, avea mea i tua. Fai inati o faiifeau ma ave i latou sa. E afio mai loa Usipua (referring to his feagaiga Tupua) e tasi lava le sua e tai e totonu o Filia*”. This translates as “listen here, take all these things, wrap them up and place them in the cars belonging to each of the church ministers; when *Usipua* arrives in *Filia* (residence of Sa Tuala) there is only one *su'a ta'i*.”

Based on the example, one could say that there is a place for just one *sua ta'i* in our beloved *fa'asamoa*. My humble suggestion is that when it is a cultural event, then the *sua ta'i* should be given to the highest-ranking *matai*. If it's a *lotu* (church) occasion, then the *sua ta'i* should be given to the church minister of that specific church or the *feagaiga* of that specific village. The rest of the honoured guests should be given a *inati* (a portion of food set aside). Some may challenge my proposal and may even say my suggestion is absurd. However, I would like to point out that one of the reasons for this ancient Samoan custom of *sua ta'i* was to provide food for the travelling party or *paolo* for the journey home. We as a people must retain our cultural values, but at the same time, we should also be open to accept positive changes

about how we conduct our cultural exchanges. This will ensure that we are not committing the future generations of Samoans to a cycle of financial hardship because of the high costs of *fa'alavelave*.

I want to end this section with the words of 'Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi words “*E fai le tautua a Aiga i a latou Tama, A'e fai foi le taulaga a le Tama i ona Aiga*”. This means that as a matai, or in his case a “Sacred High Chief”, he has the right to command service (tautua) from his families. However, a “Sacred High Chief” must also know how to reciprocate, by serving his or her families”. This I believe is the essence of what a matai should be.

### **Relevance of Fa'amatai in the workplace.**

I would like to share my experience of using my *matai* title and knowledge of *fa'amatai* within my workplace, and how has it supported my career development. Being a *matai* could be compared to that of a lifelong career journey; some at the end of their career as a *matai* may look back and say they were successful; others may not. However, there are skills that I believe are acquired through one's journey as a matai. These skills are leadership, mediatory, oratory, project management and relationship management, to name a few.

To focus specifically, let us look at project management and relationship management. For example, when a family member passes away within a Samoan family, they call the *matai*. The *matai* then calls the family together through a family *talanoaga* (meeting), and the *matai* usually facilitates the *talanoaga*. The *matai* ensures that each family branch is given an opportunity to speak and convey their views. The *matai* will delegate roles, such as for someone to oversee the catering and cooking; and a person to oversee the church is decorated, and the burial ground is culturally prepared.

At each stage of the funeral preparations, the *matai* will liaise with the spouse and children of the deceased about the budget and decisions to be made. Usually there is a family catch up (not formal meetings) each night to check the stocks of boxes of corned-beef and the plans for the next day. At the end of the funeral, the family would have catered for hundreds, or even thousands of people, and the budget will sit anywhere from \$10,000 to \$100,000 (The issues related to the unsustainable financial costs of Samoan *fa'alavelave* could be another good topic for discussion after the presentation).

The *matai* responsible for the whole event must ensure the money is accounted for and all transactions are transparent. Usually at the end of the funeral, the family comes together, and all expenses and *si'i alofa* (monetary gifts) are read out for all to hear.

This example illustrates the role of a *matai* as being a project manager, with sole responsibilities of managing internal and external relationships. Keeping in mind that these events are constantly recurring, it means that within a few years a *matai* may have project-managed five or more of these cultural events. Hence my argument that experience gained from being a *matai* can add value to a person's career development by providing practical opportunities to obtain transferrable skills.

### **Importance of identity in the fa'amatai, to know who you are.**

Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi meticulously wrapped together the meaning of the Samoan identity with his views below (Tamasese, 2016: para.14): "As a Samoan, I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share my divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a 'tofi' (an inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging."

This view is also supported by Anae (1997: 132), who suggests that the Samoan identity is created from experiences with your *aiga*, church, *matai* and *faalupega* systems, *gagana Samoa* (language), and all associated values such as *tantua* (service), *fuaaloalo* (respect) and *feagaiga* (sacred connection between siblings and others) (see also Anae et al., 2003, 2016, 2017).

Both views are well balanced. One is the perspective of a Samoan *matai* living in the homeland and who is considered to be an authority on all matters pertaining to Samoan history, culture and traditions. The other is a New Zealand-born Samoan *matai* who grew up in New Zealand and is a leading Pacific academic. However, both views identify the importance of relationships and experience gained from *fa'asamoa* through family. This will guide the final part of this paper.

As a *matai*, it's important to know who you are; your *gafa* (genealogy) and in particular the *gafa* of the title you have been bestowed with. You must also know the relationship between your *matai* title in the family you are a

*matai*; and whether it's an *ali'i*, *tulafale* or *tulafale-ali'i*. It's important to know where you sit in the *fono a matai* (the meeting house of chiefs). Finally, it's important to know what is the meaning of your title, and the history of how your title came to be. These, I believe, are the most important details that every transnational *matai* should understand; the fact that some people discount transnational *matai* by saying that they lack knowledge of protocols and of oratory is irrelevant.

### **Conclusion (Fa'aifoga)**

I will conclude by sharing the story of my *matai* title. Before I became a *matai*, I researched the meaning of my title and the history of my title, family, village and district. There are many versions, and depending on the informant the versions will differ slightly, and most probably will favour the family of the informant. Hence, with apologies my version is going to be from a *Moata'a* perspective.

The ancient name of my village is *Fuainupolu*; it's in remembrances of the original ancestor *Fuataogana*, the son of *Malietao Ganasavea*, who was given the right to settle and govern this area now called *Vaimauga* (reference to the *Fe'e* God). *Fuainupolu* consists of three sub-villages *Moata'a*, *Vaiala* and *Maagiagi*. The sacred meeting ground of the district of *Vaimauga* is "*Falefatu*," and two of the three high ranking chiefs' (*Tofaeono* and *Asi*) *maota* (residences) are located in *Moata'a*, namely *Fa'atoialemanu* (now *Taumeasina*) and *Lalonine*.

The other residence *Tapuotaota* belonging to the title *Patu* (*Patu-tagata*) is in *Vaiala*. According to *Moata'a* sources, when *Tofaeono*, *Asi* and *Patu* agree to a decision, the whole of *Vaimauga* district is expected to fully support the decision. This is confirmed by Kramer (1994: 296) when he states "If *Tofaeono*, *Asi* and *Patu* vote in favour it means that all of *Vaimauga* accepts". This is because, according to the local tradition (*aga i fanua*) that was handed down through the generations, the decision is obtained through a sacred process: the three high chiefs held a *Fono-ma-aitu*, and this meeting was called *Falepanga*.

*Falepanga* is a *matai* title now, just like *Fonomaaitu*, but it previously wasn't. *Fale* means house, *pau* can find connection to the word *fa'apau* meaning pagan beliefs. Hence one could say that the word *Falepanga* is related to an old traditional belief of meeting with predecessors and ancestors gone before. *Falepanga* is a process where all the *pola* (blinds) of a Samoa *fale* are brought down and only one blind is open towards the sea. *Tofaeono*, *Asi* and *Patu* will sit on the other *Matuatala* and the other *Matuatala* will be made

available for the “*aitu*”; they will meditate and seek wisdom from the “*aitu*” (referring to “the village ancestors”) for the whole night until the morning. By the morning they would have come to a decision and *Tamapua (fofoga mua)*, the most senior orator, will announce the decision of the three sacred chiefs.

Hence, the title *Fonomaaitu* is bestowed in remembrance of the process of *Falepanga* as a reminder to the district of *Vaimauga* of the authority that was once held by *Fuaiupolu*; the title now belongs to the *Tofaeono* and *Samoatele* families of *Moata’a*.

Why is this history important to me as a transnational *matai*? Well, it determines who I render service (*tautua*) to, and have an allegiance to within the village setting. It gives insight of the title I hold, and in turn gives an understanding of who I am, the village and the family I am from. I proudly use my title not only in the cultural gatherings but also within my place of work.

There is a Samoan saying “*ua lava lena, o le vale e tau uma ana mea.*”

“My prayer is that God will look kindly upon you, the *matai* that serves from afar. May he grant you the gift of oratory, may he bless you with an articulate mind and good counsel to serve your family, who is your inheritance from God.”

O le tatalo, Ia manuia ou faiva oe lena le matai Samoa o lo’o e ai tau malele i nu’u mamao. Ia fa’aupegaina lou fofoga ma ia manino lau tofa fa’aalualu, lau tofa saili fa’apea ma lau tofa mau, aua le tausiga o aiga, o lo tatou tofi mai le Atua!

Soifua

Fonomaaitu Tuvalu Fuimaono

## References

- Anae, M., 1997. Towards a NZ-born Samoan identity: some reflections on “label”. *Pacific Health Dialog*, (4)2, 128-137. Retrieved from <http://pacifichealthdialog.co.nz/wpcontent/themes/dialog/oldissues/Volume204/No220Pacific20Peoples20in20New20Zealand/Viewpoints20and20Perspectives/Towards20a20NZ20born20Samoa20identity20some20reflections20on20labels.pdf>.
- Anae, M., 2003. O a'u/I: My identity journey. In P. Fairbairn-Dunlop, G. Makisi (Eds.) *Making Our Place: Growing Up PI in New Zealand* (pp. 89-101). Palmerston North, N.Z.: Dunmore Press.
- Anae, M., 2016. Teu le va: Samoan relational ethics. *Knowledge Cultures*, 4 (3), 117-130.
- Anae, M., Tominiko, F., Fetui, V., and Lima, I., 2017. Transnational Samoan chiefs: views of the faamatai (chiefly system). *Journal of Samoan Studies*, 7 (1), 38-50. <http://journal.samoanstudies.ws/2017/03/22/transnational-samoan-chiefs-views-of-the-faamatai-chiefly-system/>
- Fuata 'i, I., L., 2007. E sui faiga, 'ae tumau fa'avae: Practices changes but foundations remain. In A. Soo. (Ed.). *Changes in the Matai System – O suiga i le fa'amatai* (pp. 33-60). Apia, Samoa; Centre of Samoan Studies Le Papaigalagala: National University of Samoa.
- Huffer, E., and So'o, A., 2005. Beyond Governance in Samoa; Understanding Samoa Political Thought. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 17 (2), 311-333. doi: 10.125/13872.
- Kramer, A., 1994. *The Samoa Islands: an outline of a monograph with particular consideration of German Samoa/ Augustin Kramer; translated by Theodore Verhaaren*. Auckland, New Zealand: Polynesian Press. (Original work published 1865-1941).
- Refiti, A, L., 2009. Whiteness, Smoothing and the Origin of Samoan Architecture. *A Journal of Architecture and Related Arts, On Adam's House in the Pacific*, (10), 9-19. doi: 10.292/861.
- Schoeffel, P., 1979. Daughters of Sina: a study of gender, status and power in Western Samoa (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, Australia National University, Canberra, Australia). Retrieved from <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/110688>.
- Simanu, A., 2002. O si manu a ali'i: A text for the advanced study of Samoan language and culture. Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press/Pasifika Press.



- Suaalii-Sauni, T., 2007. E faigata le alofa: the Samoan fa'amatai – reflections from afar. In A. Soo. (Ed.). *Changes in the Matai System – O suiga i le fa'amatai* (pp. 33-60). Apia, Samoa; Centre of Samoan Studies Le Papaigalagala: National University of Samoa.
- Tamasese, T., 2016. E iloa le lima lelei o le tufuga I le soofau: Navigating culture public health service and leadership. Retrieved from <http://www.headofstate.ws/e-iloa-le-lima-lelei-o-le-tufuga-i-le-soofau-navigating-culture-public-health-service-and-leadership>.
- Tcherkezoff, S., 2000. The Samoan category matai ('Chief'): A singularity in Polynesia? Historical and etymological comparative queries. *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 109(2), 151-190. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20706915>.
- Tcherkezoff, S., 2012. More on Polynesian gift-giving: The Samoan sau and the fine mats (toonga), the Maori hau and the treasures (taonga). *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 2(2), 313-324. doi: 10.14318/22016.
- Tcherkezoff, S., 2017a. The Samoan village, the brother-sister relationship and the rule of exogamy. *Journal of Samoan Studies*, 7(2), 6-37. Retrieved from Centre of Samoan Studies database.
- Tcherkezoff, S., 2017b. Gift-giving in Western Polynesia: Lifting the contradiction between Samoa and Tonga. In M. Meleisea, P. Schoeffel & L. Tovio-Alesana (Eds.), *Pacific Islands University Research Network Conference Proceedings, 2016*. (pp. 119-128). Apia, Samoa: The Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa. [http://samoanstudies.ws/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PIURN-Proceedings-FINAL\\_27.10.2017.pdf](http://samoanstudies.ws/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PIURN-Proceedings-FINAL_27.10.2017.pdf).
- Toleafoa, F., 2007. A changing fa'amatai and implications for governance. In A. Soo. (Ed.). *Changes in the Matai System – O suiga i le fa'amatai* (pp. 33-60). Apia, Samoa; Centre of Samoan Studies Le Papaigalagala: National University of Samoa.

**“E SUI FAIGA, AE TUMAU LE FAAVAE”  
TRANSNATIONAL NOTIONS OF SERVICE – “WAYS OF  
DOING MAY CHANGE, BUT THE FOUNDATIONS  
REMAIN THE SAME”**

**Seulupe Dr Falaniko Tominiko**

**Abstract**

While the saying “O le ala i le pule of le tautua” implies that through service, one becomes a leader or matai, it doesn’t state that one’s tautua continues beyond acquiring of a matai title. While tautua in its traditional practice meant being physically present in the village and rendering service to one’s matai, aiga and nu’u, the growing number of Samoan people domiciled away from the homeland has resulted in the practices of tautua from afar or tautua aitaumalele. While tautua continues to be an important value and practice to most Samoans irrespective of where they were born or raised, the way people practice tautua has transformed over time, especially for those living away from the homeland. In this paper I will discuss what tautua means to me, a Samoan born New Zealand citizen who migrated to New Zealand at the age of four, and compare it with how my father, a migrant to New Zealand, who practices tautua from afar. I will also speak on a survey conducted this year by the Marsden Transnational Matai team, and look specifically at the findings around tautua and service.

**Keywords:** tautua aitaumalele, service from afar

One of the most important values of the Fa’a Samoa, or the Samoan culture, is that of tautua or service (Apu, 2010; Huffer & So’o, 2005; Tui Atua, 2007); tautua to your matai,<sup>23</sup> tautua to your ‘āiga,<sup>24</sup> tautua to your nu’u,<sup>25</sup> tautua to your atunu’u,<sup>26</sup> and tautua to your lotu.<sup>27</sup> This paper will discuss what tautua means to me, a Samoan born, New Zealand raised matai. It will provide an insight into to how matai like myself, who are living away from the homeland, see our roles as matai, and how we tautua our families. Traditionally, there are many forms of tautua, and the purpose of this essay

---

<sup>23</sup> Titled chief of the family.

<sup>24</sup> Nuclear and extended family.

<sup>25</sup> Village.

<sup>26</sup> Country.

<sup>27</sup> Church.

is to discuss how we continue to render the different types of tautua from a transnational context. I will also discuss how I see my role as a transnational matai in my own family in New Zealand.

According to the popular Samoan proverb, “E sui faiga, ae tumau le faavae” – “Ways of doing may change, but the foundation remains” (Fuata’i, 2007: 173). This paper will also endeavour to illustrate that this applies very much to the way we practise tautua transnationally. While our methods and ways of serving may change, the Samoan principles upon which tautua are based remain unchanged.

According to the well-known Samoan proverb “O le ala I le pule o le tautua” – “The path to leadership is service”. The leadership or pule role that this proverb refers specifically to is that of a matai. According to Huffer and So’o:

It is through tautua, which literally means “fighting from the back,” that is, being behind the matai, that the taule’ale’a acquires the dimensions necessary for future leadership. Implied in this notion is that the future leader has not only put in the hard work and apprenticeship necessary but also intimately understands what it is like to “be in the back” (2005: 318).

Rendering tautua in the traditional sense meant being physically present in the village and rendering service to one’s matai, aiga and nu’u. This meant living in the village or the family estate and working the land and fishing the seas to provide food for the matai and the family (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2000: 31). It also meant being available at all times to the matai, serving them hand and foot, and being at their beck and call. Tautua also required loyalty to all requests and demands of the matai without any questions or reservations.

According to Filisi (2018: 382-383), there are four types of traditional tautua in the fa'a Samoa. They are:

1. Tautua Tuavae – this is traditionally the ability of a person, mainly a taule'ale'a<sup>28</sup> to be self-sufficient and self-determined to ensure that food from both the land and sea are abundant so that he is providing sustenance for his matai and his family (ibid: 382). Another variant to this is Tautua Matavela – service through burning eyes. This specifically refers to someone who constantly slaves over the hot umu<sup>29</sup> preparing and cooking food for their family and burning their eyes in the process.
2. Tautua Matalilo – this is when a person through their actions ensures they are always protecting and upholding the honour and dignity of the family name.
3. Tautua Malele – this is sometimes referred to by others as Tautua Mamao – service from afar. It originally referred to people who continued to serve their family and village while working in the urban area of Apia, however today this refers more to the family members who are now living overseas away from Samoa, sending money back to their families in Samoa as a form of tautua.
4. Tautua Upu – this is service through words. It specifically relates to the service rendered by an orator whose words and oratory brings honour and glory to his family and village. It applies in general to the act of speaking respectfully to and about matai, church ministers, elders and people of importance as a form of rendered service.

On the other hand, there are other types of tautua that can be described as disrespectful and unfortunate. Tautua Pa'ō is service while making noise. This type of service implies that the person doing it is not happy doing it, or is doing it unwillingly. Tautua Toto is service through spilt blood. This implies that someone has lost their life in the service of their chief and their family. The unfortunate death of Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III during the Mau march of 1929 has often been referred to by many as an example of Tautua Toto. After being shot, Tupua Tamasese made his dying appeal to his

---

<sup>28</sup> A taule'ale'a is an untitled man.

<sup>29</sup> An umu is a traditional form of Samoan cooking where lava rocks are preheated, and then used to cook food on an open earth oven.

supporters:

My blood has been spilt for Samoa. I am proud to give it. Do not dream of avenging it, as it was spilt in maintaining peace. If I die, peace must be maintained at any price” (Field, 1984: 157).

The proverb “O le ala I le pule o le tautua” is therefore one of, if not the most important, proverbs in Samoan culture. It clearly defines the connection between tautua and pule, service and leadership. It is a traditional policy that outlines what one must do if they want to lead. What the proverb doesn’t state is that one’s tautua continues beyond the acquiring of a matai title. While tautua continues to be an important value and practice to most Samoans irrespective of where they were born or raised, the way people practice tautua has transformed over time, especially for those living away from the homeland. For some Samoans living abroad, the physical and emotional isolation from the homeland has resulted in different ways of rendering tautua.

### **Tautua Tuavae**

As the eldest son of my parents, the ideals of service and responsibility were instilled in me at a very young age. Through both cultural and religious teachings, I have come to accept that as a child of Samoan parents, my first and foremost responsibility is to honour and serve my mother and father. Service for me was simply to obey my parents at all times and to be the best role model I could be for my younger siblings and cousins.

Service took on a different meaning for me when my father became the matai Sa’o<sup>30</sup> of our immediate and extended family. It was at this point that I committed myself to serving my father as his taule’ale’a when he was bestowed the paramount Sitagata title from Lotofaga in 2006. A good Samoan son is expected to serve his father as portrayed in the well-known legend of Fe’epō and his loyal and dutiful son Atiogie (Henry, 1979: 19). Traditionally, the eldest son of a high chief was referred to as the manaia,<sup>31</sup> the heir apparent who had special privileges that allowed him to represent his chiefly father in his absence (Schoeffel & Daws, 1987: 188). While it could be considered that I held the position of manaia in my family, I didn’t feel that I had any such privileges, as my role was to simply serve my father out of duty, but also with the intention of learning the finer details of being a

---

<sup>30</sup> The Sa’o is the title given to the head matai of an extended family group.

<sup>31</sup> A term loosely defined as a ‘prince’ of the family or the village.

Samoa chief and the inner workings of Samoan protocols and culture. It was in my view, a cultural apprenticeship.

While the traditional role of a taule'ale'a was to serve the matai through acts such as working the plantation, fishing to feed the family, serving in ava ceremonies, and accompanying the matai to fa'alavelave,<sup>32</sup> in New Zealand, families generally don't have plantations, they rarely engage in ava ceremonies, and rates of participation in fa'alavelave differ from family to family. My father grew up in Samoa, and in his youth often accompanied his father to family fa'alavelave and was always called upon to perform the ava ceremony whenever family from the village visited home to meet with his father. So, what tautua does a taule'ale'a raised and living in New Zealand render to his matai?

As my father's taule'ale'a, I accompanied him to our family fa'alavelave. I still did the usual things that a taule'ale'a did such as folafola sua,<sup>33</sup> and the dividing and distributing of the gifts as instructed. We don't have plantations in New Zealand, but nonetheless, as my father's right hand, it was my responsibility to ensure that the lawns were always mowed and everything outside was looked after and maintained. There were even times when I helped inside in the kitchen, and on many occasions cooked for the entire family, no differently to a taule'ale'a cooking for his matai and family in Samoa. While a taule'ale'a in Samoa may have had to work the land to grow food for the family to eat and to sell at the markets to make money for the family, my role wasn't too different. I too had to work and from this, I contributed financially to help my parents with food, and also with any fa'alavelave that we had. E sui faiga, ae tumau le fa'avae.

### **Tautua Matalilo**

Another responsibility of a taule'ale'a was to be at the beck and call of his matai. In this modern environment I wasn't always able to be at the beck and call of my father as I was not only a student; but I also had to work. Nonetheless, this never stopped me from being a taule'ale'a to him in other ways. One way I saw my role was as a secretary or as a personal assistant to my father, a similar role to being a personal assistant to a Chief Executive Officer of a company, providing administrative and professional support.

---

<sup>32</sup> A general term for cultural obligations and events such as funerals, birthdays, weddings, title bestowals etc.

<sup>33</sup> Folafola Sua is when a gift is publicly acknowledged to the matai and the family by a taule'ale'a.

When my father became the Sa'ō of our Sa Sitagata family, he also inherited all the family court case documents and writings belonging to his late father, my grandfather, Sitagata Falaniko Tominiko. All these important family documents had been up until then kept by my grandmother. Although the documents had been well kept, they were showing signs of wear and tear. I decided that one way I could tautua my father and family was to preserve all this important information and knowledge. For three months I scanned all the family documents so that we had electronic copies in the event that the originals got damaged or lost. Now whenever my father requires a document for a court case, it is as simple as clicking onto a folder on his tablet. As I reflect back at this action, this is a form of tautua matalilo – an action that I have taken to ensure the protection of something important to our family.

### **Tautua Upu**

Another way that I felt I could tautua my father was through intellectual discourse by providing critical feedback on family genealogies and court cases. Although initially shocked at my challenging of family knowledge, my father and family members eventually warmed to the critical lens I was providing, as too often we accept versions of stories without checking whether timelines match up with well-known Samoan historical events which have been widely documented. As a result, some of our family histories and timelines have been altered slightly to align with the more accepted written and recorded histories of certain events. A personal interest in Pacific culture and history led me to studying Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland, and the knowledge and skills I have obtained from being university trained has helped me serve my family in the analysis, compiling and recording of my own family's histories. I am often called upon by my father to check a history of a certain family line, and our resulting discussions and debates help him put together speeches or documents for court cases etc. To me this is a modern example of Tautua Upu – serving through words.

Tautua Upu is traditionally respectful speech and rhetoric; however, the act of critiquing and debating may be viewed in the Samoan context as being disrespectful. Regardless, the intent of my critiquing is to ensure that our family records are as accurate as possible and based on evidence. Having clear and accurate histories and records will benefit our family, especially during times of court cases over lands and titles. My father is not only the

Sa'o of his family, but he is also the failauga.<sup>34</sup> Often Sa'o of families do not deliver speeches at major family events, as the Sa'o usually has a tulafale that speaks on his behalf. The Sitagata title is one of a few matai titles in Samoa that are known as tulafaleali'i. This means that the title has both the status of an ali'i and a tulafale title. It is for this reason that my father is also the orator of our family at family events.

As I reflect back during the last twenty years, I have rendered Tautua Upu to my family in many ways other than the Samoan lauga or speech that is traditionally associated with Tautua Upu. The first example of Tautua Upu is merely retaining our Samoan language. It is common for those who migrated to New Zealand at a very young age to lose the ability to converse in the Samoan language. For my brother and I who migrated from Samoa with our parents at the ages of four and two respectively, it was important for us to maintain our ability to speak Samoan, as our grandparents were living with us, and Samoan was the main language by which we communicated. The next way we were able to render Tautua Upu was through the process of vala'au and folafola. Vala'au in English simply means "to call". Vala'au in the Samoan context is when someone announces to guests and families that a meal has been prepared and now everyone is formally invited to come and eat. This is usually the role of young children, and in the process, the child has to sit themselves on the ground, and formally proclaim in the Samoan language using respectful terminology that the meal is ready and that everyone is welcome to eat. For many parents and grandparents, seeing their young child perform this is something to be very proud of. Folafola is when someone formally announces to the gathered family, gifts that have been given from visitors. Gifts range from prepared food dishes, to tinned food, produce, meat and money. When families visit families and take gifts of food, the children of the host family usually folafola the food gifts provided. Like the act of vala'au, the child sits on the floor in front of the family matai and the gathered members, and proceeds to call out and list all the products that have been gifted, ending with a thank you to the family members that had gifted it. There are certain Samoan terms of respect that are used in the process of folafola, and to see a young child who is proficient in the use of the language brings pride to the family.

The next progressive step for me from vala'au and folafola was actually running family events as a Master of Ceremony - MC. In most Samoan

---

<sup>34</sup> Failauga is another term for tulafale which means an orator.



gatherings, the role of MC often falls upon one who was gifted in the art of Samoan oratory, and in most cases, this is a tulafale. Growing up, this was a role that my father often played, as it involved the formal welcoming of families and guests in the beginning, as well as the official thanking and farewelling at the end. From my teenage years, I remember being made to MC small family gatherings, and over the years, these grew into major family gatherings such as weddings, funerals and family reunions. In most cases, I ran the event and then handed the final word to my father who would thank the guests on behalf of the extended family, before I closed off the gathering. My grasp of the formal Samoan language progressed through the years, and it wasn't before long that I was confidently leading events proficiently in both the English and the Samoan languages. It was because of this ability that I became the resident family MC at events for my ability to communicate to both our Samoa and non-Samoan speaking guests. After many years in this role, it began to feel like a chore that I quickly no longer wanted to do, however when I reflect back at it, this was my way of rendering Tautua Upu to my family.

Today the role of family MC has been passed onto my younger brother, however I am sometimes called upon to deputise for my father in special family events that he is unable to attend. While speaking responsibilities have become less frequent for me, I find that in my current work as an academic and a researcher, a lot of my writing on the Samoan culture is written from a personal family context. I often write about Samoan fa'amatai and leadership using my family connections on both my father and mother's sides as examples. In writing about my family in my academic work, I am actually profiling them as my work is intended for a wide academic audience. This can be seen as fa'aeaea 'āiga, the acknowledgement and the raising of the mana of one's family. Often when a member of a family achieves something of great significance, the elders of the family thank them for their fa'aeaea, i.e. thank them for putting their family name on a pedestal. Fa'aeaea is also regarded as a form of Tautua. The fact that I often write about my families personally can be viewed as a form of fa'aeaea as well as a form of Tautua Matalilo. I would also describe this also as a form of Tautua Upu, but not so much the spoken form, but more the written form.

### **The Reluctant Matai**

In 2009, I was asked by my mother's family to consider taking on the tulafale title of Seulupe. My initial response was to decline the offer, as I felt that becoming a matai at that time would be disrespecting my father, as I will

no longer be able to serve him as his taule'ale'a. Furthermore, I felt that I hadn't learnt enough about what it means to be a matai. I expressed these concerns to my father, and he reminded me that tautua does not stop once you become a matai, it actually increases. He reminded me that being a matai is not only about getting a new title, but also about using that title to serve. The title I was being asked to take was an orator title, and he reminded me that an orator title is not a sitting title, it is a title that serves the family not only through actions, but also through words, Tautua Upu. With that he gave me his blessings, and in April of 2009, I officially became a matai tulafale, following in his footsteps, and his father before him.

Shortly after being bestowed my matai title, the feeling of excitement quickly turned to feelings of fear and anxiety as the reality of the responsibilities of a matai began to sink in. Even more scary was the fact that I was taking on a tulafale title, and being expected to deliver eloquent oratory as my grandfather and father did before me. There was comfort in the thought that maybe all the MC and speaking duties that my father had made me do reluctantly all these years were in preparation for this, and that I was actually not starting from scratch as I had previously thought. Nonetheless it was a challenge that I took on.

In the first couple of years as a matai tulafale, I rarely used the title nor did I do anything with it. I still felt like I was a taule'ale'a. I also considered myself a 'junior matai' or matai of second rank, believing that the title I had received was of junior rank, given that it was a newly created title that didn't hold the same rank and prestige as many of the more senior ranked titles that have been in existence for centuries. Reflecting back to these first couple of years, this self-relegation was a coping mechanism to justify in my own thinking, my lack of experience as a matai. Many young Samoans residing in New Zealand have had the honour of being bestowed a matai title; however, from my personal observations, not too many actually use it to live a life of service to their family as a matai. I did not want to be this kind of matai, and have since worked hard to be a matai that continues to serve my family.

### **The Backup Matai**

Today I see myself as a 'reserve' or a 'backup' matai because I still give the fa'aaloalo<sup>35</sup> to my father. When anything happens in my father's family, he is still the one that speaks. However, as stated above, on the odd occasion

---

<sup>35</sup> Fa'aaloalo means respect.

when my father can't make it, and without much notice, I would get the sudden call to see if I am available to come and take something to another family, or attend something on his behalf. This is how I see my current role as a matai in my family; one that is always waiting in the wings to serve. Similarly, not too long ago my father in law was hospitalised, and then unfortunately at the same time there was a fa'alavelave in his family. I'm not too familiar with my wife's side of the family, but one night I got a call saying: "Son, I'm sorry I'm in hospital but can you come and take a si'i to this family". I was reluctant at first, as up to this point, a lot of the matai duties I had been doing were within my own family. Now I was being requested to act as a matai on behalf of my father in law, to a family that I knew next to nothing about. It was a very scary and daunting request, as a lot of the events that I had attended prior to this were in the comfort and safety of my own family circles. I remembered the words of my father that "In the Fa'a Samoa, the world is your class room and you only learn from being brave and from giving it a go". With this in mind, I accepted my father in law's request. I only had a couple of days to prepare for this, but again, I was comforted in the knowledge that I have had a lot of prior practise, and was able to apply what I had already learnt to this fa'alavelave. The other important lesson learnt from this, is that one must always be prepared as a matai, for you will never know when you will be called upon to perform your duties as a matai.

At times I still feel as if I am a taule'ale'a; i.e., sometimes I think and act like a taule'ale'a, and other times I think and act like a matai. Traditionally in Samoa, matai are always matai, and are never called upon to carry out the roles reserved for non-matai people. This would not be befitting their role as a family matai. It will not only be an act of shame for the family if their matai was to be seen doing things that non-matai people are expected to do, but the most serious repercussion would be the view that the mana and the honour of the matai and the family has been trampled on. Comments such as "talofae ua leai ni taulele'a o lenei aiga..." - "pity there are no untitled men in this family..." would be made, alluding to the lack of respect and support that the family has for their matai. Unfortunately, in New Zealand not all Samoan families have taule'ale'a freely available to serve their matai, and at times our family has been in such a situation. Despite having a matai title, I have no issue with taking on the role of taule'ale'a, especially to serve the more senior and elder matai of my family.

Being a matai in New Zealand doesn't necessarily mean that one is exempt from doing the chores normally reserved for the non-matai members of the family. In Samoa, matai are the ones who give the orders whereas in New Zealand, and a lot of matai can be found carrying out the orders from other matai members of the family. I am such a matai. Whenever we have family gatherings, I always take off my tuiga<sup>36</sup> and go and help out in the kitchen, or wherever help is needed. The matai are often sitting around discussing things and giving instructions while everyone else is running around doing chores. It is my opinion that this is how matai in New Zealand have to operate. There are times when we have to put on our matai hat, and there are times when we have to take off that hat and get our hands dirty.

### **Conclusion**

Being a transnational matai has its challenges. One of the main challenges is that we are not able to serve or tautua our families in the ways that have come to be known as “traditional”. The concept and the practise of tautua have taken on different forms for us who live away from our Samoan homeland. The environments that we live in don't allow us to render traditional services like growing food and fishing to serve our matai and family, so we have to find different ways we can render service. Matai like myself who were raised away from Samoa are not exposed to the Samoan language as much as matai raised and living in Samoa, and therefore we would most likely be unable to render tautua upu in the traditional sense i.e. through lauga. While some transnational matai may not be able to recite formal Samoan oratory, there are other ways that we can use language and words to render service in the transnational context. Lastly, a transnational matai can move freely in and out of the matai space. They can be a matai when they need to be, or they can move out of the matai realm and act as a non-matai or taule'ale'a. At times, this is out of respect to a matai who is more senior than they are. This should not be seen as an act of defiance to the faamatai, but rather, as a sign of respect to seniority and leadership. Like many things throughout history, over time, things change, and the same can be said of the matai system. However, while transnational matai may not necessarily practise the “traditional” ways of doing, their intentions and reasons for doing remain unchanged.

“E sui faiga, ae tumau le fa'avae.”

---

<sup>36</sup> A tuiga is traditional headpiece of a paramount chief. It is a symbol of status like a crown is to a king or queen.

## References

- Apulu, M., 2010. *Tautua Fa'atamali'i: Servanthood with Absolute Integrity Engaging with Samoan Young People*. Thesis: Master of Philosophy, Massey University, Auckland.
- Field, M., 1984. *Mau. Samoa's struggle against New Zealand oppression*. Auckland: Reed.
- Filisi, F., 2018. Tautua a le Niu. *Te Kabaroa*, 11, 377-384.
- Fuata'i, L., i, I., 2007. E sui faiga ae tumau faavae: Practices change but foundations remain. (pp. 173-183) In A. So'o (Ed.), *Changes in the Matai System*.
- Henry, B., 1979. *History of Samoa*. Apia: Commercial Printers.
- Huffer, E., and So'o, A., 2005. Beyond Governance in Samoa: Understanding Samoan Political Thought. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 17(2), 311-333.
- Macpherson, C., and Macpherson, L., 2000. Where theory meets practise: the limits of good governance program. (pp. 17-40) In E. Huffer & A. So'o (Eds.), *Governance in Samoa: Pulega i Samoa*. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press.
- Schoeffel, P., and Daws, G., 1987. Rank, Gender and Politics in Ancient Samoa: The Genealogy of Salamāsina O Le Tafaiā. *Journal of Pacific History*, 22(4), 174-194.
- Tui Atua, T., 2007. *Samoan Jurisprudence and the Samoan Lands and Titles Court: the perspective of a litigant*. Paper presented at the Public Lecture Address, University of Hawaii.

## TAUTUA: A RELATIONAL OBLIGATION?

Muliagatele Vavao Fetui

### Abstract

This paper attempts to demonstrate that matai tautua is a distinct bond that exists as a necessary and fundamental component of fa'amatai. "O le ala I le pule o le tautua." The inference of which is the way, or pathway to authority is to serve from the rear. Thinking of one thing, and saying another is a contradiction, and therefore the functional implication of the notion tautua has to be redefined, experienced and practiced in regards to time and transnational spaces. As a parent born, raised and educated in Samoa of the baby boomers generation, most people would find it odd if I felt no sense of special obligation for those individuals who reared me or provided for me as a child, simply on the grounds that I did not voluntarily serve, tautua in whatever form, whether I hold a matai title or not. The Transnational Matai Project looks particularly at the 'affective ties' of transnational Samoa (Macpherson, 1994: 83 cited in Anae, et al., 2017: 1). Thomas Jared Farmer (2010: 41) commented "We are all born into a nexus of social and familial ties that are influential forces in the development of our selfhood. Even if we were to attempt to repudiate these ties later, they represent a formative factor in our lives, which is both inalterable and ultimately inescapable." I will discuss what tautua means to me, my personal experience, and the tautua experiences of those living in Sydney as reported by the Marsden Transnational Matai team in the last two years.

**Keywords:** tautua, tautua from Australia

### Introduction

The theme of the Measina Conference 2017 is based on the saying: 'E sui faiga ae tumau faavae' – which translates approximately as 'practices may change but the foundations remain'. As children we are taught (one hopes) to respect our parents, teachers and elders, school rules, and traffic laws, family and cultural traditions, other people's feelings and rights, our country's flag and leaders, the truth, and people's different opinions. "*Fa'aaloalo*" the Samoan notion of respect is one of the most important values of *fa'asamoa*, and the way it is played out amongst transnational matai in Sydney Australia, will be examined in this paper. The paper seeks to establish the perception of respect, *fa'aaloalo*, and

how it can be understood in the context of Samoan tradition (*agamu'u*), and to advance critical insights into how these Samoan ideologies impact and comply with a system of relational and social obligations in regards to matai. Questions asked are: Why is *fa'aaloalo* morally important? Does 'politeness' relate to the Samoan 'traditional' ritualised encounter amongst transnational matai?

Despite the widespread acknowledgement of the importance of respect and self-respect in moral and political life and theory (Dillon, 2009: 5) there is no settled agreement in either everyday thinking, or philosophical discussion, about such issues as how to understand the concepts. "The centrality of the concept of *fa'aaloalo* as face-to-face conducting of relational arrangements manifested and performed formally and informally" (Anae, 2010: 12-24). How formal and/or informal is the appropriation/manifestation of both within and between *fa'asāmoa* and the maintenance of *fa'aaloalo*?

As noted by Duranti (1996: 328) "in the everyday life of any known community, the boundaries of nature and culture are renegotiated through big and small, visible and invisible, ritual of passage, of incorporation, of familiarization". But then he continues, saying that language as a 'carrier' of politeness itself is now seen as a set of practices, culture as a dialogue; and any system of abstractions is believed to be an ideological product. With this in mind, in this paper, I will explore how the Samoan language influences and negotiates the practice of *fa'aaloalo* within the Samoan way of life.

Much of the following research suggests that politeness theory is one of the most rapidly developing areas of pragmatics, with constant refinement of theoretical approaches and re-definition of core concepts. As cited in Holmes et al. (2011: 1064), Bargiela-Chiappini and Haugh (2009: 12), summarised neatly, neo-politeness theory and post-modernism approaches to politeness, regardless of their considerable differences, argue that politeness is most productively analysed "as a social practice which is both dynamic and interactive, with variability seen as a positive component that builds into human communication a capacity for social and cultural negotiation and change".

In this paper we will examine how *fa'aaloalo*, as a Samoan dogma, can be understood in the context of Samoan tradition (*agamu'u*), and how Samoan

ideologies impact and comply with a system of relational and social obligations in regards to transnational matai in Sydney, Australia.<sup>37</sup>

We are particularly interested in the following questions:

- Why is *fa'aaloalo* morally important? What, if anything, does it add to morality over and above the conduct, attitudes, and character traits required, or encouraged by various moral principles or virtues?
- Does 'politeness' relate to contemporary Samoan encounters in a life-story interview context amongst matai in Sydney, Australia?
- Who defines 'traditional'? and how is the 'traditional' ritualised encounter expressed in a Samoan context?

Literature reveals that the concept of politeness is both a complicated, and a universal one. This research will endeavour to critique the Samoan concept of *fa'aaloalo*, not only through a Samoan lens, but also through foreign understandings. These foreign understandings and concepts of politeness will also provide a basis from which a comparative study of Samoan politeness can be made.

The following five themes will help unravel *fa'aaloalo*, respect from the Samoan perspective: *fa'aaloalo* and *aganu'u Samoa* (respect and Samoan culture and language); *fa'aaloalo* and *fa'asinomaga* (respect and identity); *fa'aaloalo* and *fa'alupega* (respect and traditional salutation and honorifics); *fa'aaloalo* and *fa'aonaponei* (respect and post-modern institutions of the aiga, family, church and education; and *fa'aaloalo* and *fa'amatai* (respect and the Samoan chiefly system). These themes will be used to categorise fieldwork data.

### Fieldwork findings

The following are excerpts taken from interviews conducted with a group of 4 transnational matai aged between 35-55, living in Sydney, Australia. Of the 8 Sydney cohort group of matai who were interviewed, matai titles included: Tuipola, Taumaimaseola, Naea, Ulugia, Taofiga, Tuilaepa, Seve, Auva'a and Sitagata from the villages of Fagamalo, Manono, Vaiusu, Safotu, Fagaloa and

---

<sup>37</sup> I am a researcher for the Marsden Project study "Samoan transnational matai (titled chiefs): Ancestor god 'avatars' or merely title-holders?" which is funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund.



Lotofaga respectively.

The context of these interviews were individual focussed life story interviews<sup>38</sup> in which we used Anae's *teu le va* paradigm/methodology (2016). Instances of the matai being *fa'aaloalo* were thus noted.

Relevant understandings and perceptions of *fa'aaloalo* have been analysed under the five themes of 'politeness' mentioned above. Both Samoan (with translations) and English comments are used below.

### **1. Fa'aaloalo and Aganu'u a Samoa: Politeness and Samoan Culture**

As discussed above, the Samoan culture is built on politeness and respect. Various aspects of Samoan traditions and practice incorporate elements of respect; for example, the language used. One matai participant illustrates this in an opening phrase he uses during an interview:

*Faafetai mo lenei avanoa i se mataupu taua...e avatu ai se lagona i le mataupu nei...*" (Thank you for this opportunity to discuss such an important topic...as well as the opportunity to share some of my thoughts and feelings on the topic at hand...)

This participant is a high-ranking chief, but he lowered himself. As the researcher, I am the one that is thankful, for he has made available his precious time to share with me his experiences; yet he has turned it around, and thanked me for this opportunity. This is a very common way that Samoans show politeness when being asked questions; i.e. they thank the asker of the question for the asking the question as well as the opportunity to answer the question. The utility of such phrases such as...*se lagona i le mataupu nei*...is indicative of how crucial are one's effective and/or emotional ties to his '*fa'asinomaga*', his identity.

Another matai participant similarly remarks at the importance of the occasion and the interview:

*O lenei faamoemoe ma le tofamamao ua faavae ai lenei sailiga, ua lagona ai lava lo'u loto fiafia, aua ua taunuu lenei sailiga ma le faamoemoe e maua ni faasoa taua mai la outou suesega, se tofa ma*

---

<sup>38</sup> Olson and Shopes, 1991.

se faautautaga a matai ma taitai o le tatou atunuu, ua nonofo ma aumau i atunuu i fafo mai o si o tatou atunuu o Samoa” – (This undertaking creates a feeling of happiness within me, because it has allowed the opportunity for matai and leaders living away from Samoa to share their knowledge and wisdom).

The use of respectful language such as “tōfāmamao”, a term referring to the chiefly vision or indigenous epistemology, shows how important the occasion is to the participant. Like the above participant, the magnitude of the occasion is shown by the respectful language used to express how important the occasion is to him as a participant. The participant also expresses his gratitude in the collectiveness of the project, with the inclusion of ‘them’ who are living away from the homeland. He acknowledges the collective gesture of the project with the inclusion of community leaders etc.

## **2. Fa’aalalo and Fa’asinomaga : Politeness and Identity**

One’s identity as a Samoan, and as a member of the family, also influences the playing out of politeness and respectfulness. As one matai participant points out, one’s order in the family also influences respect and politeness:

Ou fai atu loa i le matou fanau poo ai o le a avea le igoa o le tatou tama, o outou na matutua e tatau iai, e le talafeagai ona ou matai ae lena e nonofo mai outou matutua” – (So I asked my siblings who will take on the matai title of our late father. I said to my older siblings that they should take it on because it doesn’t look right if I am a matai and you my older siblings are not).

Here the participant is aware of his place and identity in the family. He knows that he is younger than some of his siblings, and understands that leadership is as much due to seniority, as it is to holding a matai title. He recognises that his older siblings have influence over him through seniority, and that his taking on of the matai title disrespects the seniority of his older siblings. Out of respect and politeness to his older siblings, he encourages one of them to take on their late father’s matai title.

Another matai participant speaks about how his extended family rendered him and his sibling respect by virtue of their identity as the children of the late chief:

Our extended family all agreed that it should be one of my father's children that succeeds his title.

While there is no written law that the children of a chief that passed away should inherit their father's title, the fact that the extended family still offered the title to the children is not only a sign of respect to them, but also a sign of respect to the late chief whose lineage flows through his surviving children.

### **3. Fa'aaloalo and Fa'alupega : Politeness and Honorifics**

Respect is also evident in the Fa'alupega or salutations of each village. The salutation of each village is an indication of the matai that are of senior rank within the village, and are the ones with which the highest of respect is afforded. This faalupega respect was evident in a comment by one matai participant about his role as an orator chief in the village of Vaiala:

O lo'u tiute faamatai i Vaiala poo le Faletuamasaga, o Fata ma Maulolo"  
– (My duty as a matai in Vaiala, is like that of Fata and Maulolo).

Here the participant pays respect to the senior orator titles of the village of Afega. Although the participant is from Vaiala, both villages belong to the district of Tuamasaga, and in the rankings of the Tuamasaga faalupega, the Afega orators are senior. The participant is aware of this relationship, and therefore likens his role as an orator in Vaiala to that of the senior orators of Afega. By doing this, he is paying respect to Fata and Maulolo and acknowledging their having higher status than his own orator title from Vaiala.

Knowing fa'alupega also helps matai to place themselves within a gathering of matai. While all matai have rank and status within their own families and villages, when it comes to the gatherings of district and national importance, the fa'alupega becomes the doctrine by which respect and politeness is based. As one matai recalls, attending events and fa'alavelave promotes respect amongst the matai fraternity:

By attending these events, I know how to nurture the relationship between one matai and another matai, as well as knowing my role and time with regards to the overall gathering of Samoan matai.

#### 4. Fa'aaloalo and Fa'aonaponei : Politeness and Post-modernism

One participant speaks of his reluctance to take on a matai title because he wasn't living in the village but in the capital of Apia. Despite his reluctance, he respected the wishes of the family matai by still taking it:

Sa faapena ona ou nofo atu i se pitonuu o Apia, ona o lou manatu sa iai, ou te lei saunia, poo le 3 i le 4 tausaga talu ona ou matai, ae ou alu faigaluega ma tauave le igoa matai" – (For 3 to 4 years after taking on a matai title, I lived in Apia but even though I wasn't ready, I still took the title and used it in my work).

This example shows a young matai taking on the role out of obedience. Although he felt he wasn't actively engaging in the fa'amatai while in Apia, he still carried the name, and the fact that his matai title was used in the work that he does shows that he was respecting the family wish. In carrying the title at work, he was also representing his family and putting his family name out there, even though he wasn't actively engaging with the village that his chiefly title was from. This is one-way young people are respecting their obligations to be a matai outside of Samoa. By the mere fact they are carrying their family name, when they succeed in their careers and jobs, they in the process are raising the status of their families.

There are also new offices and statuses outside of the fa'asamoa and fa'amatai that have, over time, gained the same respect. This is often associated with the Christian religion(s) within Samoa. As one matai participant explains, his status as a deacon has helped his role as a matai:

O lea lava la e faaauau le tofiga lea e faataitai ma avea foi ma tiakono i le matou ekalesia, ma ua faapena foi la ona moomia ona iai ni agavaa e mafai ai ona faatino lauga i mafutaga, taimi foi o faalavelave a aiga i Samoa, ia ona maua mai ai lea o nai iloa i le tatou aganuu, faatinoina o faaipoipoga, maliu ma isi lava faalavelave e tausi ai o tatou aiga ma ekalesia" – (I am also a deacon in my church. It gives me experience to give speeches during weddings, funerals and other occasions within my family and congregation here and in Samoa).

Deacons in most Samoan Christian churches have taken on oratory roles. They are the spokesperson of the church minister, just as the tulafale speaks on behalf of the ali'i. The tulafale and alii relationship seems to have been

transferred to the Deacon and the Church Minister and, as a result, the respect and politeness afforded to the tulafale has now also been given to the Deacon. According to the matai participant, being a Deacon enhances his role as a leader in the family as well as the respect he gets:

When anything of my wife's family and village happens here, they ask me to look after it and lead what we do. Even my wife's brother's give me the respect to lead their family's side in faalavelave etc.

Modernisation has had an impact on the fa'asamoa. One of the matai participants was asked what his opinion was on the future of the fa'asamoa and the fa'amatai:

I always look at the way things are done. It is good to be critical and analytical but it is better to perform with some errors than doing nothing to promote the gagana Samoa and the aganuu Samoa but slowly sliding away into extinction.

The matai participant understands that the fa'asamoa and the fa'amatai is changing and evolving; he is well aware of postmodernism Samoans in the diaspora. Rather than being negative about what he sees, he respects that today the young matai are changing things, but the main thing is that they still have that respect for the culture to continue practising the fa'asamoa and the fa'amatai. According to the participant, having a practice that may have errors is better than having no practice at all. He realises that everyone is different, and he admires the various creative ways of performing a cultural act in diaspora. What this participant displays, is an unconditional respect for the culture regardless of the inaccuracies he observes in the modern-day practice.

## **5. Fa'aaloalo ma le Fa'amatai : Politeness and Samoan Chiefly System**

Politeness plays a large part in many aspects of the Samoan chiefly system. Politeness is evident during the process of selecting a matai. One of the participants describes his feelings about being asked to take on a matai title:

My father's family from Safata gave me a matai title, yet I had no intention of becoming one, mostly because I did not have any experience in being one. It was one or two years after I had graduated from University. I was

still young, and had not had any exposure to *aganu'u*, and no knowledge of it as well. That was the reason I was reluctant and worried; in case I take on the title and I am not able to honour the duties and serve the village. This is the reason I was so reluctant.

Even the expression of reluctance is nuanced in politeness and respect. He respectfully admits his inability to carry out the duties obligated to the position of matai. He admits his weaknesses and inexperience in taking the role. He goes on to say:

O le taimi lena o la ou te talavou ina ua faamalieina lou uncle sa matai, i la'u tautua ma la'u foi fesoasoani mo lo matou aiga" – (This was during my youth, but my uncle who was the matai at the time was happy with my service to my family as well as the help I was giving to our family).

This example shows that respect and politeness flows both ways, from the people to the matai, as well as from the matai back to his people. In this case, the matai is showing respect to a young man who has shown his value in serving and helping his family.

Another matai participant recalls the instruction of the head chief of his village to prepare for a matai title bestowal:

Fai mai le Sa'o, sauni...o le tagata lena ua tasi iai outou tatou o e fai le saofai i le itumalo taeao" – (The head chief of the family said prepare...the one that the family agreed upon shall have his matai bestowed tomorrow in the district).

In this instance, the Sa'o is conscious of his role of checking to see that that family have democratically elected the rightful representative to be conferred with the paramount title. He is raising that self-awareness of how important the protocol is in relation to another cultural space of the 'itumalo', the district who will collectively celebrate, witness and honour the new title holder, and his family as well. Having the district present further increases the importance of the occasion, as the respect for the newly bestowed title will be acknowledged at that district level.

The matai title itself elevates the holder to higher position in society and the actions of the holder elevates his family's status. The matai title automatically gives respect to the holder. He is forever respected/honoured

as a matai in every sense of the word. “Ua ta tofo i ai i le manaia o le aganuu” - I have tasted how awesome/beautiful the aganuu/culture is. It is a great learning curve for him. According to one matai participant:

I like my matai name to be known because it is a matai of our country. I am happy to show my title from Safotu Savaii.

### **Conclusions**

Over the past two decades, growing interest in understanding the relationship between identity and language learning has been reflected in the wealth of publications within the field of applied linguistics. Joseph (Cited in Kidd, 2016: 65-66) describes identity as being related to who individuals are in relation to ‘the groups to which they belong, including nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, generation, sexual orientation, social class and an unlimited number of other possibilities.’

It is my contention that both the literature, and the interview data above, demonstrate that politeness languaging reflects the singular importance of context. The context-dependent nature of identities as constructed during interaction is captured by Zimmerman’s (1998: 67-68) three types of identity: discourse identity, situated identity and portable identity.

1. Discourse identity - This refers to the identities an individual adopts within the immediate interaction which are ‘integral to the moment-by-moment organization of the interaction’ (1998: 90.). Discourse identity relates to the sequential development of the talk as interlocutors engage i.e. speaker, listener, questioner, and challenger. The Samoan tulafale (orators), whose role as a representative spokesperson on behalf of the matai ali’i, chiefs and other invited guests in a wedding ceremonial feast for instance, to engage in a fa’atau, a debate among the tulafale present, to agree/disagree on the one tulafale to perform, in presenting a traditional Samoan speech, lāuga tali, as a right of reply, is an arduous and time consuming procedure. Tui Atua (2005: 9) reckons that ‘In the harmony between fellow men Samoans find that there exist special relationships between people. As with the relationship between man and the cosmos and man and the environment, (Aiono, 1996) there exists in the relationship between men certain tapu.’ There is some ambiguity in saying that these tapu are accompanied by the sacred covenant called feagaiga. The sacredness of the feagaiga covenant in whatever cultural context is always held in high esteem.

2. Situated identity - This refers to the alignment of roles with reference to the social situation the participants are in 'engaging in activities and respecting agendas that display an orientation to, and an alignment of, particular identity sets' (Zimmerman, 1998: 9). For example, within the context of the classroom, the teacher and the students will behave according to rank and roles viewed by the participants as being socio-culturally consistent with the classroom environment. The parallel scenario as in the case of giving honour to those (in the aiga situation) who deserves respect is quite significant, as addressing the rightful holder of a matai titled person with his/her matai title is a way of showing great respect within the aiga setting, or out in other unfamiliar circumstances. A Samoan saying that commonly reinforces and encourages the proper use of honorifics is "A malu i fale e malu foi i fafo." Being respected in-house will likewise be honoured elsewhere. Meleiseā took the opposite stance at the higher national situation in which the "Fa'asamoa, as national ideology (and/or identity) was used, as the Samoans term their political and economic system, conveys a very deep meaning to Samoans. It was not simply a reactionary nationalism although it did develop a certain symbolic significance in the struggle against colonialism" (Meleisea, 1992). That is why the term "Fa'asamoa" is not utilised in this paper. Over time, speakers of Samoan may refer to Samoan language, Samoan culture among other things Samoans use "Fa'asamoa" as a buzz word with negative connotations in 'fa'alavelave' fa'asāmoa of funerals, weddings, matai title instalment to name a few.

For a collective religious affiliation of a group who identify themselves as Christian, role play is critical for identifying position as one of a responsible and functional leading elder at a Samoan speaking church in Henderson Auckland. Such language domains/situations are common, where Samoans identify themselves as of Samoan descent, mostly fluent Samoan speakers except a few New Zealand-born of the Z generation, and of the Alpha generation of less than ten years old. Also noted as a significant situated identity, is the category of mature women's meetings, convened to meet their spiritual needs (3) below "...which furnish intersubjective basis for categorisation" (Zimmerman, 1998: 91). That said, when I go home, my home situation addresses me as a father or grandfather, hence my situated identity is daily spoken appropriately at home. As recorded by Schultz (1953: 50) "E sau le fuata ma lona lou, When the breadfruit harvest comes, the lou will be found, too." The lou is a long pole with a crook at the end, used in gathering breadfruits. After the harvest the pole will be laid aside or thrown away. For the next harvest, the old lou will be fetched again or a new one



will be made. Thus, there is a lou for every harvest. The proverbial expression is ‘upu fa’amafanafana – consolatory words used at the death of a matai: Every generation has its chiefs and orators.

3. Transportable identity - This refers to identities transported across a variety of interactions, and which are ‘usually visible, that is, assignable or claimable on the basis of physical or culturally based insignia which furnish the intersubjective basis for categorization’ (Zimmerman, 1998: 91). Migration from third world countries, relocation of population to avoid political upheaval of warring nations seeking refugee’s status for security, and especially for better living elsewhere are all examples of transportable identity. A Samoan saying thus...E *maota tau’ave Samoa* ...translated...Samoa’s ‘chiefly residence’ is transferrable (figuratively speaking), Samoan *‘fa’asinomaga*; identities of language and culture among other things are ‘conveyable’ when the pioneering Pasifika people invaded the shores of Aotearoa in the 1950s and 1960s, and the present Pasifika population landscape of the polyglot Auckland is dynamic, and diversity is a blessing.

At the beginning of this paper we posed three research questions. Our responses are as follows:

- Why is *fa’aaloalo* morally important? What, if anything, does it add to morality over and above the conduct, attitudes, and character traits required or encouraged by various moral principles or virtues?

Fa’aaloalo respect/politeness is very important for all moral human beings because it is an ideal, basic and essential component of one’s character traits required for harmonious living in a social/cultural space. ‘lē fa’aaloalo’ impolite/disrespect is immoral if one’s conduct/personality negates fa’aaloalo. Hence, over time, and spatial and or cultural space where fa’aaloalo, that is the positive attitude of fa’aaloalo, has become a very important learned behaviour, regardless of whether a person is raised away from their homeland. Social/cultural spaces are significant language domains for developing character traits. Fa’aaloalo is a transferrable concept that is nurtured by cultural custodians at homes, churches and various education institutions. Fa’aaloalo is an ideology matai interviewees in Sydney recognised as part of their prior learning experiences, and is still an ongoing open scenario adapting to the here and now social context and the global space in regards to the homeland relationships and in diaspora. The

underlying principle/ideology of fa'aaloalo is idiosyncratically analysed in the five sub-themes. The interwoven nature of fa'asamoa, Samoan social fabric is wholistic, in that fa'aaloalo is central but interacts totally with aganu'u culture, fa'asinomaga identity, fa'alupega traditional salutation, fa'aonaponei post modernism, and fa'amatai chiefly system. The neo-modern way of playing out 'politeness'/fa'aaloalo in the social context amongst matai in Sydney is challenging and adaptable.

- Does 'politeness' relate to contemporary Samoan encounters in a life-story interview context amongst matai in Sydney, Australia?

If politeness/fa'aaloalo may be redefined as 'obedience' in doing what one thinks is not right, then the interaction is confrontational. From the interviewees' responses, most of them value challenges of their obligations as matai in their new cultural spaces. A Samoan proverbial expression says...*O Samoa e maota/mamalu tau'ave...* Samoan relocates/migrates...and likewise takes with them their 'residence'/dignity. Samoan people migrate with them, and take their cultural values with them. Age/gender selection of interviewees reflect their ideas, indigenous knowledge, coping strategies to deal with matai/familial obligations (fa'alavelave), and how they manage to live out the demands of living in big city like Sydney. One of the interviewees deliberately left a family church where fa'asamoa is not a dominant feature of their programme, in order to attend a Samoan-speaking congregation, as he wants to learn more matai language and acquire a deeper knowledge of fa'amatai. As an existential transnational matai in Sydney, one has to be tactful and skilful, and be fully committed to the cause of adapting to materialising his/her obligations, but also of developing simultaneously Samoan indigenous epistemology.

- Who defines 'traditional'? And how is the 'traditional' ritualised encounter expressed in Samoan matai interviews in Sydney, Australia?

According to literature, 'tradition' relates to culture (Meleisea, 1992; So'o 2007). A Samoan saying states...*O le fuata ma lona lou...or o le lou ma lona fuata...* Every breadfruit season has its long stick with a crook at the end for plucking breadfruits. Every generation will come up with new ideas and so as traditions. Heritage matai that has to do with gagana Samoa and aganu'u Samoa in Sydney may have to define/redefine traditional like a new 'lou' the long stick with a hook at the end. So, to adapt to the new season of

generation of Samoan descendants in Sydney is a matter of concern only for the older, staunch advocates of aganu'u Samoa, as practised in the homeland. Some interviewees try their very best to counter language loss and language shift by running language programmes, and early childhood education centres to sustain language and culture. Tradition is a 'tofi' - a transferrable ideology from one generation to another; but it is up to the new generation to readapt it according to their needs and cultural space in relation to time.

**Acknowledgements:** The authors wish to thank the Marsden Fund, Royal Society of New Zealand for their assistance, without which we would not have been able to conduct our research. We also wish to thank our research participants who kindly agreed to be interviewed by the team, and Pacific Studies, Te Wānanga o Waipapa, University of Auckland for supporting this research project.

## References

- Aiono, F., 1996. Motugā'afa; Alafua, Apia, Samoa.
- Anae, M., 2010. Research for better schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va - a Samoan perspective. MAI Review, 2010, 1.  
<http://ojs.review.mai.ac.nz/index.php/MR/article/viewFile/298/395>
- Anae, M., 2016. 'Teu le va: a Samoan relational ethic'. In Special Issue: Indigenous Knowledge: Past, Present, Future, *Knowledge Cultures* 2016, Vol.4, Issue 3 pp.117-130.  
<http://www.addletonacademicpublishers.com/contents-kc/859-volume-4-3-2016/2835-teu-le-va-samoan-relational-ethics>  
(Password to view article is AddletonAP2009).
- Anae, M., et al., 2017. Transnational Samoan chiefs: views of the faamatai (chiefly system). *Journal of Samoan Studies* Vol. 6, 2016. Forthcoming.
- Brown, P., and Levinson, S., C., 1978. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, F., and Haugh, M., (eds) 2009. *Face, Communication and Social Interaction*. London: Equinox. pp. 1-30.
- Dillon, R., S., 1992. Respect And Care: Towards Moral Integration. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. Volume 22, Number 1, March 1992, pp. 105-132.
- Duranti, A., 1996. 'Meditated encounters with Pacific cultures: three Samoan dinners', in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, botany and representations of nature* D.P. Miller, P.H. Reill (eds.).

## 4 CHAPTER

### TEU LE VA (RELATIONAL SPACES OF MATAI)

#### AUTHORITY OF THE MATAI SA'O IN CONTEMPORARY SAMOA: AT HOME AND ABROAD

Meleisea Leasiolagi Malama Meleisea

##### Abstract

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

**Keywords:** matai sa'o, matai legislation, multiple title holders

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

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

background of the Samoa Land and Titles Court (Land and Titles Act 1981).

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

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

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

reject the traditional obligation to seek approval or consult with the higher ranking *sa'o*, claim their own rights to land and titles - often backed by decisions made in the Land and Titles Court.

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

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

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

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

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

Where are these trends leading us? It is not impossible that in fifty years' time our villages and their *fa'amatai* governance systems will have faded away, to become like suburbs and small towns, with locally elected councillors under central government control (which is the way in which local government operates in most modern democracies). If, in the distant future *matai* titles become de-linked from the *nu'u* (traditional villages) and *itumalo* (traditional districts) as is the current trend (evidenced by the bestowal of titles upon people who do not live in the *nu'u* or have any presence there), *matai* titles may come to be regarded of equal rank, held by all their adult

members. Although this may seem improbable today, we have only to look at the evolution of Scottish and Irish clans (which were once like *'aiga*) as examples. In ancient times, names prefaced by Mac or Mc (as in Macdonald/McDonald) identified men as *suli* and *tautua* of the Donald clan. The 'Donald' was their chief. Now they are family surnames, (or hamburgers, or even, and I'm joking here, Presidents of the USA).

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

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



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

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

### References

- Samoa Law Reform Commission Pule a le Matai Sa'o. Apia. July 2016 and 2017.
- Meleisea, M., 1995. To Whom Gods and Men Crowded: Chieftainship in Ancient Samoa. In: J Huntsman (ed.) Tonga and Samoa: Images of Gender and Polity. Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies. University of Canterbury.
- Meleisea, M., 1987. The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the Modern History of Western Samoa. Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.

# THE MATAI TAUTUA AND THE WORD “MATAI” THROUGH TIME AND SPACE.

Serge Tcherkezoff

## Abstract

This presentation has two parts: some comments stemming from my sparse observations of three generations of *matai*-s, and a reconsideration of the socio-political and linguistic evolution of the concept and of the word “*matai*”. In the first part, the example of the first generation of *matai* that I will evoke is a *matai* who spent all his life in Samoa, but pushed his children to seek opportunities overseas. One of his sons who moved to New Zealand accepted at the end of the 1970s, when he was in his 40s, responding to the pressing demand from his parents, to take the title. The third generation I will mention includes a transnational *matai* who came to NZ in his young age and became a *matai* in his late 20s. In the second part, I will add a few precisions to my findings published in 2000 about the uniqueness of the word “*matai*” for designating a “chief” throughout all Polynesian languages, and the transformation in Samoa from a time when all *alii* and *tulafale* were not considered to be *matai*, to a time when the word “*matai*” came to designate the encompassing class of all the “chiefs”.

First of all, let me express my deep respect to the past and present members of all Aiga o Samoa, who are symbolically present through the Samoan design of this magnificent Fale Pasifika. Also, all my respects to the Iwi-s on whose land I humbly stand here today. And all my thanks to the organisers of this symposium, Afioa Lupematasila Misatauveve Dr Melani Anae, and the whole team, Seira Aukuso-Sue and others; and of course, the Centre for Pacific Studies and at the larger level the University of Auckland.

Dear Colleagues, and with this collegial word I want to include everyone, from Vice Chancellors to students present today, as you are all sharing strongly the same collegial deep engagement with the *FaaSamoa*. I feel privileged, during this symposium, to be part of that collegial relationship, this *va*, as in the sacred expression “*teu le va*” which is, I quote Dr Melani Anae, “valuing and nurturing of sacred and secular relational spaces between people, knowledge, environment, ancestors, the cosmos and things” (Anae, 2016).

In our gathering, *teu le va* is also caring for the link between each *matai* and their *aiga*, and the link between the spaces where transnational *matai*-s stand, in the islands and overseas, particularly here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

When I received your kind invitation, I wrote in the usual academic way. I realise that, after listening to the wonderful but also very entertaining papers presented up to now, all addressing important social issues, but also very lively and filled with personal memories, that I should have planned this paper differently, with a more personal side. It is too late to change the whole, but at least I will add a few words about my own names, my *matai* names or other names, to bring in a more personal approach. I will come back to that in the second part of this presentation.

### **I. Three generations of *matai*-s *tautua***

First, let us evoke the continuity of the *faamatai* through the example of three successive generations.

In the early 1980s, I came to know a Samoan *matai* who was a high chief in his own village and district (Salani, Faleali'i), but also very respected within the village of his wife (Faanenefu, of Moata'a), even though he was there as a *faiava*. He was Fuimaono Manulua.

When I knew him, he was in his late 70s, a man that I believe was a *tamali*? in every sense of the word. I recall seeing many people coming back and forth to his residence in Moata'a. These people coming back and forth were seeking advice about speeches, coming from his own village of (Salani). Others would be his extended family from other villages seeking his wisdom on title disputes, or support in preparation for an upcoming land and titles court case. Through his service, humility and knowledge of *fa'asamoa*, his wife's village respected him very much in the village council and sought advice from him whenever that was needed. I could see a man that instilled values of service, humility, love and service to his children.

In fact, he represented his wife's family at many of the court cases. When a judge of the land and titles court asked him: "Fuimaono why are you representing your wife's family?", he would reply: "There are two places where a person can be buried, firstly in his own land, secondly in the land belonging to the family of his children".

Manulua was born in Moata'a, to his parents Tima and Isara; Isara has been, I was told, the first church minister of the LMS church in Moata'a in the 1890s. Years went by, and Isara and Tima passed away and are buried in Moata'a. From what I have been told about the life of Fui and Nefu, Nefu's father Laulusa died in 1918 due to the terrible influenza epidemic brought on ship that we all know about. Fuimaono Manulua rendered service not only to his wife's village, but to his children's village. He was known to have led all the major court cases pertaining to his family in Salani, Vaiee, and Mulivai. He also led court cases for his wife's family in Moata'a, and won several of those court cases.

At this point Fuimaono Manulua's story continues with his son Laulusamanaia Fuimaono Ativalu, but I don't need to go there much, as Fono Tuvalu mentioned yesterday that story when talking about his "Uncle Fui". And you remember that story, of how the old Fui asked Uncle Fui to think about taking the title Laulusa before going to New Zealand, etc., his reply and the mention of the ava cup.

The Laulusamanaia title was held by one title holder until 1979. By that time, the family's *faletama* (different branches) wanted the title to be split. Laulusa's grandfather was the only male heir, and he had five sisters; four had children, and one, Lepetimalo who married Tui Pelehake, didn't have any children.

You remember, again from Fono's paper, how Laulusa became a *matai* in 1989, and with the passing of his father in 1988, he became holder of the Fuimaono Atanoa title. He moved to New Zealand in the 1970s for a better future for him and for his children; however, he never stopped rendering service (*tautua*) to his parents in Samoa. He built a two-storey house for them in Moata'a, and would visit his parents often. Laulusa later took on the same duties his father previously held. He started to be involved in court cases at the Land and Titles Court with regards to family matters in Moata'a, Vaiee, Salani and Satalo.

From what I observed, Laulusa was a transnational *matai* that understood the importance of being present in family's *fa'alavelave*-s in both Samoa and New Zealand. In the early 2000s, he initiated the "Fui and Nefu family reunions", as it became to be called from his parents, and where all the descendants attended.

In New Zealand, Laulusa held the role of “*taitaifono o le aiga Au Salamo*” for over 20 years. He was related to this family through his grandfather Isara; he was not even a *matai* from Faleasiu, however he continued to serve as the *taitaifono* for many years. He only resigned when he was unwell and heading towards his last years.

Laulusa attended all family funerals, bestowments, and any major *fa’alavelave*. I can recall a family *fa’alavelave* in Wellington a few years back. Laulusa helped bring to New Zealand a cousin from Samoa in the 1970s, who later settled in Wellington; and he had a family of his own. He died, and his wife’s family decided to organise the funeral. When Laulusa heard, he went over to the cousin’s in laws to *soa-lau-pule* (to consult and discuss) and asked them for his cousin’s body to be returned to the church hall. He also made sure the funeral was done by our side of the family. Why would he care so much? Why couldn’t he just have his cousin’s in-laws do the funeral?

The answer could lie in this man’s upbringing. He was taught by his parents from a young age that *tantua* is the most important duty of a *matai*. Laulusa knew the meaning of *tantua*. He would tell of the story of *tantua* from when he was young. Laulu had two older brothers, one who married and left for Savai’i. The other stayed in Moata’a and they grew up together. They were quite the pair in their younger years, and whenever there was trouble, the brothers would be somewhat involved. Their father told them that the duty of the Samoan brother is to serve his sisters. Hence, they would do all the cooking, and when meal time came, their parents and sisters would sit around whilst the two brothers prepare and bring forth the meals. Sometimes there was nothing left to eat after that, and they would climb a coconut tree to find at least a *niu* (young coconut) to eat.

These experiences helped Laulusa in his journey as a *matai* in New Zealand. He saw the importance of participating in family *fa’alavelave*, but he also saw the importance of education for his children. He was indeed successful in this, supporting his children to achieve. All his children received tertiary qualifications in NZ; one became a nurse, the other a teacher, and rest held good jobs within the public service sector. One could say that Laulu’s experience as a young man, and the struggles he went through, led him to support his children to have a better future.

Laulusa was a *matai* that held education in high regard. I remember being in the first family reunion on my wife's family. As a person married into the family, I was expecting to be treated like everyone, sitting in the same table and chairs like everyone else. However, I was called to sit at the head table with the two ministers of the family and their wives. Laulusa was of course showing respect to my status as "Professor" (teacher), as I am not a *matai* (and he did not know about my Siliga-ma-aitu story, see here the second part), but yet he saw the importance of the roles connected to education. Laulusa I believe was able to experience the old fa'asamoa that was practiced by his father; but he also exercised, experienced, and paved the way for transnational *matai* in his family.

Laulusa passed onto his brother's grandson the knowledge that he acquired from his father, and also shared with him his experience from growing up in Samoa in the 1930s up until the 1970s. Laulusa saw the importance of succession, and the passing on of knowledge to the next generation. In 2016, the old man was unwell, and he knew that time was not on his side. So, he requested Vaa (now Lauulusa), his sister's son, and Tuvalu (now Fono) his brother's grandson - whom we heard yesterday - to come to Wellington to discuss a decision pertaining to his succession. He was advised by his two living sisters to hold the Laulusa title until his final breath, and this created some tension within the family. However, the old man stated that he wanted one of his older sister's son's living in Samoa to be bestowed the title Laulusa, which was done.

Fuimaono Manulua lived in a time where fa'*amatai* was done in a very traditional way; his son who became Lauulusa experienced some of those changes, and lived in a time when transnational *matai* were first starting to move around between Samoa and NZ. Laulusa knew from his experience as a *matai* that he could have gone to the grave with his Laulusa title, and then the family would have to seek advice from others on how the bestowment should progress. However, he wanted to pass the knowledge onto to the next generation, not only the family knowledge but the cultural knowledge.

That succession of 3 generations is all about passing down the unchanging values of the fa'*amatai*, through and in spite of the wide social changes that came about.

## II. Words and names.

### II. 1. Names and *matai* names given to a visitor in 1981

From the Russian first name Serguei (my parents were Russian who met in France), my first name in France was written down in my birth certificate as Serge, the French usual translation of Serguei (in this part of the world, the name is more often known through its Italian version: Sergio). Now, my parents did not preview that I would go often into English speaking countries, where the name Serge is unknown, and thus people have a hard time pronouncing it when they hear it. When they see the written form, they try to say “Surge”, which then evokes like a surging source of water. That sounded ridiculous to Samoan ears when I came to Samoa. Thus no, “Serge”. Then my name was made into a local-style transliteration: from “S-e-r-g-” “they made of it “Se-le-ga”. But Samoan names are immediately shortened by close friends, and, believe it or not, it became “Sela”, and there I was condemned to be for ever “short of breath” in Samoa (as this is the meaning of the common word “sela”). So, after an initial period of jokes, my friends stopped to call me like that; they realised that, in those years at least (not now), I could walk up and down the hills without being *sela*.

Then some more generous friends said that among Samoan first names, one was close enough: Siliga. So, for some, I became Siliga. With that name, one day, in those early times, I went to Laulii, as I was friend with the then Pastor’s son there. One evening, a good friend of the Pastor’s family, an old orator who told me that his name was Salapo, came to see that new visitor named Siliga. He told me that he heard that I was keen to study the Samoan customs and was ready to help. We both agreed that a case of Vailima was a necessity to engage in such a deep discussion. On departing, a number of hours later, and making me believe that he was impressed with my sincere attraction to understand Samoan customs, he told me that from now on I was to be called with, he said, “an ancient and vacant *matai* title of the *nuu*, fitting for someone already named Siliga”: and that *matai* name was Siligama-aitu (literally: Serge with a spirit-ghost side). I was honoured, but thought it was a kind of honorific joking name and forgot about it.

Sometime later, I happened to enter and try to listen to some court cases discussed at the Land and Titles Court. One day, at the end of a session, I saw my Laulii old orator standing up, and a long line of people going towards him, giving him words of thanks and putting in his hands a “pepa lima, pepa sefulu tala” etc (bank notes). He had obviously pleaded and won a case. On

turning his eyes around, he recognised me and, to my great surprise and even despair, he said in Samoan in a loud voice to everyone: why do you all come only to me, don't you see that we have here with us Siliga ma aitu! And there I saw that long line coming to me, everyone a bit surprised as they did not know my face, but still shaking my hands and putting in my hands also the same kind of bank notes. Well, I realised that day that my *matai* name was not just a joke.

The saga of my names is not finished, but the last part belongs to my distinguished companion in this panel, Luamanuvae Morgan. When I made the grand mistake, another day, long ago, of telling him my Lauili story, he began in his usual mischievous way to shorten my name Siliga-ma-aitu into just "Aitu". And when I would arrive in a group where he was present, he would greet me with that name, or better said that *matai* title: "Here is coming Aitu"! And you can imagine how other people present, when they did not know me, were kind of thinking: should I run away or would I dare to stay? I could continue with the Aitu reference, this time not jokingly at all, with our speaker who presented yesterday, Fonomaaitu Tuvalu, but he already explained the origin of his title Fonomaaitu and this ancient practice of *matai* meeting in a closed house, in silence, and seeking inspiration from "aitu". In the pre-Christian times, the word was not opposed to Atua, and referred to past ancestor souls; but, in my years, the old man who had this title was usually called Fonomaalii, and I was told one could not — should not — talk about "aitu. So, let us now leave aside my "aitu" side and step back into a more academic side. But at least we stay with mystery stories, as I want to deal with the historical and linguistic mystery of the word *matai*.

## II. 2. The word *matai*: a quick update

First, as an anthropologist-sociologist, I am always very interested in the commentaries about the meaning and the etymology of any word that is at the core of a social institution, when these commentaries, or even short comments are offered by those who are practitioners within that given social institution, in the present case the *matai*-s themselves and other Samoans.

We know how these insider comments are often called, in the outsider academic vocabulary, "folk etymologies", a label which carries an unfortunate condescending tone, with the understatement that the content of the "folk" knowledge is wrong once it is assessed by "serious" (understand outsider) historical research. Let us forget about that tone.



Local interpretations of the words are always a strong way of expressing shared values, and are thus an important source of information for any student delving into a given culture, in this case the *Fa'aSamoa*. Among those insider commentaries, as I heard from some Samoan elders, and I think Fono-Tuvalu evoked it briefly yesterday, the most often offered comment states that the word *matai* takes its existence and meaning from its base “mata”, whether to be understood as “mata-i-ai”, “a-mata”, etc. These comments stress the fact that a *matai* is one who is supposed to “look to” for the group, has his eyes outward; in this way he also is the eyes of the group, but also in another way he is looking after the group. Anyway, a number of variations can be discussed with the base “mata”. That entire configuration of meanings is sociologically very true in the Samoan social organisation, as the *matai* to his group is like a sister to her brother, who is the most important component of her brother’s eyesight (we know the saying: “the sister is the pupil of her brother’s eye” *o le ioimata o le tuagane lona tuafafine*).

That main role of the *matai* has been deeply misunderstood by outside observers, at least in the past, and when they were wearing their “political science” lenses. That is why the usual translation in Western languages has become “chief”, and has led to misunderstandings, as those that one can read for instance in the United Nations reports, when UN commissions were visiting Western Samoa in the preparation of independence in the 1950s. From the commissioners’ points of view, the *matai*, the chiefs were the social class of “nobles”, as distinguished from the “commoners”, and of course those commissioners were horrified, in the name of modern post WWII “democratic” values, that the majority of Samoan people were advocating for a post-independence parliamentary system, where only *matai*-s — but it became said among the commissioners: where only “nobles” — could be candidates (and electors) in each constituency.<sup>39</sup>

Professor Leasiolagi Meleisea (nd ms [1987]: 13-14) has written an ironic comment on the way that these Western commissions wanted to impose their definition of democracy through “a very non-democratic way”, and it was indeed difficult for the Samoans in the Constitutional Assembly of the late 1950 to maintain their wishes and their views. In the end, formally, the *faamatai* prevailed, but the Constitutional Advisers from Australia and New Zealand, the well-known historian James Davidson, and the jurist specialist

---

<sup>39</sup> All the relevant quotations from these UN report (but in their French language version) and all references can be found in Tcherkezoff ([in French]2003 : 235-238).

Colin Aikman, influenced the draft of the Constitution in such a way that undoing the *faamatai* prevalence was possible through an ordinary Act of Parliament, and did not require a full amendment of the Constitution with a 2/3<sup>rd</sup> vote in the Parliament. As we know, the consequence was that, without a Constitutional vote but a simple majority vote, part of that change became a reality in 1990<sup>40</sup>. In a way, the contemporary outsider comments about the transnational *matai*, those that Melani want to address and redress, and which she quotes in the proposal of our program about Transnational *matai*, continue the same misunderstanding, just that this time it is not a class distinction by birth and rank, but a distinction in financial means: “*matai* living overseas are only taking advantage of their title and shirking their responsibilities”, etc.

Now, this being said on local understandings of the word, we also have another comparative duty. Samoan language and culture belong to the group of Polynesian languages, and even, at a larger level, they belong to the so-called Oceanic languages and cultures, and we can enter into this comparison. There we have a difficulty that is that the word *matai*, as chief of extended clans-families *aiga*, seems to be unique in the whole are, and appears in the end to be restricted to the Samoan language. Indeed, everywhere else, the chiefs are designated by the pan-Polynesian word *alii*, *arii*, *ariki*, which of course is very well known in Samoa, but applied for only one type of *matai* chief, in contrast with the other type, the *matai*-orators. That situation had led me to try to solve that mystery. I went into mid-19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century ethnography, in various sources, including the narratives in Samoan recorded by Krämer, and it became evident that, at that time, within a great *aiga* headed by an *alii*, the different households following the orders given by the *alii*, for instance for preparing gifts for a *faalavelave*, were headed by men who — them only — were called “*matai*” (Tcherkézoff, 2000a). From there, it became clear that only towards the end of the century, during German colonial times, a certain levelling happened, in successive steps, in fact pushed forward by the administration, that made all chiefs being considered, from outside, as one category (Tcherkézoff, 2000b).

Thus, for instance, German sources in 1911 state clearly that “the word *matai* has only lately been applied to ‘chiefs’” (Tcherkézoff, 2000a; 2000b). The matter is even clearer when looking at the early missionary dictionaries. In all early missionary ethnography accounts, the word *matai* is absent from

---

<sup>40</sup> On these points, see Tcherkezoff ([in French]2003 : 233-234).

their narratives describing the social settings; it is found only in the missionary dictionary. One can see in the first edition of 1862, two different entries: word *matai* and word *alii*: “*matai*, the head of a family” and “*Alii*: a Chief”.

I am not rehearsing here all the relevant ethnography and discussion, as the papers published in 2000, particularly in JPS, were quite long and are, at least for the JPS one, easily available online.<sup>41</sup>

The historical-linguistic query becomes then different. Clearly the word *matai* has not been “invented” in the second part of 19<sup>th</sup> century; it was already in the language. But to what other words in the region can it be linked? Thus, another short part of my papers of 2000 tried to put the word *matai* into a regional comparison. This is where today, a brief update is useful, and I am deeply indebted to another great colleague and master of Oceanic languages, Paul Geraghty of USP. In 2000, I attempted to say that we should not be surprised that, in Samoan, the word *matai* came to designate household elders, as I found different occurrences of that word in neighbouring languages, applying to someone who is the best in his activity, and among others a master in a craft. In the German ethnography of Samoa, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is not clear when *matai* is mentioned as head of family, or as a master in a craft, *matai tufuga*, because master *tufuga* were indeed most often *matai* family head. But I then thought, with my naïve linguistic short sight, that anyway the two words were the same.

So, I went on to say that the word *matai* as applied to Samoan chiefs at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century originates from the word designating an expert craftsman, someone skilful, or just the quality to be expert, to be the best, as it can be found in several Western and Eastern Polynesia languages. Thanks to Paul Geraghty, through a personal communication (private letter he sent me long ago, 15 August 2000, after reading my 2000 paper), we must now consider two different words. The Samoan “*matai*” as family head has a short <a> in the first syllable, while the various words found in the region for the expert (the Fijian word for “carpenter”, also to designate a “clever” person, the Tahitian word for being “skilful”, the Tongan word for “expert”, etc.) are all “*maatai*”, with a long initial <a>, even if written everywhere in the same spelling as “*matai*” with a short initial <a>. So, we should not think

---

<sup>41</sup> I take this opportunity to thank once more our Colleague Judith Hunstman who provided me with her well-known generosity and spent a long time transforming my draft, written in French, into proper English.

that the Samoan position of matai as family head somehow originates from a regional notion of expert, skilful, the best.<sup>42</sup>

But on the other hand, Paul continues, “Samoan *matai* may well be related to the Fijian verb *matai* which means to be first, perhaps via a form like *mataitagata* for ‘leading man’; and is probably also a component of *mataisau*, Fijian carpenter, which appears to be of Samoan origin and to have spread relatively recently to Fiji and parts of Vanuatu”. In another writing, our late respected Colleague Aiono Dr Fanaafi mentioned that the creation power of God in ancient Samoan was named the *mataisau* (Tcherkézoff, 2012).

There are still many unanswered questions around this wide lexical configuration of words applied to being a leader. But let us say for the moment that we did, and do have a regional notion of localised leadership, with the connotation of being the first as a social position, even if probably not evolving from being a master in a skilled activity. Beyond these linguistic debates, the main point remains solid: *matai* as an encompassing category of chiefs, of *alii* or *tulafale* types, is a recent development, specific to Samoa, where, perhaps more than elsewhere, large *aiga*-s headed by *alii* contained many subgroups, households headed by *matai*-s, and thus the notion of *matai* was apt to become more universal for family chiefs when large *aiga*-s became more and more divided in autonomous groups and when, as a consequence, the whole traditional idea of rank was gradually eroded and even flattened, if I may say, by outside influence, and colonial administration.

Thus, today and since more than hundred years, the institution of *matai* includes at the same time: 1) a strong idea of sameness, the unitary notion of leadership, what it is to be a *matai*, and all papers have discussed that; and 2) a strong idea of rank, at the national and local level, between names within a polity, be it the village-polity *nuu*, the parliamentary district *itumalo*, or the whole of Samoa atoa, as well as within the same name but held between several holders.

In conclusion, allow me a note of nostalgia: I still cherish the supportive comments made right here, well in another building, but on this campus of the University of Auckland, by our late colleague Roger Green, when I

---

<sup>42</sup> Also a note of further thanks to Paul Geraghty: when discussing the word “*mata*”, I was also quoting Te Rangi Hiroa and Raymond Firth about the word for a fishing line, and from there the connotation of leading line; in his personal communication of 2001, Paul made it clear that this is an altogether different story, because the word is *mata'i*.

presented my research on the word *matai*, some time before my 2000 publications, in a seminar of the anthropology department. Roger was very happy because, as he told me, I have cleared one obstacle, at least for that specific part dealing with the notion of chiefs and the words applied to it, which stood in his way when he was pursuing, with Patrick Kirch (2001), the wide comparative study that they published shortly after in 2001 (their well-known *Hawaiki Ancestral Polynesia*).

## References

- Anae, M., 2016. Teu le va: Samoan relational ethics. *Knowledge Cultures*, 4(3), pp.117-130.
- Kirch, P., and Roger C., 2001. *Hawaiki, Ancestral Polynesia: An Essay in Historical Anthropology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
- Meleisea, M., 1987. N.d. ms, « Ideologies in Pacific studies: a personal view » (typed ms of a presentation at the UNESCO Cultural Administrators Training Workshop 14-18 September 1987). Apia: documentation UNESCO [A close version was published shortly after, the same year 1987: « Ideology in Pacific Studies: a personal view », in A. Hooper et al. (eds.), *Class and culture in the South Pacific*. Auckland/Suva: University of Auckland Press (Centre for Pacific Studies)/ University of the South Pacific Press (Institute of Pacific Studies), pp. 140-152].
- Tcherkézoff, S., 2000a. "The Samoan category matai ('chief'): a singularity in Polynesia? Historical and etymological comparative queries." *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. 109, n°2 (June), pp. 151-190. [Available on line at JPS Webpages].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2000b "Are the Samoan Chiefs Matai "out of time"? Tradition and democracy: contemporary ambiguities and historical transformations of the concept of chief", (pp. 113-133) in Elise Huffer and Asofou So'o (Eds), *Governance in Samoa*. Canberra / Suva, Australian National University (National Centre for Development Studies, "Asia-Pacific" Series) / University of the South Pacific (Institute of Pacific Studies). [Not available on line; PDF can be sent on request].
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2003—FAASAMOA, UNE IDENTITE POLYNESIENNE (ECONOMIE, POLITIQUE, SEXUALITE). L'anthropologie comme dialogue culturel. Paris, L'Harmattan ("Connaissance des hommes") (545 p.). [Available on-line, with fee] <https://www.7switch.com/fr/list/search/page/1/relevance?q=faasamoa+une+identite>

<http://www.editions->

[harmattan.fr/index.asp?navig=catalogue&obj=livre&no=15701](http://www.editions-harmattan.fr/index.asp?navig=catalogue&obj=livre&no=15701)

\_\_\_\_\_ 2012. 'More on Polynesian gift-giving: The Samoan sau and the fine mats (toonga), the Maori hau and the treasures (taonga). In HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 2 (2): 313–24.

## AGA'IFANUA MA AGANU'U: LOCALISED AND UNIVERSAL VILLAGE PRACTICES – TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS SYSTEMS: A CASE FROM FALELATAI, UPOLU, SAMOA

Luamanuvae Morgan Tuimaleali'ifano

### Abstract

Like many other Pacific Island societies, Samoa is governed by two governing processes, village custom – *aganu'u* - and modern rule of law – *tulafono*. *Aganu'u* is administered by village councils – *fono* - comprising of titled family heads – *matai*, and the latter by a democratic constitution. It can be assumed that as villagers commute between the village and the urbane environs of the world, both governance processes are generally understood by adult citizens. Many social scientists have examined the nexus between these worlds in post-colonial societies in terms of the human rights, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with the emphasis correctly placed on the pivotal role of colonial policy and practice in shaping customary practices, and vice versa, for example, the evolution of the electoral system, from matai (family titleholders) suffrage in the 1960s, to universal suffrages in the 1990s with matai-only candidates. While this nexus between customary practice and the rule of law is important, my concern in this paper is about identifying and tracing the evolution of another specific aspect of custom within village authority that is related but distinctly different. I refer to *agaifanua*, or local practice that lies within, but is distinctively different from, *aganu'u*, or universal custom. What is *agaifanua*, how is it distinguishable from *aganu'u*, and when it happens, how does *agaifanua* transform into *aganu'u*? Finally, how is this process relevant to explaining the phenomenon of the transnational *fa'amatai*? Is *agaifanua* – *aganu'u* transportable to the diaspora, and for what purposes?

*Agaifanua* and *aganu'u*

*Agaifanua* is local practice, and *aganu'u* refers to universal custom with universal application.<sup>43</sup> Local practice implies many things under number of headings.<sup>44</sup> The source of custom is generally assumed and verification

---

<sup>43</sup> A detailed treatment of this nexus is in A. M. Tuimaleali'ifano, 1997. 'Aganu'u ma Agaifanua Fa'a Samoa: Custom and Usage in Samoa, a history and process of a tama'aiga title dispute in Falelatai,' PhD thesis, the University of the South Pacific.

<sup>44</sup> A simple google search reveals the following on local practice. 'Ordinary practices may

remains, but for the purpose of discussion, it is assumed to be derived from local practices, where such local practices have entered into the realm of universal custom, which in the village context have village-wide application, currency or practice. For example, it is custom that at the installation of new matai called - *saofa'i* - all village matai attend, a universal custom or *aganu'u*. However, in some villages, attendance is confined to matai of the extended family to which that matai title belongs.<sup>45</sup> In such cases, a local practice is accepted as unique or peculiar to that particular family or sub-village. In Fiji, it is custom for the ceremonial installation of a paramount titleholder - *turaga ni vanua* - to be commemorated by feasting and honorary exchanges. However, in Bua, the appointment of their paramount title is done without ceremony. This practice, unique to Bua, would be seen in the Samoan context as an *agaifanua*.

What qualifies a local practice – *agaifanua* – to become universal custom – *aganu'u*? Under the laws of natural selection, it is generally assumed that what transitions into a social value system makes it, if it survives the test of 'fit for purpose'. Furthermore, once the purpose no longer exists and/or is overtaken by events, under progressive adaptation, the custom dies, or is recreated to satisfy the new conditions. To trace the transition from local to universal custom within contemporary traditional society would require an examination of the interface between the two, and by so doing, would provide an alternative approach to the development process, at least from the point of view of local villagers.

The transition process is examined through a case study, the decision-making process of a village council, with specific relation to the punishment of banishment, a significant village-wide practice sanctioned by custom.

---

reveal the kind of meaning which people give to life, economic matters, social and political organisation, architecture, health, law, religion, agriculture, etc., etc. By "implicit *meaning*" we understand the values, spirituality, cosmology and symbolism which undergird visible *practices*. The political economy developed in the West since Adam Smith can claim no universal validity. There are other economic systems. Economics are embedded (K. Polanyi) in a variety of different social and cultural realities. In addition to that, there is a dialectical relationship between local economics and local cultures.<sup>7</sup>

<http://www.networkcultures.net/47-48-49/Local%20Practices.html> accessed 25 Nov. 2019.

<sup>45</sup> In the sub-village of Matanofu in Falelatai, apart from the paramount title, the installation ceremonies of attendant titles are attended by matai of Matanofu and the senior matai of the neighbouring sub-village of Falevai. Similarly, only the matai of Falevai and paramount title holder of Matanofu attends the installation of Falevai matai titleholders.



## Falelātai

Like many villages, Falelatai and its neighbouring village to the east, Falese'ela, attribute their origins to two Fijians, almost always assumed to be men, Latai and Se'ela (see map). Latai became the founder of Fale-o-latai – House of Latai and Se'ela founder of Fale-o-se'ela – House of Se'ela.<sup>46</sup> Located in south-western Upolu, in the district of A'ana, Falelatai comprises about 10 sub-villages.<sup>47</sup> The precise population, from the 2016 Census, is 2,401, and while the national growth rate increased (mainly in Apia capital), the numbers of most, if not all villages have been nose-diving since the 1950s.<sup>48</sup> While often mentioned as a winner of the National Village Beautification prize,<sup>49</sup> what resides underneath this beautiful flora belies a long list of past grievances that have been longing for an airing, and for relief and justice.

Falelatai has the distinction of featuring in the evangelizing history of Samoa through the London Missionary Society (LMS). The first LMS printing press was located in Matamatanonofo under the steward of a 24-year-old printer J. B. Stair and the first missionary Tract was printed in 1839, 'O le Sulu Samoa' or the 'the light of Samoa'.<sup>50</sup> Matamatanonofo was the site of the first missionary services before it was transferred to Sagogo, and from thereon to Matautu, where the latter site acquired a new honorific - *ole malae o le filemu* — the *malae* of peace. Falelatai and its neighbour Samatau to the west converged to form an electoral constituency. Although each village is of equal status in national-state affairs, in custom they are as different as a talking stick and fly whisk. While both titular - *ali'i* - and orator - *tulafale* - types of *matai* are found in each polity, in political orientation and operation, Falelatai is *ali'i* centred and Samatau is *tulafale* centred. At all levels of Samoan politics, this political

---

<sup>46</sup> In modern times, these names are commonly used by women. I have come across Latai in Moala (founding ancestor of the late Fijian Ratu Savenace Draunidalo from Moala whose family traces ancestry to Tongatapu in Tonga where Latai is a familiar name for a female.

<sup>47</sup> From east to west, the sub-villages are Sama'ilauago (residence of Lupematasila), Falevai (residence of Fa'asavalu, Salu and 'Auva'aipau), Matamatanonofo (resident of Tuimaleali'ifano), Levi (residence of Tuivaeti), Sagogo (residence of Anae), Matautu (residence of Nanai), Puna (residence of Misa), Fusi, Pata (residence of numerous orator titleholders) and Si'ufaga (residence of Falalava'au, Lealaitagomoa and Taefu). Many of these places are names of *maota* and *laoa*, or the residential sites of titular chiefs and orator/attendant titleholders.

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.sbs.gov.ws/digi/1-Preliminary%20count%20report%202016.V2.pdf> accessed 22 Nov. 2019.

<sup>49</sup> *Samoa Observer*, 6 April 2011.

<sup>50</sup> See M. Tuimaleali'ifano, 2006. *O Tama a Aiga: The Politics of Succession to Samoa's Paramount Titles*, Suva: USP, 47.

distinction frames village attitudes and behavior.<sup>51</sup>

Like other villages, Falelatai can be caricatured as an ultra-conservative village, and its council leaders are reputed to be fiercely independent in mind and spirit. It is home of a tama'aiga and a political family who dominates the village councils, and whose *modus operandi* are unwritten understandings of what constitutes customs, or perhaps more correctly, what its members perceive to be custom. The perceptions are determined largely by the interpretation of whoever dominates proceedings, which in most cases is the council chair. Customs are not articulated in village council minute books, but are largely remembered in the heads of elders, most of whom are in their mid-sixties and upward. When translated into village policies or rules, custom can be often be seen at village entrances in sign boards or notice boards.

Falelatai governance is for practical purposes disbursed into three councils; the biggest is the Matautu council, with jurisdiction over seven sub-villages from Sama'ilauago to Matautu. The remaining two are Pata and Si'ufaga, each with its own council and jurisdiction over its own sub-village. When circumstances require, all three polities converge, and act on matters concerning the village district, such as the appointment of its paramount titles. Often, it meets with the neighbouring village of Samatau, with whom it shares a common history and traditions, and for electoral purposes, a shared constituency.

### **Banishment**

Banishment from residence and family is an ancient form of punishment in Pacific societies and has precedents in other civilisations. Its survival to the 21st century in Samoa is due largely to the fact that colonial and central governments have relied on village councils for the maintenance of law and order in the absence of resources to enforce its laws. Banishment represents one of the severest forms of punishment among village councils, and there are numerous incidents where village councils have been notorious in invoking banishment orders against their own people.<sup>52</sup> While the village

---

<sup>51</sup> The distinctive difference between villages is contained in Shore's *Sala'ilua, A Samoan Mystery* (1982). In a personal communication from A'e'au Leavaise'eta Peniamina, a holder of an *ali'i* title, he notes that in Falealupo, the village his A'e'au title belongs, power lies with orators. They are referred to as "*o le fa'antaga ma le moe ile to'afa o le tapuaiga*-the collective decision of the four that wait and listen." A'e'au continues, "*ali'i* titleholder remain passive when major decisions are delivered. Abuse of this power is common, of course." Pers. Comm. 23 July 1999.

<sup>52</sup> The closest police station is thirty minutes away by car in Faleolo airport, failing which is

with the highest number of banishments for a given period has never been calculated, Falelatai would easily qualify for a place among the top three.

Banishment knows no boundary and rank. Almost all village families from Falelatai, from its paramount title holders, to non-titled families, have suffered by the scourge of banishment, some on several occasions.<sup>53</sup> Falelatai has been responsible for some of the worst forms of banishment committed in Samoa. Historian Malama Meleisea documents a horrifying case in the mid-1980s<sup>54</sup> where a respected and brave matai, Nanai Likisone, was roped, tied and dragged from his house, trussed up like a pig and left next to a scorching earth oven.<sup>55</sup> This humiliation followed subsequent humiliation. Earlier, the home of one of the very few Falelataian business entrepreneurs, Tuivaeti Tariu, was torched. His buses as his livelihood, and his plantation were wasted, and he was driven into exile by the council banishment order. The incident was reported widely, and resultant public outcry from this violation of human dignity was a major catalyst in the enactment of the 1990 Village *Fono* Act by Tofilau Eti Alesana's Human Rights Protection Rights government.<sup>56</sup>

The enactment of the Village Fono Act did not discourage banishments, but emboldened village councils because their rights to conduct their villages were protected by the Act.

Paramount titleholders and senior pastors have not been spared. Other humiliations that followed later included two pastors of the largest church, Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano o Samoa (EFKS),<sup>57</sup> Tama-a-Aiga

---

Apia, another thirty minutes.

<sup>53</sup> Some from being drunk and disorderly and banished from failure to pay. In some cases, the senior matai of their family is banished.

<sup>54</sup> M. Meleisea, 1987. *The Making of Modern Samoa, Traditional authority and colonial administration in the modern history of Western Samoa*, USP, 214-220.

<sup>55</sup> Pers. Comm. Nanai Kuresa, 18 January 2014, Tula'ele. *Ua uma ona fa'ate'a Tuivaeti Tariu ma Nanai Likisone mai Falelatai. Ona o mai lea I Apia. Ua o'o I le isi po, ua toe fo'I mai I Falelatai momoe ai. Ua malama le taeao, ona usu mai lea o Tuivaeti I Apia, ae nofo pea Nanai Likisone I Falelatai. Ua logo tala le nu'u ia Nanai Likisone o iai I lona fale. Typu loa ma le tasi ole nu'u ile fa'ate'aga, ole veresi na fa'apogai lava e le 'Aiga Sa Nanai. One night after the decision to banish the two men returned to sleep in Falelatai. When dawn broke, Tuivaeti woke and traveled to Apia but Nanai Likisone remained in the village. The village heard that Nanai Likisone was in his house. That was when the village decided to act on the banishment, an action initiated by the members of Sa Nanai clan.*

<sup>56</sup> The Act permitted Village Councils to enforce their decisions via monetary penalties and banishment but not capital offences.

<sup>57</sup> Pastors Keilani Tagoa'I Pele and Uale Papali'I Taimalelagi and their families. See Tuimaleali'ifano in Huffer and So'o 2000:171-187.

titleholder, and the then de-facto Head of State, Tuimaleali'ifano, clan heads of Sa Misa<sup>58</sup> and Sa Nanai,<sup>59</sup> and before the March 2011 elections, the then high-profile MP and Deputy Prime Minister Misa Telefoni Retzlaff.

### **Falelatai village council and method of governance**

The village is ruled by its fa'alupega, or ceremonial salutations of the ancestral hierarchy. As alluded to, Falelatai for governing purposes, governance is disbursed in three polities:

1. Si'ufaga: The faletolu or house of three. These are represented by the heads of the three clans of Fa'alava'au, Taefu and Lealaitagomoa centred in Si'ufaga.
2. Pata: The orator sub-village which lies between Si'ufaga and Matautu and whose leading orators are referred to as *galu-e-fa* or waves of four.<sup>60</sup>
3. Matautu: while it is dominated by the falefa or house of four clans comprising Anae, Lupematasila, Misa and Nanai, it also includes the sub-villages of Falevai and Matanofo.

Like many of the 330 Samoan villages, Falelatai village exercises authority on a day to day basis through the village council or *fono*, and governs according to its understandings of *fa'avae*, or principles of ancient customs. In the course of its administration, each sub-polity invokes the relevant punishment as a way of reinforcing its authority. These range from petty fines to banishment, and in former times, death. The punishments are announced as decrees and weighted in local idiom, *ole afioga tutasi*, roughly translated as the 'royal decree' due to its implied jural authority. In modern terms, it is explained in this way, *e mafai e le tagata ona alo le pulufana ae le mafai ona alo le afioga tutasi*, meaning approximately 'one may be able to evade a bullet but never the royal decree'.

---

<sup>58</sup> Misa Ai'i and his brother, Nanai Faitala and sister Vaega'au Ivara.

<sup>59</sup> Nanai Gagaifo

<sup>60</sup> The 'four' refer to Tuisau'a, Sa'ula, Tologata, Ti'eti'e an Va'atu'itu'I according to Methodist Church in Samoa, 1985. *O le Tusi Fa'alupega o Samoa Atoa*, Apia, Methodist Printing Press, 44.

Fines are levied and normally paid in cash or kind. In terms of banishment or *fa'ate'a*, there are at least three types. In all cases, the stipulated period of banishment is never specified. *Afioga tutasi* are deemed irreversible, and punishments range from monetary fines to banishment. To add insult to injury, members wishing to be reinstated to their homes are required to feed the village council and provide gifts of cash and kind.

### Three types of banishment

1. *Tua ma le faigannu'u* or non-participation from village governance. The individual may continue to live in the village but without participation in village affairs.
2. *Tua ma le nu'u* or behind the village, implying removal from the village.
3. The more serious kind is invariably called, *mu le foaga, soloa ma le 'aufuefue* or *ati ma le lau*, – immediate departure of family from the village, property is appropriated, slashed and burnt.<sup>61</sup> Associated with this form of banishment is an erasure of identity from memory, and any evidence of the person's material existence.

There is another aspect, a very serious one, of the *afioga tutasi*, which is often overlooked. While the process of decision-making is ideally done through consensus among clan heads, once reached, obedience is expected. The subject of the decision is deemed to have no right of appeal. If the individual wishes to apply for reinstatement at a later date, the request is made through intermediaries, but it is not an automatic right. Once a decision to banish is reached by clan heads, whether right or wrong, obedience is expected almost immediately. Often, the decision to banish without any substantive deliberation is taken for the purpose of removing the 'heat' and lessening the tensions, and to provide the council with an opportunity to deliberate under relaxed conditions. However, if the subject disobeys, which in many cases is rare, refusal is taken as an offense and a challenge to the council's authority. The banishment takes on a new complexion and escalates to the subject's non-recognition of authority, and action is taken on this challenge rather than the original charge. The consequences are incarceration, wasting of property and possibly physical assault and/or death.

---

<sup>61</sup> G. Milner 1966. *Samoan Dictionary*, OUP: London. P.26. 1. pull up (by the roots). Similar meanings are also conveyed in other villages through the phrases *soloa ma le aufuefue* and *Mu o le foaga*. The latter is used in Salamumu. Pers. comm. Le'aula Aneteru, 12 June 1999.

### **Censorious oration of decisions – afioga tutasi**

Afioga tutasi<sup>62</sup> decisions are delivered in strong languages, authoritarian language, and a tone bordering on intimidation. Here is an example from the banishment of the current Tama-a- 'Aiga Tuimaleali'ifano titleholder after he stood and lost the 2001 elections against the fautuaga –advice of 'Aiga Taua'ana & Falelatai.

*Tulouna le Maota ma le Suafa Tuimaleali'ifano A o 'oe Va'aleto'a Eti, ua fa'ate'a! Tula'I ese nei mai le afioga o 'Aiga. Alu i sou itu taulagi e fai ai lou faitalia. Ae o le asō lava, e le silia. O fea o I ai le fautua pua'aelo lea na fautuaina le Tama'aiga? E sa, pau a lea na o 'Aiga [Taua'ana] e pulea le latou tama. E fautua e 'Aiga [Taua'ana] le latou tama. O fea se taimi, o fea se tausaga e toe tafa ai le tofa a 'Aiga [Taua'ana], e fa'apena ona toe felogoga'i.*

(“With due respect to the residence and title Tuimaleali'ifano, you, Va'aleto'a Eti, you have been banished! Get out from the residence of the political family [Taua'ana]. Go somewhere else and please yourself, from today, no later. Where is the stinking swine who counseled the Tama'aiga? It is forbidden, only 'Aiga [Taua'ana] can counsel their tama. As to what time, in a year or whenever the 'Aiga Taua'ana so deem appropriate, we shall determine further.”)<sup>63</sup>

### **Church organizations in Falelatai**

The single most important factor reinforcing traditional authority is perhaps the churches; in the case of Falelatai, it is the Protestant Congregational Christian Church (CCC), and to a lesser extent the Catholic Church. The CCC churches are located in Matautu, Pata and Si'ufaga. Regular village-wide gatherings rally around church activities, such as preparation for the *fonotele* (annual general meetings), and fund-raising. The churches are perhaps the single most influential institution in the village apart from the village council itself. Village councils control the churches and have the power to fine villagers who do not attend church services or start another church without village council sanction. Village council office, and being a senior church elder or deacon, or parish catechist or sector leader serves

---

<sup>62</sup> Afioga is a salutation reserved for titular leaders. Tutasi connoted consensus and unanimity.

<sup>63</sup> See Tuimaleali'ifano, 2001. Words to similar effect would've been used for the banishment from Lufilufi of Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi in late 2010 over an incident regarding the erection of a house in the Maota of Mulinu'u ma Sepolataemo in Lufilufi.

mutually self-serving purposes. The chair of the village council is rotated among the head clans and the chair almost invariably becomes the spokesman on behalf of the church, pastor and parish priest.

### **Matautu village council vs Misa Gaga'e son of Misa Li'a**

This case traces the history of, and demonstrates how custom is created and re-created within the nexus of local practice - agaifanua and aganu'u – universal custom.

The case concerns a banishment issued in February, 2011, and before implementation the matter was referred to the Land and Titles Court. The case was heard on March, 2011. The incident can be summed in three stages:

1. A banishment order was issued by the Village Council in February 2011 to an individual matai.
2. The individual matai disobeys the order and resigns himself to his fate which is unleashing the untitled men – the *'aumaga* – to enforce the council decision.
3. Before enforcement, the Village Council decides to refer its decision to the Land and Titles Court.

The court proceedings and ruling forms the remaining discussion of this paper.

In March, 2011, Misa Gaga'e and family were the subject of an *afioga tutasi*, banishment. Instead of seeking refuge in the Land and Titles Court via an interim order which would have allowed the court to intervene and investigate the justification of the banishment, Misa Gaga'e stayed in the village with his family, thereby challenging the Council authority.

Unlike previous Council decisions, the Village Council did a remarkable thing. Instead of taking the law into its own hands, it referred its decision to the Court.

What was Misa Gaga'e's alleged offence?

### **Misa Gaga'e's alleged offence**

The cause of the banishment can be traced to a difference among the women of Sā Misā or the clan of the Misa family.

On Sunday evening, on 20 February 2011, the *falelua* or wives of the Sa Misa clan met to discuss the state of their financial affairs. The chair was Talalelei Misa, the wife of the head of the Sa Misa clan, held at the time by Misa Paepaele. At the meeting, the women were surprised by Talalelei's announcement that she had decided to resign from the chair on the grounds that she was returning to her natal family village. She gave no reason for the sudden departure, but it was widely known that there was a strong difference of opinion between her, and one of her husband's child from a previous marriage. This domestic apparently flared up on the morning of that Sunday in which the meeting was held.<sup>64</sup> At the meeting, members attempted to dissuade Talalelei from her decision to resign, and when they failed, the members agreed on another of their member to continue as alternative chair. The replacement chair was Fofoga, the wife of Misa Gaga'e. The women then adjourned and decided to reconvene on Tuesday 22 February. Two days later, they met and were surprised to see Talalelei sitting at the *matuatala* – the chair's place. Before the meeting, the women berated Talalelei for this sudden turn of events. This led to a consternation within the Sa Misa clan over the next three days.

Four days later, a meeting was called by the Village Council chair on Saturday 26 February. The Council chair was held by Anae Laumei. In addition to being the head of the Sa Anae clan, he also held the Misa title (and thus under the jurisdiction of Misa Paepaele as the head of the Sa Misa clan). He was also a serving judge of the powerful Land and Titles Court and served as Deputy President. The conspicuous purpose of the meeting was to resolve the row among the women of Sa Misas. At the Council meeting, Fofoga's husband, Misa Gaga'e was instructed by his clan head, Misa Paepaele not to attend but to send his wife Fofoga.

---

<sup>64</sup> Words used by Fofoga Misa Gaga'e, *ona o se latou va ma alo matutua o Misa Paepaele* – on account of relationships between her and older children of Misa Paepaele (i.e. her step children). In an earlier statement in response to questions by the Judges, Talalelei admitted having quarreled with one of her children over the way 'her' child was treated. The assumptions here are, 1, the child she quarreled with was one of her step child and the child over which they argued was presumably Talalelei's child from Misa Paepaele.



At the Council meeting, it was reported that the only person that spoke was the council chair.<sup>65</sup> In his speech, he claimed that Fofoga<sup>66</sup> had uttered the following statements:

1. Misa is the king of the village
2. Misa's children are Anae and Nanai
3. Misa should be first in everything

Furthermore, Anae claimed these words were uttered by her under the guidance of her husband, Misa Gaga'e.<sup>67</sup>

Throughout Anae's speech, Fofoga was not asked to respond to the allegations leveled against her and her husband. It was also alleged that none of the other three clan heads (Nanai Taulia, Misa Paepaelele and Sila Talatonu) spoke.

By the end of that day, the Council decided to banish Misa Gaga'e and his family.

The terms of Misa Gaga'e's banishment were stated by another titleholder of the Anae family<sup>68</sup> in the following way:

1. *Ia ta le 4 I le afiafi, ia se'e ese ma le maota.* By 4.00pm, you should move out from the residence.
2. *E iai se taimi e tafa ai le finagalo o aiga, ona toe logo atu lea I se aso.* When a time comes, when aiga has satisfied itself, you will be informed of the day and time.

Despite the banishment order, Misa Gaga'e held his ground. Misa's resolve must have been strengthened by a meeting of Sa Misa clan scheduled for 14 March. The main item was to scrutinise the Misa clan head's handling of the row among the women of their clan. Under examination, the clan head responded that the alleged offending words arose out of an exchange of words between his wife, Talalelei and Nana, the wife of Anae Pita Laumei. Dissatisfied with the outcome of the Council decision, the clan members

---

<sup>65</sup> Submission by Misa Gaga'e, 18 March 2011, pp. 5. Anae was previously known as Misa Pita before he was titled Anae.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* And Se'ela, the wife of Misa Galo.

<sup>67</sup> Submission by 'Aiga Tauoa'ana (sic), undated, pp. 3.

<sup>68</sup> Anae Toni as note taker during the court proceedings.

unanimously stripped Misa Paepaetele of his position as clan head and appointed another holder of the Misa title, Misa Lamoni as clan head.<sup>69</sup>

Upon hearing that Misa Gaga'e had refused to heed the Council decision, the Council chair dispatched a second delegation to Misa Gaga'e's residence to reiterate the Council decision. Again, Misa held his ground. Despatching the young men seemed inevitable. Before unleashing the might of the village, on 14 March, it deferred its decision to the Land and Titles Court. The reasons for this turn of event are unclear, but events of the recent past are worth recollecting. The banishment of Tariu Tuivaeti in 1980 led to the latter suing the Matautu Village Council for trespassing on his family land in the village, willful damage to property, intimidation, conspiracy to hurt him and his family, and for compensation for loss of earning from his plantation, and Village Council boycott of his buses. For ten years, Tariu had worked in New Zealand and saved enough to return and set up a transport business. He also had a good sense of the law. In January 1981, the Court ruled in favour of Tariu, and the Council was fined \$11,520.<sup>70</sup> Another element that led to the deferral was the evident dissatisfaction emerging from within the Sa Misa clan over the way its clan leader handled Misa Paepaetele the matter. Its displeasure was reflected in the sudden change of clan head to Misa Lamoni. Four days later on 18 March, the Court convened to hear the Village Council's petition to banish Misa Gaga'e.

### **Court hearing and outcome**

Before proceedings started, the role of spokesman for the Village Council as the petitioning party needed clarification due to a conflict of interest. Since the Council chair and head of the petitioning party was also Deputy President of the Land and Titles Court, it was decided to transfer the spokesperson to the next most senior Council member, Nanai Taulia. Once cleared, Judge Va'aelua Rimoni Va'aelua began proceedings with the nature and character of *afioga tutasi* or the Falelatai Village Council decision-making process.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Due to Misa Paepaetele's 'fale'ula'ua'I tala' or storytelling, clan members appointed Misa Lamoni as replacement.

<sup>70</sup> M. Meleisea, 1987. *The Making of Modern Samoa, traditional authority and colonial administration in the modern history of Western Samoa*, USP, 214-220.

<sup>71</sup> The panel included Seve Alo Panapa Ve'e as Deputy President, Lelafu T. Taua'a and Tofa Eteuati Tofa as Assessors, and Maiava Nafatail and Va'aelua Rimoni Va'aelua as Judges. All cross examined the witnesses on important aspects of the case. Va'aelua's line of questions was most pertinent to the nature of the *afioga tutasi*.

## **Nanai Taulia, spokesperson for Matautu village council and petitioning party**

Va'aelua Rimoni Va'aelua (VRV): *O le a le uiga o le afioga tutasi?* What is the meaning of afioga tutasi?

Nanai Taulia (NT): *O lone uiga o se fa'ai'uga ua tutasi iai ali'I matutua. O le fa'ai'uga lea ua ta'u o le afioga tutasi e tu loa le to'oto'o ma le fa'ai'uga, ia usita'ia loa.*

The Afioga tutasi is the outcome of a deliberation by the Council and, once a consensus is reached, the decision is conveyed through the to'oto'o (speakers), and it must be respected and obeyed immediately.

VRV: *E tusa pe sa'o pe sese le fa'ai'uga?* Even if the decision is right or wrong?

NT: *O le na lava, e tusa lava pe sa'o pe sese.* Yes, that is correct, whether the decision is right or wrong.

VRV: *I lou lava talitonuga, pe sa'o pe sese le afioga tutasi, o se mea amiotonu lea mea?* In your personal opinion, even if the afioga tutasi is right or wrong, is this act, a just act?

NT: *I lo'u lava talitonuga, e leai. E le amiotonu.* In my personal belief, no. It is not just.

VRV: *E le amiotonu?* It is not just?

NT: *Leai, e le amiotonu.* No. It is not just.

## **Misa Gaga'e**

VRV: *Ana e usita'ia le fa'ai'uga, pe mata e le mafai ona toe fa'aa'e mai oe I se taimi?* Assuming you obeyed the afioga tutasi, could you not be reinstated at some point?

MG: *E mafai ona o'u usita'ia. Ae o le mea na o'u le usita'ia ai, ua o'u iloa lava, e le toe fa'aa'ea a'u I se taimi vave pe a tu pea Anae Laumei I le tofi ta'ita'ifono. Onte manatu o le 10 tausaga e o'o I le fa'avavau e le toe fa'aa'ea maia o a'u. O lea na o'u malie ai lava, a o'u maliu lava I lo'u fale, ua o'u malie ai lava, 'ana ua tele mea ua faia*

*e le ta'ita'ifono e fa'asaga ia te a'u ma lo'u aiga.*

I could have obeyed. But I knew that as long as Anae Laumei remains as chair of the Council, my banishment could be for 10e years or more. This is why I remained. I was satisfied to die in my house because the Council chair has done a lot of things against me and my family.

VRV: Ae a pe ana fa'apea, e fa'ate'a loa 'oe, ona e aumaia loa lea o le mata'upu I le fa'amasinoga? How about when the banishment decision was made and then you lodge the matter in court?

MG: E le mafaia ona o'u aumaia lo'u nu'u I le fa'amasinoga. O a'u o le Falelatai 'auuliuli, ou te le mafaia ona faia lea mea ona ou te alofa I lo'u nu'u. Ana le aumaia e le nu'u le mataupu, e leai lenei fa'amasinoga. O le mea moni e ta'u atu, ele mafaia ona o'u aumaia lo'u nu'u pele e fa'amaasiasi I le fa'amasinoga.

I cannot bear bringing my village to court. I am a Falelataian patriot, and if the Village Council did not raise this matter, there would be no court case. Honestly, I tell you. I cannot bear bringing my village and humiliate them before the Court.

### **The Court's decision on Friday 25 March 2011**

The Court took one week to reach a decision, and it:

1. Reaffirmed the value of the Village Fono Act of 1990.
2. *E fa'atauaina lave e le Fa'amasinoga le Pulega mamalu a Ali'I ma Fai'pule ....Peita'I e le mafai fo'I ona fa'agaloina I le va'ai a le tulafono ile aia tatau ma le sa'olotoga o tagata ta'ito'atasi.*

The Court emphasises the importance of the Village Council system of governance, stating the law depends on their support and cooperation. At the same time, the Court could not ignore individual rights.<sup>72</sup>

3. *E talia gata e le fa'amasinoga le mau a le Aiga Tauoa'ana ma Falelatai, e fa'apea, 'o le afioa tutasi pe sese pe sa'o, e leai se tali ae alu gugu.*

---

<sup>72</sup> Paragraph 19, p., 5.

The Court finds it difficult to accept the opinion of the Aiga Taua'ana and Falelatai that 'the afioga tutasi, whether right or wrong, no one can respond but to leave.'<sup>73</sup>

- a. Na fesiligia le itu [Tagi] ile amiotonu o le afioga tutasi I le sa'o po'o le sese 'aua ne'I fesiligia. O le tali mai a Nanai Taulia le ta'ita'I, e le amiotonu.'

The Court asked the petitioning party on the justice of the afioga tutasi whether it was right or wrong that there should be no right of reply. In the response from Nanai Taulia as head of the petitioning party, 'It is not just'.<sup>74</sup>

- b. Ole manatu a le fa'amasinoga ile fa'ai'uga a le fono ia Misa Gaga'e, ua matuia ma e le talafeagai.

The Court is of the opinion that the decision against Misa Gaga'e and his wife was harsh and inappropriate.<sup>75</sup>

- c. Ua te'ena e le fa'amasinoga le tagi a le 'Aiga Taua'ana ma Falelatai.

The Court rejects the petition by the 'Aiga Taua'ana and Falelatai.<sup>76</sup>

From the available evidence,<sup>77</sup> no witnesses had been sought, or evidence provided regarding the utterance of the alleged offending words. Attempts by the petitioner to attribute these words to Fofoga and her husband Misa Gaga'e were not pursued by the Court. The fundamental concern shown by the Court was the decision-making process of the Village Council. The alleged exchanges of offensive words were ignored by the Court, but may point to long-standing tensions within the clan of Sa Anae itself, and the way these clan tensions have spilled over and impacted other clans. The tensions and ramifications may well be reflected in the governance agenda of the village council.

---

<sup>73</sup> Paragraph 21, pp., 6.

<sup>74</sup> Paragraph 21, pp., 6.

<sup>75</sup> Paragraph 22.

<sup>76</sup> Court decision LC11644 dated 25 March 2011.

<sup>77</sup> The evidence includes copies of submissions by Aiga Tauoa'ana (sic) and Misa Gaga'e, the Land and Titles Court judgment of LC11644 and attending Court proceedings on 18 March 2011 in Mulinu'u.

## **Conclusion**

Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection provides a useful reminder that customs are human constructs which we create to serve a particular purpose. Human beings are creators, rather than servants of custom. What is often lacking is the courage to remind ourselves of this basic natural human law.

In the evolution of universal custom, it would seem that local practices continuously influence, if not always transform custom. Whether we as villagers or city dwellers realise it or not, this process occurs regularly. While the source of local practices has not been clearly examined in the case of Samoa, we may safely presume that its origin derives from families and villages. But as this case shows, the source is diverse, perhaps as a combination of various factors, which in this case includes the 1981 Court judgement, and knowledge of the law in the present. The local practice – deferral to the court - that seemed unique to Matautu Council stems from a better understanding of the law, plus the suffering as a consequence of not following the law.

But in the context of modern constitutional democracies, the practice that the Council adopted before the execution of its customary practice is a universal custom; namely, a person is deemed innocent until proven guilty. Whether this universal Western custom is transformed into universal council custom remains to be seen. What this case makes clear is the relevance of external exposure to the injection of new ideas and technology as a source of local practices. Both Tariu and Anae had lived and worked in New Zealand before returning to Samoa. Anae's exposure and experience as Deputy President of the Land and Titles Court goes some way to explain the phenomenon of the transnational fa'amatai in operation. Tariu was a non-titled man who returned to Samoa after ten years to assume a matai title. Due to objections from other family members, he did not succeed to the title, and his savings and business acumen were jettisoned by the banishment, and he eventually moved to Apia. In the case of Anae, a matai and Council chair, his decision to defer to the Court makes apparent the lessons of the past, and the likely consequences if the past is ignored. When the Court found in favour of Misa Gaga'e, the village and its Council was spared further humiliation.

The nexus between local practice and universal custom is in constant flux. What is universal custom in one context – obtaining Court endorsement before enforcement - may become a local practice in Matautu.

A follow-up inquiry on whether subsequent Council decisions on banishment were subjected to Court endorsement continues. It may also clarify whether the nexus between local and universal is both portable and viable in the short to long term. Of further interest, is whether the phenomenon of transnational fa'amatai as beneficiaries of exposure to international contexts can adapt, and apply the nexus inside village authority systems and in the diaspora.

I acknowledge with gratitude important input from Leasiolagi Malama Meleisea, Nanai Misa 'Aiono Taulia, Va'afusuaga Toleafoa Puleiata Eli, Serge Tcherkezoff and Elvis Patea. The shortcomings of the paper are mine.

### References

- Fa'amasinoga o Fanua ma Suafa Samoa, 25 Mati 2011. LC 11644. E uiga I le faatulaiesing o Misa Gagae' ma long faletua mai le nuu o Falelati po'o le afoaga o Aiga ma Tuimalealiifano ma Falelati, Seve Alo Panapa Vee, Sui Peresetene et al.
- Huffer, E., and So'o, A., 2000. *Governance in Samoa: Pulega i Sāmoa*. Huffer E, So'o, A. (eds) Canberra: Asia Pacific Press; Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.
- Meleisea, M., 1987. *The Making of Modern Samoa, traditional authority and colonial administration in the modern history of Western Samoa*. Suva: University of the South Pacific.
- Methodist Church in Samoa, 1985. *O le Tusi Fa'alupega o Samoa Atoa*. Apia: Methodist Printing Press.
- Milner, G., B., 1966. *Samoa Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Samoa Observer*, 6 April 2011.
- Shore, B., 1982. *Sala'ilua, A Samoan Mystery*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Tuimaleali'ifano, A., M., 'Aia Tatau ma Afioga Tutasi: Aiga versus Tama a 'Aiga, manipulation of old and new practices, an MP for Falelati and Samatau in Samoa's, 2001. Elections: Human Rights versus Village lineage, *The Journal of Pacific History*, V36 (3): 317-325.
- Tuimaleali'ifano, A., M., 1997. 'Aganu'u ma Agaifanua Fa'a Samoa: Custom and Usage in Samoa, a history and process of a tama'aiga title dispute in Falelati,' PhD thesis, the University of the South Pacific.
- Tuimalealiifano, A., M., 2000. Talofa e 'Äiga, ua 'ai e lago le tofa! Village Governance and Development in Falelati. In Huffer E and So'o A. 2000.

- Governance in Samoa: Pulega i Sāmoa. Huffer E, So'o, A. (eds) Canberra: Asia Pacific Press; Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific. 171–187 Tuimaleali'ifano, A. M 2001  
Tuimaleali'ifano in Huffer and So'o 2000: 171-187.
- Tuimaleali'ifano, A., M., 2006. O Tama a Aiga: *The Politics of Succession to Samoa's Paramount Titles*, Suva, the University of the South Pacific.

**Websites**

- <http://www.networkcultures.net/47-48-49/Local%20Practices.html>  
accessed 25 Nov. 2019.
- <https://www.sbs.gov.ws/digi/1-Preliminary%20count%20report%202016.V2.pdf> accessed 22 Nov. 2019.



## 5 CHAPTER

### **LOTO ALOFA MA LIMA MALOSI (AFFECTIVE AND EFFECTIVE TIES OF MATAI)**

#### **Introduction**

The contributors to this Chapter are members of the Newton PIPC (Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church) and are among the first New Zealand-born and raised generation of Samoans in New Zealand. The Newton PIPC was the first Pacific ethnic church to be established in New Zealand, in 1947 (Anae, 1998). So, within that church or community we have the first pioneer generation of Samoans in New Zealand who became matai while sojourned in New Zealand. The contributors in this Chapter share their experiences as first generation New Zealand born-matai. Their transnational faamatai experiences have been described as 'Lima malosi ma loto alofa' to have strong hands and a loving heart' (Anae, 1998) described by Anae as effective action driven by strong affective ties.

#### **Reference**

Anae, M., 1998. Fofoa-i-vao-ese: The identity journeys of NZ-born Samoans. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland.

## **A MODERN MATAI: RECONCILING MODERN KNOWLEDGE WITH ANCIENT WISDOM**

**Papalii Dr Failautusi Avegalio**

My experience as a matai in the United States, i.e., Hawaii, has been as much about a renaissance of cultural (re) affirmation as it was an academic journey that shaped and influenced my beliefs, assumptions, world view, and ultimately, my behavior as a modern Samoan matai living outside the boundaries of the Samoan Archipelago. With the backdrop of Western leadership philosophy bolstered by a lexicon of individuality, confidence, assertiveness, power and authority, the contrast of the faamatai and its collective orientation clashed inexorably with the individualistic assumptions of my university field of instruction, until time enabled me to overcome the dilemma by creating a third option with value added. Much had to do with the ability to distinguish the difference between form and essence, understanding the difference between what is important and what is meaningful, and not letting knowledge (palagi knowledge) outrun wisdom (Samoan wisdom) in all that I do. By taking the best of both worlds and discarding the negatives, a value added third option can be created with a basis for adoption, effectiveness and growth. I'm a recovering academic. Most of work is in my field of Pacific business and project work. I lecture when I can, but demands in the region are compelling.

I'd like to share a perspective I have on the famaatai, especially transnational matai. We are often led to feel inadequate or lacking when people hear that "Oh you're gonna have this title" or "somebody selected you", and the first thing you are hammered with is "You can't even speak Samoan...You know...Where's your oratorical skills?" And then when you have a tatau they say, "Aua e le tatau lou guku e muamua". Things like this. And so, you are almost constantly inundated with these negative feelings. I don't think it's really mean-hearted. I think some people have a strong sense of the sacred. Perhaps it's a lot more sacred than what we think it is. And so, I took a critical look at myself. And along my journey I was able to distinguish after several years at the University – my field of study is Organisational Systems, Theory and Development - so I'm very much into the abstract, and I take a look at Western business and economic development, their models, their designs and their systems, and then the rationale behind that. So, then I discovered something really interesting that I wasn't aware of.

I was in a world where people see the world as a machine. Where there is linear thinking – it’s called ‘monochronic perspectives’. So, everything is machine-like. It’s rational. But I come from a world which is ‘polychronic’ - this means that my world is more circular; it’s more holistic. I don’t see parts, I see relationships. The world is moving in this direction if it’s not there already, and yet many of us are still caught in the old paradigm (see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. 1962). It’s an excellent book on why people think the way that they do. So, there I was dealing with the machine paradigm. But I don’t belong here [in the Samoan world], unless I learn. Where did I learn it? Guess what, of all places, I learned it from my mother. I had no idea that she had been preparing me, all of this time, until the very moment I was asked “You need to come home...ua faatali le aiga (the family is waiting for you). My response was “No I can’t go”. She would say “No, please come”. That’s where the determination from a mother emerged – responsibility to be a leader and having a sense of vision. If you have that vision, it’s something to fully cherish and to develop.

Let me give you an example. In the Business School, in our most successful businesses, our executives say, “The executive must have a sense of vision”. So, I said, “Well, how does that relate to me?” My mother told me something about *i’ike*. I’d never heard of *i’ike*. It’s an intuitive sense. You can sense things that are not readily apparent to others, but it’s amazing and often we attribute *i’ike* to the great navigators. How did they find the way over thousands of miles when there are no markers? It’s this intuitive ability. I had no idea what it was, but it helped to explain how I felt sometimes. Have you ever felt that something was going to happen and then it happens? Well, among our people in the stories that I have heard, it’s a very, very real part of leaders. And so, this sense of *i’ike* or this intuitive trait makes for successful business practices.

In terms of relationships in the *faasamoa*, in terms of leadership, in terms of effectiveness, there are four *tofā*s that my mother drilled into my head that now guide my life and everything that I do. The first *tofa* is *tofa faamaulalo*. Regardless of who you meet, whether they’re high or low, you engage with humility, followed by the next *tofa*, *tofa faaaloalo*. You engage with humility, and you embrace with respect, followed by the third *tofa*, *tofa alofa*, you engage with humility, you embrace with respect, and you sustain with love. My mother ran that through me ever since I was a kid, so I didn’t really need this great academic proclamation from the Business School about being a successful executive? But then there is a fourth *tofa*. So, my mum

said, “Sometimes, when the three tofa or stars are in line, you will get to where you need to go. But sometimes the tofa is disjointed. The tofa humility is over there, the love’s up there, and the respect is somewhere else”. And she said “when this happens, when there’s inconsonance or tension....the fourth tofa is the tofa faamagalō – the wisdom of forgiveness. And then the process is repeated. And oftentimes, she used to say that the wisdom of forgiveness means you need to forgive yourself first. You may have done something, whatever; she said it doesn’t matter. But if you can’t forgive yourself, you can’t forgive others. So, forgive yourself, forgive the others and then you engage with humility etc. When those four tofa or stars are aligned, you will get to where you need to go.

So, another [business/executive] attribute I learnt about was performance - the ability to catalyse, the ability to motivate people – the people in the staff, the organisation, the company. Whatever organisation it is, if you have performance, then you’re dealing with people, and so I was thinking, well how does that relate to my Samoanness? It’s really simple. It’s alofa. I saw demonstrations of that all my life, watching my mother treat her relatives *osi aiga*, doing *faalavelave*. Where’s my mum when we have people? She’s in the kitchen, cooking, so always; and I realised that she had generated so much respect and love with other people, that it had inspired others to treat others the same. So, it goes on and on. And there’s one thing that is really important to know. That alofa can actually help the blind see and the deaf hear. They can feel it. It’s that compelling.

So, you have these four tofas, and then coming down to actual performance. One of the best examples I like to give is when I isolated what I thought was separate from the other, but they’re actually the same thing – just called different names. So, what I was looking at was the difference between traits and skills. Skills is the ability to talk, the ability to do things physically, as a matai that can be visually observed – to stand, the poise, delivery of eloquent oratory. These are all skills. Very important to know and differentiate. You can learn skills. But traits are like *i’ike* – tofa, *loto alofa* - these are intangible. So, when you feel inadequate, there’s no reason to. Because what you are feeling inadequate about, as I felt, was inadequate at the skills level, and I mistook the skills for the traits - the character traits that are so fundamental to producing a good matai. A good human being for all of that matter.

So, I'm concerned because we have a lot of young people who want to do faasamoa, who want to serve, and they want to correct or improve upon our way of life. But they are ashamed because they don't have the skills. Well perhaps we're looking in the wrong place, perhaps what we need to be looking at is traits. How many of you have dealt with highly skilful traditional leaders who lack the traits? So, we start with "You know my family wants me to be a matai" Well good. What do you feel in your heart? That's where it begins. So, I had no idea, I was being prepared by my mother to be a matai ever since I was a kid. And for many of you, so have you. Don't deny it, to me as well as others the responsibility to accept a title if you know you can contribute to improving the quality of life for your family, your village and your country. We need to diminish the issue of skills. I'm not saying it shouldn't be important, of course they're important, but you can continuously improve, you learn, every day you learn a bit more, but what you were born with is the foundation, the gift, the gift of responsibility.

If you want to be successful, these are important things. First, performance with *loto alofa* – very important to distinguish. There's a difference between being a good leader. Good leaders are good. They have the knowledge, skills and abilities and the experience to align systems, goals, strategies, etc. But great leaders heal. The word for improving what I've always heard from my mother is *Fofo le fitauli* (massage the fitauli). How do you massage a machine? But in the industrial world, that paradigm where everything is machine-like, where you have to think rationally; there has to be a sequence where we can 'fix the problem'. Did you ever go to see a Doctor, and the Doc says 'Let's see if we can fix the problem?' That's part of that paradigm that we are all involved in and that we need to be aware of.

Our paradigm is a 'living organism' paradigm. A classic example is that the *loto alofa* doesn't end with human to human relationships. My mother explained to me what happened to my *pute* (belly button). She said "Well when you were born, we removed your *pute* and then we buried it". "You buried it? You mean it died?". She said "No. We buried it", and she showed me the place in our village where she buried it. I could never make sense of why she buried it there, or what the significance is. Now I know what it is. In our form of communications, we communicate through allusion, allegory, or metaphor, because these are the linguistic tools that create meaning. They privilege kinship relationships, and they also embrace the essence of the sacredness of the other. So, this is our language, and of course some of my colleagues say, "Well you know" (they are very subjected by the machine

metaphor) – “Yea but how do you quantify that? If it’s not measurable I’m not so sure that that has any kind of validity”. And I said “Really, why”? They said, “Because if it’s not rational, it cannot be fixed”. I am saying that what my mother shared with me is that I now know I have two mothers.

The pute buried in the ground metaphorically connects me to my Earth Mother. So, I have two mothers – my biological mother, and Papa - my Earth Mother. It’s no accident that the word eleele and palapala mean blood. Fanua means placenta, and ma’a comes from fatu ma’a – the heart. We know it’s a living entity, and so connecting me metaphorically to the Earth, connects me to the Earth. So, it’s my responsibility to see to the beauty, the health, the welfare and the security of not only my biological mother, but my Earth mother too. Where are we when we look at the environment? If you don’t see your mother, then you need to find where your puke is buried. It will help you. It changes your paradigm.

If we continue to see the way I have been trained professionally to see things rationally, I think I would have missed so much of the beauty that I now embrace, that I now see with great wonder. So, an interesting study that recognises the significance of the intangible and how it’s related to i’ike would be like having an innate intuition. This i’ike is so much a part of all of us. It’s there; it’s a matter of cultivating it, strengthening it, and making it even stronger. If there are those that still doubt that science is not the cornerstone of all knowledge and wisdom and everything else, I’d like to quote something that is sometimes attributed to probably the greatest intellectual, scientific mind of the modern era – Albert Einstein - and he said “The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift” (Einstein in Barbato, 2005: 636).

The point is, there is so much we don’t know, but what we do know is that there are those who have profound I’ike that have been able to see far beyond what we can, and who have reported back. What they report back to my satisfaction is nothing new, but new to the other world but it reaffirms our world. That we are part, one and the same.

I was asked to come home to Samoa. They were going to organise a saofai for me and I had no idea – I’m on the other side of the world, I was doing work in Saipan, Palau and Guam, I got a call and my aunt says “Ua fai le saugi...” I was trying to tell my Dad that “I’m pretty tied up right now...”

But anyway, my aunt called me and she said that my mother wants this. But when this happened my mother had passed away. And that's why I said okay. I flew to Pago, over to Upolu, caught that boat over to Sapapalii, and met all my relatives, and I don't think I drank so much beer in a long time. But that's how that started. But I was again, feeling a little inadequate – I didn't have any skills – and just like what my mother had shared with me – the elders of my family said the same thing “It's already in you”. And being able to differentiate skills and traits, I'm now at peace with myself. I'm not that good on my skills but I tell you what, I still have a few years; I'll keep practising it and I'll get better and better. But I have traits – I have the tofa. And this is the bedrock of me being a Samoan, and a good matai, and a good servant.

So, there are four things - So how do you know you are an effective matai? Or an effective anything? For me, if you're going to be an effective leader...If you can respond in the affirmative – You're there.

Are the children well fed and healthy? This is the first important question that you must ask yourself. If you're in the village and the answer is yes, then that means the plantations are intact and everybody is working well. The process for producing food and feeding the children and there's more than enough – Then it's all intact. If they're not. You'd better investigate. Something is not connecting. We've got some problems.

I used to think that the most valuable thing in the world was money. Again, it's my mom. O le ola ma le malosi – This is real wealth. If you have that, everything else is possible. So quit focussing so much on trying to get a new car, but take care of your health, take care of your life, and the life of others that depend on you.

This is really important. As a matai, or as a community leader or leader of a country, you must ask this question. Are our elders being treated with love and respect? There's nothing more heart-breaking than seeing an elderly person, sitting outside waiting for something to eat. This must never happen to your aiga and to our people. There are tools. Because I'm in Hawaii I have access to tools and skills to help address these issues. The same kinds of tools that we can share with our matai in Samoa.

The last question – This is huge “Are our women and children living without fear?” I'm shocked with the domestic violence, the sexual abuse of children. All these things seem to be hidden off and yet we see it constantly coming back. It takes moral courage to do the right thing. That one saying

resonates with everybody 'In order for evil to triumph, good men do nothing.' So, you can sit and watch and be part of the problem by not saying anything, but this is a question that is very important. This also means that our women should not fear to improve themselves, to move on. Go after those degrees, become executives, and we need to support that. Women matai – To me that's a no-brainer. The key is ability not gender and we've got some amazing women. That's a much more amplified sense of commitment and conviction because I have 4 grand-daughters.

And the fourth one 'Are we living in harmony and respect with Mother Nature?'

The projects I am working on in the Pacific have to do with this issue. Over 70% of deaths in the Pacific are due to non-communicable diseases. The leading causes - diabetes and obesity. I'm shocked; it's not in every pulpit every Sunday – that Government leaders are not putting it in the press that the Government will move and deal with this. This is growing; so, what can we do? Tautua mamao. I am with the largest university in the Pacific, and we have a lot of resources. And the one resource that can deal with all this is Ulu, breadfruit flour can stop this. Kids will eat anything if they are familiar with it. It takes ages to change behaviour but just moments in the kitchen can change attitudes. This is amazing. The commercial opportunities around ulu are amazing. The pulu – the research on that – we are in the process of producing a bio-degradable plastic that is based on ulu sap; and for our work we are being recognised through national awards. So, use the tools you have wisely. Thank you very much.

### **Reference**

Barbato, M., 2005. Caring for the dying patient. In *Internal medicine journal*, 35(10), pp: 636-637.



## **PACIFIC ISLANDERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MATAI PERSONAL NZ-BORN/RAISED EXPERIENCES**

**Anae Lupematasila Lima Arthur Anae**

I am proud of my matai Titles, and strongly respect and support the faamatai. It has been the basis of fa'a Samoa that has held Samoan people together for thousands of years, and has progressed Samoa to where it is today governed by fa'aaloalo. However, I believe that the whole process of the splitting of matai Titles due to political manipulation, that is creating hundreds of additional Titles in order to gain votes, has severely compromised the fa'aaloalo and mana of the faamatai. Way back in our history, I'm sure that there was only one Titleholder for each Title; but today there are hundreds, maybe even thousands of Titles. So, what does all this mean in terms of respecting and valuing our Titles? One could almost say that in other Polynesian nations like Fiji and Tonga, there would be more respect for the Tu'itonga, or the Ratu because there is only one main Titleholder. Sometimes I feel like I'm just one person in a very large rugby team that's gone bankrupt.

Talofa and good afternoon. First thing I'm going to say is it's a brave Samoan who says he's an expert in Samoa, and I say that because the busiest place in Samoa is the Land and Titles Court, and that's because everybody thinks they're an expert in Samoa, and they go there and argue over the titles and lands; and so I'm always careful of how you speak and what you say to a Samoan group.

I remember that in 1999, when we got the Portability of Pensions through by the National Government, and I was wearing the ulafala, and I went down and then I put it on Jenny Shipley as the Prime Minister as an acknowledgement that she has acknowledged Pacific people by delivering Portability of Pensions policy. A couple of prominent Samoan matais in Wellington attacked me in saying I shouldn't have done it and I just told them: "Who do you think you are telling me what I'm going to do! I'm going to do it and that's it!" and so he backed away and ran and never ever said it again. But the thing is that this has concerned me for some time – that the matai system is sometimes used for politics. As you all know that in the past, if you didn't have a matai title you couldn't vote, and so Prime Ministers in

the past started to develop, and to extend matai titles throughout their families to ensure they were voted into Parliament. In my simple terms I call it the corruption of the Samoan matai system. Because when you look at Fiji, with the Ratu or Tongan Tu'i, or the Ariki in Rarotonga or Tahiti, they value them as one person leading that family. But when you have so many being titled, and you go to a saofa'i in Samoa and there's twenty people sitting for the Anae title - what's the value of it to me? What is the value of my title? So I want us to discuss this, because this is something we have to seriously look at to the future.

Then we talk about some of the young people shying away from accepting matai titles. They shy away because of fear. Of fear of what it's going to do to them financially, and the responsibilities, and if they are capable of handling that. The one that concerns me mostly today is the maliu, and how often we read in the paper "taofi le fa'asamoa". Now these are the New Zealand-born or the young generation fearful of how to handle a funeral done through fa'asamoa when other members of their family aren't around to help and guide them through. The maliu and fa'asamoa to me is probably the most important thing of our Samoan culture. It is our final farewell to whoever it is in our family and we should honour them and do it properly, and so I am concerned that I see this happening. If it's going to continue where will it be in the future? It will just die away, and today some of our people die, and all we do is we don't put it in the newspaper, we put it on radio Samoa; and if you're not listening to that radio Samoa, you don't even know that that person who may be meaningful to you has gone and then you find out a few weeks later. So those are the issues that I want to talk about, to bring to you to think seriously about. Because I'm very interested to see what the thinking of the people is about the way in which we have just gone ahead - which is proliferation of so many titles being broken down and every second person is a matai.

I'd just like to finalise by saying please, whatever we are doing in our fa'asamoa, value it, because if we don't value it we are devaluing it. That is something that is extremely important to us that we must value it. Our point of difference in this world is our matai system and the way we look after our families. I think I said to someone today: "the one thing you can go anywhere and wear and they will know automatically wherever you are your Samoan is your ulafala". Thank you.

### **Tuifa'asisina Eseta Iosia**

My name is Tuifa'asisina Eseta Iosia. I am 57 years of age, and a New Zealand-born Samoan. I am a female, and since the early 1990s, I was bestowed an Alii title Tuifa'asisina from the village of Faleasiu. This title was one of a few titles from my grandmother the late Leaupepe Peresia Peteru bloodline which had been dormant for a number of years and were then resurrected. At the time of me receiving the title there were only a few women holding titles and even less who were born outside of Samoa. It has been, and still is something I am proud to hold. The matai system is very important to the structure and life of Samoa – and integral to the identity, and also to being a Samoan. I believe that as a matai we can make changes for the better not only for our country Samoa but for our people, families, churches and communities.

I felt like I was going to be President of a country. First of all, God is good. All the time God is good. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Lupematasila Melani for giving me this opportunity and honouring me to be a speaker here today. I'm not an academic. I'm just a lay person and so I am honoured and happy to be able to share something about my journey as a matai. As you heard, my name is Tuifa'asisina Eseta Motofoua Iosia, and I'm always proud to use all my names in everything that I do because I honour the names. I honour Tuifa'asisina because it's a titled name from my grandfather. I honour Eseta because it's my grandmother on my father's side. I honour Motofoua because it's my grandmother on my mother's side, and I honour Iosia because it's my family name. So those who know me very well know that every time I speak, every opportunity that I get, I always share my name. Because I wear it as a badge of honour, and I'm proud to hold it up high in front of me not only on behalf of myself but my family.

In the 1950s and 60s, my parents migrated here from Samoa as individuals. They met, they married and they had a family. During that generation their primary function of coming here to New Zealand was to get a job, to get a better life and to finance the families back home in Samoa, and even to this day we as the next generation continue that journey for them. Right or wrong we've accepted that that is part of our life. I always hope that as a New Zealand born-Samoan, I can make a difference in that journey. That I can make a difference in how we can come about in helping our people back home. My family amongst many other Pacific families were one of the families that built on the foundation at PIC Newton. My parents

worked hard and tirelessly next to other immigrants to build our church to make it a place where our people, our communities from the Pacific Islands can come and start their journey here in New Zealand.

At the age of 17 I was able to become a Sunday school teacher. For the last twenty odd years I've been the current secretary of the combined Sunday school at my parish. I've endured every part of my journey as a teacher because I felt that I'd made a difference among the young people within our church. The late Reverend Leuatea Sio had a vision and that was to encourage young people especially those born in New Zealand to become leaders. To make a difference not only within the church but within the community and within their families. And I along with another female plus three others were honoured to be the first New Zealand born-youth to be elders within our parish. Reverend Sio had a vision that he could see that we were the future and we hope that to this day we as elders and I know that some of us are here today are able to make that difference. We've built upon what he built and the Ministers before them had started.

In the 1980s and 90s we received a call from Samoa, and in that time one of my cousins who was the only one that I knew was a female and she had received a title - Maiava from Faleasi'u. She rung and said that our families had met, and were looking for young people to become matais. At that time the only thing that I knew about a matai was that it was somebody who was a chief who sat in a village in Samoa and was served, and as soon as I heard that my mother asked me if I wanted to be a chief, and I could just see that I was going to be a princess. I was going to sit in a village and be served, but little did I know. But on a serious note, when my mother asked me whether or not I would like to be a matai, the first thing I thought was "oh but girls aren't matais". But I knew that this cousin of mine was, and I thought well if she's paved the way then maybe I can too. So, I accepted it. I went to Samoa. I had my saofa'i which was a very wonderful experience for me. I'd never been a part of anything like that. I'd read about it, I've heard about it, I've listened to my parents talk about it but I've never immersed myself into it. The one thing that I got out of that was the joy and the love that came together with my family. How proud my Aunties and Uncles and cousins were that I had come from New Zealand to be a matai. To be a leader within my family, not knowing then the journey that I will take in the next twenty plus years holding this matai title. I was so overjoyed. I was so proud because I was able to make my late grandfather happy and I was happy to make my mother proud of me that I was able to do something for the Peteru clan.

To this day my journey as a matai has been an experience. It's been a learning curve. I went in not knowing a lot and of course I'm not fluent in Samoan so I felt that maybe that would hold me back. But you know when I think about it, it never really did. I never allowed my lack of Samoan to hold me back to be a matai because I know that being a matai is to lead your people. It's to be a leader, to make a difference, to have an input in decision-making not only, within the family but within your village, within your community, within your church and within your workplace. I've had to do a lot of battles sometimes over the years with my matai title not so much with people but within myself. Because sometimes I felt that I didn't hold up to where I should be as a matai. I always made sure I attended weddings and funerals and birthdays because it was at these places that I was able to receive the knowledge that I needed to understand what a matai was. What was expected of me as a matai even though there were some areas that I knew I was not able to attain but with work that I could I never gave up. I always believed that I could do it. I always believed that I could make a difference.

I remember one day, and I'm only touching on this because Anae Arthur mentioned it was when my mother passed away and my father had already passed on so it was only I and my siblings. And the one thing that I feared as I prepared to get ready for the funeral was how I was going to face my family, because my siblings and myself we had an idea of what we wanted to do for our mother. We had an idea of what my mother expected us to do for her day and my mother was a very staunch Samoan. She loved her fa'asamoa. She lived her fa'asamoa. She was a really gifted woman in the oratory and I never wanted to let my mother down. But the one thing that she said to us was is that she wanted A, B, and C, and that A, B, and C we were going to follow. I remembered when we had met with our families and they all gathered together - matais, non-matais, extended family, and we had a discussion. You know God is so good because if you come with an open heart, if you come with love and if you come humbly before your family matai or non-matai, they will have an ear. They will have the heart to listen to you and I know that some of the things that I suggested that I didn't want or I did want didn't always sit well with them. But you know what with discussion and debate we came to decisions that made everyone happy not only us as the children of my mother but also her siblings.

I know there was one thing, and this is just a funny little thing I want to share about one of the things that did go wrong, was when we gift people that come to your home with pisupo (corned beef) and chicken, and things like that, one of the discussions was the shopping. I remembered my uncle saying "alright we need x amount of dollars and we're going to buy x amount of corned beef and x amount boxes of chickens. But I had already done a budget, if you could say, and when I looked at the costings, it was so much cheaper to get pisupos and not chickens, and so I had only got one and not both. When my uncle expressed that to me that he wanted the chickens I said to him: "uncle, I looked at the costing and it cost less to get the boxes of pisupo which would feed more people than it would be to get chickens and buy more to try feed that number. My uncle was very unhappy with me. He was so angry and he said: "that's not the Samoan way". I turned to my uncle with much respect and I said to him: "uncle if you can show me where it's written in concrete that we have to give chickens as well as pisupos then I will go and buy the chickens", and my uncle looked at me, my brothers looked at me, and I think they all thought I was so disrespectful. But in my mind and in my heart, I was only looking out for my family. I was only looking out for what was best, for what we could afford to do, and that was the only way I could express it. And do you know to this day? My uncle loves me. He wasn't happy with me but he understood and it's my way of sharing to you that as a New Zealand-born never sit back. Don't feel as if you can't participate. Don't feel as if we can't share. Our thoughts and ideas with our chiefs. That's the only way we can move forward. You know even when we converse, I know that a lot of people might say "oh but you know you don't speak Samoan. E le fa'aaloalo to those around us". It's not that I honour my family so much that's why I don't fear that I don't speak Samoan. I make myself be a part of what is going on in my family because being a matai is important. I pray to God every day that he will give me the strength that I will be more fluent in Samoan. But as they say I'm one of those lazy Samoans. It's quicker and I think quicker in English and so I speak it in English.

In conclusion, you know one of the things I want to encourage is that for young New Zealand-born, for you to encourage them to become matais or to remain as matais, we have to learn to compromise. We have to learn to listen. We have to learn to take in the good, the bad and the ugly, and we work together to make a system that's going to be long sustaining. You know when I hear our fellow speakers before I have a fear in my heart that as the years go on that the matai system will slowly go away. It won't be there anymore because of how things are, the structure, how people are not

interested or people are interested. How people make up their own rules. We have to be consistent and if you want new blood to come into Samoa, if you want new blood to be a part of the future of Samoa, its culture and structure then we have to work together. Praise God that I have a title from Faleasi'u which I wear proudly and honourably for my family.

Thank you.

### **Talamatavau Peteru Sone Iosia**

The Talamatāvao is a tamaali'i title of the Aiga Sā Le'aupepē family from Filia in Faleāsiu. The title was bestowed on seven members of the Le'aupepe extended family during the clan's 2003 centennial celebrations in Faleāsiu, Western Samoa. As a New Zealand-born Samoan I never actively sought a title and was humbled by the unexpected honour. Over the years, because of this investiture, I have made an effort to learn Samoan and increase my understanding of the culture and in particular the role of matai. I am an active and financial member of the Aiga Sā Le'aupepe-Talamatāvao in Auckland that meets monthly and which holds an annual reunion service in Auckland combined with Wellington family. Although my use of the mother tongue has improved, the extended family in New Zealand has been tolerant of the use of English by NZ born members during family meetings and its many church services. This linguistic tolerance has in my opinion increased participation in family and village affairs by the younger generation especially those born outside of Samoa.

Ia fa'afetai lava mo le avanoa i lau Afioga Lupematasila. Ia oute lè sunuia fa'atia le malie i ou paia Samoa pe oute paupauina fa'atupu ua tona'i, leai. Auà o paia lava ua popo, o paia ua tu'u ma tamaga, ua to'oto i paga.

Tauia ina ou i'itea le fatu ole ala, i Gagaa'i ma Gagaifo; oute fa'atulou, tulou, tulou, tulou lava.

E moni sa tū i Fagalilo le upu i le Tonumaip'e'a: "Pe tua maneà lenei fa'amoemoe?" Ose finagalo i le Afioga ia Lupematasila; ose tofā na liuliu i tapaaui nei. Ioe...ua pei o se foe faae'e i le tau! Ae fa'afetai, fa'afetai ua tini pa'ò le uto pei ole fetalaiiga fai vaivai e ala i le pule fa'asoifua a le Atua i lou outou soifua maua ma se matou ola. Ua mafai ai ona tatou aulia manuia lenei aso ma fa'ataunu'uina ai lenei fa'amoemoe. Ia tatou viia ma fa'afetai i le Atua i le fa'avavau fa'avavau lava.

My name is Talamatāvao Peteru Sone IOSIA; I'm brother to Tuifa'asisina Eseta, and I too have been made a matai. I apologise firstly, as I wasn't one of the scheduled presenters at today's Symposium. I'm the driver, so I deliver Tuifa'asisina where she needs to go and pick her up and take her home. But Tuifa'asisina managed to slip my name in somehow and here I am.



So, my message is just building on what previous speakers have spoken about. I'm New Zealand-born, I'm Samoan, and my life like many of us in this room is very similar. At home Samoan is the mother language; it's the language that our parents spoke. But my siblings and I spoke English, so although Samoan is our mother tongue, English is our primary language. We live in New Zealand. We act like kiwis, and we grew up in a regular kiwi lifestyle. Papali'i touched on it before - a lot of our learnings are done unconsciously. Our parents, our mothers, and our fathers took us to church where we heard our ministers preach to us in Samoan; they took us to church events, fa'aulufalega. We saw the customary rituals performed in front of us from a young age. We attended our extended families' reunions. We heard names, we saw people, and we listen to lauga. We never took much notice of it but unconsciously, these are the things that were permeating our subconscious until we were adults.

I never sought a title (se tulou Suafa Aiga). That was never my intention growing up and becoming a young adult or an adult. Anyway, I travelled with our mother back to Faleasi'u in 2003 to celebrate the centennial reunion of the Aiga Sa Leaupepe family in Faleasi'u and the celebrations went as planned. There was a huge service. Families from Australia, Hawai'i, the West Coast of the US, Tutuila, Samoa, and New Zealand all gathered in Faleasi'u to celebrate those 100 years. At that time, it was 100 years prior that a promise was made by our ancestors that they would commit this family to the service of the Lord through music and through ministry. Over the years the family was nick-named Aiga 'Ausalamo, a slang name for the clan, and so as I said, the celebrations went well. We met the greater extended family, we returned thanks to God in services, we took part in festivities and we shared in communal feasts and when the celebrations ended my mother and I were ready to return to New Zealand.

Before returning to New Zealand we received a call from the Sa'o of the aiga, Leaupepe. He asked that our mother should stay for the saofa'i. The family was going to give out titles as part of the 100 years celebrations, and I had answered the phone and I said: "sorry, we're leaving for New Zealand tomorrow. Nobody can stay but I'll pass the message onto my mother". So, I turned to my mother and said: "That was Leaupepe and he said there's a saofa'i in a few days and he wanted us to stay, but I said no". I can't repeat what she said to me suffice to say that I had to ring New Zealand and ask Tuifa'asisina "Can you change our flights?" and then I had to reschedule our departure.

Anyway, I'm preparing my mother on the day of the saofa'i for the saofa'i because, in my mind it's my mother that is going to go and get the title. And we're in our rental on our way to Faleasi'u from Apia, and then she turns to me and she goes: "Are you ready to sit for the ceremony?" And I said: "what are you talking about? I'm not sitting...you go and sit. It's your family. Leaupepe asked you. He doesn't know me. I'll go do the fe'au (chores) at the back" which is what I usually do. She goes: "I'm too old. What's the use of giving me the title when my children are alive?" I said: "I'm not ready for this". We arrived in Faleasi'u still discussing about what was going to happen and then in the end it was me that sat in the saofa'i and received the Talamatavao title and that was the beginning of this learning curve that we all need to go through. I didn't know anything about our fa'asamoa at that point but when things like this are thrust upon you, necessity becomes the mother of invention. That's exactly what happened and I had to change my thinking about I'm not a palagi, I'm not a kiwi. I'm something else. This title Talamatavao did that and I think there are just two things that I want to raise with us as discussion points.

The first is behaviour. My behaviour because I have a title and the behaviour of others who also understand that I have a title and so little things started to happen. When I arrived back here in New Zealand we came up to the first extended family meeting and those that hadn't travelled to Samoa were eager to hear from us that did how the celebrations went, and I remember I was in the kitchen doing the fe'au (chores) like I usually do - preparing the meals, getting ready to serve out our elders, and one of the girls holding a towel wiping down dishes she said to me: "oh Peteru ga e malaga i Samoa?" I said: "oh yea ese le manaia o Samoa. Manaia le lotu ale tatou aiga i Faleasi'u" and one of the other boys said: "oh o Peteru ua maua le igoa matai. Ua maua lana suafa matai" and so the girl with the towel said: "o ai lau suafa?" and I said: "o Talamatavao" and she said: "oka okae se igoa. Oka kua kelè legà igoa aisea ua tu'ua'i ia oe?". That firmly grounded me as to who I am. The Talamatavao is here. Peteru the person is here. So, I knew regardless of how important the Talamatavao was to the extended family, that I am only human and that my behaviour as Papali'i has said needs to start with humility. It needs to start with alofa. Those are the things that our parents taught us innately.

We never sat down in a class, and there was a board, and people wrote that. We learnt that at our parent's knees and so those are the things we bring to the matai and behaviour of others. I've seen at our family meetings that

they respect the Talamatavao, and as I sit there and take part in these meetings, there's been a level of tolerance, at least within my extended family, to the fact that I don't speak Samoan well. They allow us to discuss matters within the family about the distribution of money, the way that we deal with funerals, the way that we deal with weddings, and the way that we donate or send remittances to Samoa to Faleasi'u to build houses and homes for our extended family there. But that my input will always be in English, and as I say about their behaviour, that doesn't mean that I should be complacent, and so I try to learn more of my fa'asamoa. As a child, the words I knew were talofa, fa'afetai and fa'amolemole. That was all that I knew, and so I can look back now and say that the conferring of the Talamatavao changed my behaviour, and the conferring of the Talamatavao on a New Zealand born-Samoan has changed my extended families' behaviour.

The final thing that I wanted to point out was kinship. The concept of so'otaga, so I talked about my mother's family and the conferring of titles on Tuifa'asisina and myself, and when my father passed away my mother and I travelled to Samoa to attend a funeral on my father's side.

My mother, even though she's not a blood relative of my father's extended family, we still went there and performed appropriate rituals that are required for families, and at the end of the funeral there was some discussion about how things should be distributed.

In any event, at the end of it our mother said to the family my husband has died. He's passed away months ago, it's almost a year, "ae oute fiamana'o i se so'otaga mo ma fanau." I thought, "hmm what's she asking for?" I understand now that she wanted to keep those kinship ties alive. She wanted to rekindle them, even in the absence of our father, by inviting the extended family to consider titles for us, the children of our father (their uncle) who passed away. To this day that hasn't happened. My point is this: our culture is a shared understanding, but if that understanding is not shared, or manipulated by people that hold the power, then some of us may get a skewed view about how our culture operate so I compare and contrast those two things. Those things that happened on our mother's side which I thought demonstrated a lot of tolerance, and those things that happened or did not happen on my father's side. These are the dilemmas that face those of us that live outside of Samoa about how different families administer the fa'amatai system. That's my time up.

Thank you.

## 6 CHAPTER

### **‘FOTU O MALAMA’ YOUTH PANEL (SULI: MATAI-IN-WAITING)**

#### **TALANOA: FOTU O MALAMA: SAMOAN YOUTH & TRANSNATIONAL FA’AMATAI**

**Dillon Misa, Sili Mireta Pita, Elise Peleti Fuimaono Alolua,  
Seraphine Ekita Williams  
Facilitator: Natalie Toevai**

*Natalie Toevai:* Ia fa'atalofa atu i le suafa ma le malo i Iesu Keriso le tatou Ali'i ma le tatou fa'aola. Le ou faigaluega paia o le Atua, Professa ma Faia'oga, Minista o tagata Pasifika, ia le paia ma le mamalu ua aofia. Fa'afetai i le Atua ua tatou fisilafai pua manū ae leo pue o mala. Fa'afetai fo'i i lou Afioga Lupematasila Misatauveve Dr Melani Anae ma le komiti mo le avanoa ua tu'uina mai a'u te fa'afoina ai lenei talanoaga e fa'asoa ai manatu o le tupulaga Samoa e uiga le Transnational Matai. Ia mo le silafia o le tatou mafutaga o a'u o Natalie Leitulagi Toevai, o a'u o se tasi o fanau o aoga i nei o le Pacific Studies ma sa maea ai i le masina o Iuni lo'u Master of Arts. Sa fa'apea ona ta'ita'iina o le Afioga ia Lupematasila Misatauveve. Ia o le taimi nei o avea ai a'u ma tausala a Samoa i Niu Sila ia ma o se fiafiaga tele i lo'u auai mai ma lagolago ina ai fo'i lenei fa'amoemoe ua leva ona tapena ai le Afioga o Lupematasila Misatauveve ma le komiti. Ae o lona filania ai le tatou fa'atasiga lenei tula o le a fa'aogaina gagana i lua mo lenei talanoaga. Ia ma ona o lo o tatou nonofo ma papaau i Niu Sila nei o le a tausisi lava i le tatou taimi.

Talofa lava, welcome, warm Pacific Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since you will be listening to my voice for the next hour or so, I thought I'd give a little bit of information about myself before we introduce our four guest panellists. My name is Natalie Leitulagi Toevai, and I am a Postgraduate Student here at the Centre of Pacific Studies. I submitted my Master's thesis in June under the supervision of Dr Melani Anae, and what a journey that was. I've been a Graduate Teaching Assistant as Seulupe has mentioned, for a couple of years now here at Pacific Studies, and I have been involved actually with this project as a Research Assistant with my sister Mirofora who isn't with us today.

If I'm not studying or working, then you'll find me dancing with my sister's Ura Tabu Pacific Dance Company, which you will later see at our

dinner tonight. So, as you may have noticed, and as Seulupe has mentioned, you're probably wondering why am I wearing this sash. A couple of weeks after I submitted my Master's thesis, I took part in the Miss Samoa New Zealand pageant, and I was blessed with the crown and the responsibility to represent our Samoan community not only, here in New Zealand, but also abroad. So, I have that title currently, and I hold it until we crown our next tausala in July of next year (2019). All of this would not have been possible without the love and support of my friends, family and the guidance of our amazing God. But that's enough about me, let's get this programme rolling. This talanoa: Fotu o malama is made up of four panellists, and we will be hearing their thoughts and perspectives on transnational fa'amatai from their respective areas of specialisation. Without further ado, please put your hands together and welcome our four panellists.

We decided that they will introduce themselves, so the floor is yours.

*Dillon Misa:* Malo le soifua maua ma le lagi e mama. Good to see everyone today. Talofa my name is Dillon Misa. I am from Glen Eden, West Auckland, but I was raised in Tuafu in the Atoa-Tugaga family. I was born in Long Beach California, and I attended Marist Brothers Primary School Mulivai in Samoa, so I'm a St Joseph's old boy, and I was one of those boy's lea e fa'atupu misa solo i tai le mateti, but that was a long time ago. I currently study here at the Centre for Pacific Studies doing my Bachelor of Arts in Pacific Studies and Anthropology, and the dream is to become a lecturer here at the Centre in the near future. I will give it onto my next panellist to introduce himself. Also, I'm from Falelatai so you got another Falelatai person here.

*Elise Alolua:* Talofa, my name is Elise Alolua. I'm currently a student here at the University of Auckland, currently doing my last year in a degree of a Bachelor of Theology. I come from the villages of Salani and Sapunaua on my dad's side and Malie and Salelesi on my mum's side. My dream is to one day attend Malua Theological College, and I hope to enforce and emphasise the importance of youth in the Ekalesia, because not many can agree that the youth leaving the Ekalesia is a problem; but that's something I hope to one day ponder on. Fa'afetai.

*Seraphine Ekita Williams:* Fa'atalofa atu i le tatou aofia ua fa'atasi mai i lenei tula oi le afiafi, talofa, talofa. I feel like I'm at church aye talofa lava. So, my name is Seraphine Ekita Williams. My first name is my grandmother's name. Ekita is a combination of my mum's and dad's names, so Sera and Laki, and my surname obviously is my dad's surname, but it's actually my dad's

mother's surname. Because at the time I think it was that if you had a palagi last name when my dad was growing up, you had a better chance of getting into a better school in Samoa, so that's why we went with our more palagi last name. It was very nice during high school. People call out your name via surname, and they'd call out my name and be like "Williams", and this brown girl would stand up and people would be like "you're brown" and I'd be like "Yea, I'm brown, I ain't white and so yea".

My dad Laki Williams, he comes from Lepea, and my mum Seraphine Erika Williams comes from Magiagi. At this moment I study a Master of Science at the school of Psychology. My research area is based around the experiences of Pasifika transgendered men and women in employment. I look at the organisational practices around safety, as well as what we can do to fuel personal resilience within organisations. I am the middle child of seven children. At this moment I'm transitioning into a new role at Fletcher Building as the Learning and Development Co-ordinator, so I'm looking forward to that, a new challenge. That's a bit about me and I also teach cultural psychology here at the University of Auckland as a GTA and I'm also the psychology Tuākana for Psych 209 and Neuro Psychology. So, yea that's me.

*Sili Mireta Pita:* Ia so first of all you probably do not recognise me because I'm not in the programme [haha]; but I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank Seira and Melani for asking me an hour and a half ago. So, I'm very privileged to be before each and every one of you today. Oute muai fa'atulou atu i le paia ua aufaga potopoto mai leni tula i le afioga o polofesa ma faia'oga le paia tulatoa ma tupu Samoa oute avea ai leni avanoa e fa'atalofa atu ai ma le agaga fa'aaloalo. O lo'u igoa o Sili Mireta Pita. O lo'u tama o Sala Pita e sau mai le nu'u o Leauva'a. O lo'u tina e sau mai tua i Aleipata i Lalomanu ia o le aiga o Fuatagafatu. Ia ae avea ia leni avanoa oute fa'atalofa atu ai. I le taimi nei o lo'o lagolago i le Fale Pasifika avea a'u ma sui o le au tutor. I recently, just like Nat, we were in the Masters struggle together. I submitted my Master's Thesis that focused on incest in Samoa, but that's not what we're here about today, so yea it's very nice to meet you all.

*Natalie Toevai:* Malo lava fa'afetai. We're going to get straight into it. E le tele a ni fasili i le tatou panel. But I'm sure, hopefully our discussion here with our panel will prompt some questions within our audience. So, since the theme of our Symposium is transnational fa'amatai: What does transnational fa'amatai mean to you, and I guess from your perspective, backgrounds and disciplines we have theology, psychology, and then we have Pacific Studies; what does this topic mean to you four, and the relevance of

this to you as a person or a scholar and so forth? It could be anything from what a matai means to you, what it looks like, who can be a matai?

*Seraphine Ekita Williams:* Thank you, so from what I've experienced within my family and the church the matai to me is a mediator. Like you do see them as a leader, but in my eyes Matais carry the role in mediating between different parts of a family, and different churches, and communicating the ideas between them, as well as the history of the people who they're associated with, or that matai name is associated with. They speak on behalf of the collective. They're the ones who speak on behalf of the church. They're the ones who speak on behalf of our family, and so as a mediator you must carry with you the values, beliefs and the honour and the privilege of that name. It's not something that you do to tarnish it through other means, which I'd probably go into sometime soon, but you know that's my perspective on it. I don't know about everyone else.

*Natalie Toevai:* Malo fa'afetai.

*Dillon Misa:* To me, transnational matai are custodians or practitioners of the fa'asamoa outside of Samoa. As we've heard over the panels of yesterday and today, the majority of Samoans live outside of the homeland, or what they refer to as a homeland - and so I guess to me transnational matai are those who are our leaders outside of Samoa and those who are hoping to practice and keep these key aspects of our culture alive while living in the diaspora.

*Sili Mireta Pita:* Fa'afetai Leitulagi mo le avanoa. To me a transnational matai is a leader within the household. A leader within his or her family. I see the matai as being the connector between whether your home or abroad, but the connecting force to us is to the land at home, is to our family at home, is to our genealogy. So, to me that's how I see the matai.

*Elise Alolua:* Fa'afetai lava mo le fa'afesili. To me, transnational matai pei ona faimai ai le google e "extend beyond boundaries and other nations"; so, I guess a transnational matai o se tagata e, eager to engage into the aganu'u. So those who are born outside of Samoa e le'i i ai se experience e fanau i Samoa ma vavaai i le aganu'u, it's a chance for them to engage and hopefully benefit from their matai outside of Samoa. Fa'afetai.

*Natalie Toevai:* Malo fa'afetai. Just going to go off, so I guess a lot of your answers sparked another question in my head. In terms of, I know there's a couple of us who were born here in New Zealand or outside of the

homeland: What are your views as someone who has been born and grown up in the diaspora - the importance of fa'amatai to you as the diasporic community, and you as part of that community? I guess your answer to that in terms of your experience, or how you feel in terms of the importance of the fa'amatai system abroad, outside of Samoa?

*Seraphine Ekita Williams:* I think the matai system is very important from how I've grown up. I grew up in a lotu asofitu family around ideas of what fa'amatai is, but it wasn't explicit within the way my parents taught us. But I understand from the way we practised it, and with things within the religious context and within cultural context - it is very important to respect and honour the fa'amatai system, because that is the way Samoans have communicated with each other over the years, and as a person who has grown up in a Samoan setting, because at school I'd go and speak palagi, and come home fa'asa a le tagata e koe fa'apalagi i le fale, so I wasn't allowed to speak palagi at home; and so through me learning the language of Samoan at home, I learnt these other things as well. And growing up in a lotu that was predominantly Samoan fa'amatai was one of those things that we had to do, especially when at fa'atasigas with other lotus as well as funerals. When people come from Samoa, we welcome them onto our land, we have to use the fa'amatai system to be able to communicate to them, and so how are we to do that if we somehow lose it? I feel like in order for us to grow together we as New Zealanders need to also understand what the fa'amatai system is so that we're not losing touch with the homeland. Though I do have my critiques of the whole system itself, but I feel like we have to have some type of understanding where there's a middle ground between us and our family, church, economic system and social system in Samoa.

*Sili Mireta Pita:* I think that the fa'amatai system is extremely important. It's at the core of our being as Samoan people whether you live in Samoa or whether you live abroad. As a Samoan born outside of Samoa, I see it as central to my being, central to my families' foundation, because with the system, it comes with these core principles of alofa, fa'aaloalo, tautua - love, respect and service; and those three core aspects can be drawn from the fa'amatai, and so that's why I just believe it's really important that we maintain and embrace the system of being.

*Dillon Misa:* Just to add on, being raised in Samoa and witnessing how the matai system works there as well as coming overseas and seeing it practiced here, I personally believe it provides stability and order of some sort. I was just commenting to my colleagues yesterday on how we've been watching and following the rugby league world cup, and you notice the difference in



how Tongans and Samoan fans celebrate. For example, we see how – no offence to the Tongans here – how they tend to act, when they celebrate, jumping on cars and that kind of thing, and I was telling my colleagues ‘I don’t think you would ever see Samoans doing that – you know malo vale, oso-oso vale, and I think because maybe because you know we are always conscious of what our leaders and parents will say to us on this kind of behaviour. Some will give you that look like ‘what the hell are you doing? Are you out of your mind? Who’s your family?’ Even my Tongan girlfriend asked, “why don’t you Samoans not celebrate like that?” I just replied “oh easy we’ve got class” so yea, I hope that answers your question.

Member of the audience: "wonderful answer" [haha].

*Natalie Toeva:* So, apparently, we have class now, so that's a take away point. I think it was Sili that touched on the importance of maintaining our fa'asamoa, and also in terms of the fa'amatai, and I know for New Zealand-born there's a lot of debate in terms of language, and I guess our stance, or our take, or even the importance of language and value of language to us being born outside of Samoa. So, I wanted to hear from our panellists, and I could probably start it from my perspective. Like Seulupe said, I was born and raised here in New Zealand, but as my panellists have said as well, that the fa'asamoa was at the core of our upbringing, and I guess for me in terms of transferring that knowledge the alofa (love), tautua (service), fa'aaloalo (respect), being able to understand that I feel that language has a big part in that; and if we don't understand the language then I guess it's not the only way of connecting, but it is a very important aspect to me of being Samoan. So, there are many ways for us to connect here in New Zealand, as we have Polyfest, we have Pasifika, and we also have a number of fa'asamoa workshops, languages, and also in terms of rituals and customs learning here outside of Samoa; so, I guess we're quite proactive in that sense. But it would be good to hear from my colleagues too in regards to language in how you think it's important or not and its relevance to the fa'amatai.

*Dillon Misa:* So, like my fellow panellists, I was born in the United States and moved to Samoa when I was six. We then moved here to New Zealand a couple of months later, and my mum tried to implement the English language at school and Samoan at home rule – but I found I did not learn much. When we moved back to Samoa when I was nine, my dad put us in a bilingual school - Peace Chapel - and my mum was seeing that we weren't learning much of the Samoan language, and so she decided to pull me and my sister out – and for us to go to Savaelalo (St Mary's) and Malisi (Marist). That's when I had no choice but to learn and pick up the language. At first,

I was afraid, because most of the classes were taught in Samoan and all my friends spoke Samoan, and so this resulted in my development and knowledge of the language and culture and being fluent in it. I guess throughout my journey from primary to college, especially when I got to college, there was a mentality going around amongst our people with the view that learning Samoan was not that important. Like you always heard parents say, "a mea e ave ai fua le ga gagana Samoa e le maua ai sou galuega?" [Why are you taking Samoan language classes for, you won't get a job taking that?]. You know that kind of thing. So, I used to skip Samoan classes all the time, and when I got to Foundation at NUS [National University of Samoa], it was compulsory for all foundation students at that time to take it. I was like "ok I can't run away from this", and so I had to do everything that was done in the classes, and I'm quite glad that it happened. Once my sister got up to Foundation, it then became compulsory for every single student, whether you were an Arts student, a Science student or a Business student - everybody had to take Samoan, and it wasn't until leaving Samoa that I realised the importance of the Samoan language and culture to me. I left Samoa in 2009, I lived in a couple of places from Singapore to Fiji, and then coming here [New Zealand] and I thought to myself, "man the value of our language you know how important it is, it's our identity". I know it sounds cheesy when we keep saying that language is our identity, but it is important, and I'm glad that we have workshops here in places like New Zealand that are implementing on encouraging students to learn Samoan, and even through things like Sunday School and that.

*Sili Mireta Pita:* Thanks Nat. I lo'u lava manatu e taua tele le gagana fa'asamoa. In my own opinion as a Samoan born and raised in New Zealand, I would do everything in my power to learn and acquire and maintain the Samoan language. Just as our linguist in Pacific Studies has argued - and every Pacific Studies student has to have this drilled in their head: "language is like a container, fa'asamoa is like a container". Once you acquire the language you inquire the indigenous knowledge, the traditions, the values of our ancestors of our forefathers; and so in my opinion, i lo'u lava manatu vaivai e taua tele le gagana fa'asamoa, and I give props to our community, members who hold these aganu'u 101 workshops, the University of Auckland has Samoan classes - Samoan 101 through to stage three. So, if you're looking to study Samoan, take it up here with our courses here, but also like in our churches, in our homes, our grandparents, our parents they're our first teachers so I think it all starts back there. Thank you.

*Elise Alohua:* Ia fa'afetai lava mo le fa'afesili. Ia ia te a'u lava ia i le taua o le gagana Samoa i le itu Mataupu Sili po o le biblical and theological side – the

Samoan language has gender binaries. Pe a address tagata i le Tusi Paia, e ta'ū "o ia, o ia" ae a faitau i le Tusi Paia palagi o "him, her, him, her" e faasino i tagata. I lo'u lava mafauauga i le gagana Samoa, e accepting ma e le tete'e isi tagata pei o fa'afafine. In the Samoan language, there are no gender binaries e tutusa lava tagata uma i le tatou lava gagana. Fa'afetai.

*Seraphine Ekita Williams:* Thanks. I think from my perspective, I totally agree that the Samoan language is a prerequisite to understanding the fa'amatai and understanding our culture. But the question we need to ask ourselves is: What is identity to us? And we understand now that identity can consist of many things other than just language. How do we quantify that and how do we assess that in a qualitative type of way? Is it the number of times or how deep your understanding is of the language; or is it the number of times that you participate in cultural practices? Because I've come across so many people at work in this area who say I feel distant from my culture because I can't speak the language; but I do identify as Samoan, and I understand the fa'amatai process and the fa'amatai system. But the only disconnection is the language, and so I feel the need to defend them because, yea, that's just the way it is. Is that we don't necessarily need language to connect yourself with culture or to connect yourself with the fa'amatai, because then we exclude people you know. What we want to do is include everyone. It's like the infinity game; if anybody knows that within a psychology context the infinity game is basically an activity that everyone can participate in. The only time it does not become an infinity game is when we put rules around it, and once we start putting rules around things, we start excluding people and creating hierarchies around systems, and that's how society is created. Unfortunately, humans tend to do that naturally. Thus, language acts as a barrier against participation. I'm so grateful for my parents teaching me Samoan. But I'd love to reach out to my brothers and sisters who don't know Samoan for them to be included in this whole thing, because there's so much value in it. Like you said, it teaches you respect. It teaches you honour. It teaches you how to tautua to your family. It teaches you all that stuff so how can we as people open the floor up to them as well?

*Natalie Toevai:* Dillon, since you're the only title holder here [on the panel] I thought I'd chuck you a question. Just tell us a bit about your journey in regards to your title, getting your title, the decision to actually get the title. Everyone has a journey and I guess it would be good to hear a bit from our Samoan youth in terms of their experiences.

*Dillon Misa:* Fa'afetai mo le fa'afesili. Ia, for those who don't know - I hold the titles of Misa and Nanai from Matautu, Falelatai. My grandfather was

Nanai Misa Faitala who was a Lands and Titles Court judge back in the day, and also a policeman. He was also alii matua of the Nanai clan up until his passing. I guess a couple of years ago, when I had just moved to New Zealand in 2012, our family had a fono, as they were looking for some people to become matai and go to the saofai back home. I had a conservative sort of view, I don't know if you'd call it conservative, but I never grew up in Falelatai - I grew up in Tuaeifu the suburbs of Apia, and I didn't think I deserved to get a chief title because I was always of the group that believed that you should tautua first. And you know, I thought to myself: "What tautua have I done?" So, I declined to my late uncle who passed away a couple of months ago. I told him: "nah not for me" and then just last year the call came up again and that's when Falelatai decided to - I don't know what you'd call it but they lifted the ban and allowed females to become matai back in the village. So, he asked me again and he goes "sau e nofo" and then I was like ok, and then I started asking "e fia le tusaga? E sefulu afe?" [How much is my contribution to the village? Ten thousand?] (trying to be smart and cheeky), and he goes "leai, e taei afe i le suafa" (no, one thousand tala for each name/title), and so I was like, ok I might as well get Nanai and Misa while I was there, "kill two birds with one stone". So, I could have sat for the Sila (Lupematasila) title as well (there were three saofais for all these titles on the same day), but I didn't have an extra grand that day unfortunately.

I was still sort of reluctant, but I decided to go through with it, and I just thought you know, now is my time to show my tautua to my family. Because I mean, over the years, we're taught that "o le ala i le pule o le tautua", or through your service, it eventually leads to you becoming a leader. However, the way I see it today is that it is become the other way around. Matai titles are thrown to people, and then there is the obligation and expectation of your tautua immediately. So, after my saofa'i, fai loa ma lou monotaga and that kind of stuff. So, yea that's been my journey since becoming a title holder. Thank you.

*Natalie Toevai:* Awesome. For our other three panellists, since you have yet to hold a title and Lupematasila calls this "matai in waiting". Obviously, this is our last day for the Symposium, and I thought it would be good to hear from you, as you were probably present at yesterday's presentations as well as today's. What are your thoughts, and I guess your aspirations in the future or near future? Would you put yourself up there to become a matai holder, but also a leader within your family, your village? What are your thoughts - are you thinking about it or are you just going to stay right away from all of that? I'm sure our audience would love to hear what you have to say.

*Elise Aloha:* Ia fa'afetai mo le fa'afesili. I lo'u lava manatu ma i o'u va'avaaiga i le tilotilo i nei mea o matai, e le o so'u fa'afiapoto ae o lo'u manatu: po'o le a se mea e maua mai i galuega o tatou matai? O se fa'ata'itaiga: O lo'u tama o Fuimaono Fa'atitipa ae toe Tuiloma i Sapunaua. E fai ma alu e fai fa'amasinoga mo matou aiga ae a ou mafaufau i ai, e alu e fai mea o le aiga i Samoa ae faapefea le aiga o i nei i Niu Sila? A maliu ia, e toe mafaufau mai le aiga la i Samoa ia matou? Not in a bad way, but what are the benefits of his matai and galuega he's done for the family, and how does his work in Samoa benefit us here in New Zealand? So, it's not negative thoughts on matai, it's just my thoughts on what do we get from the matai today? In saying so, i ao la you know e mau 'oa tatou tagata i Samoa. You know we have land; we have livestock. Ae a o mai nei i Niu Sila e totogi le rent you know e totogi mea uma so money is everything. So, is the matai relevant today here in New Zealand? I don't know i lo'u lava mafaufau fa'afetai.

*Seraphine Williams:* I have a similar view as Elise, and being a matai hasn't crossed my mind for quite a few reasons. Because I'm not so sure if it's relevant within the context that I live in right now. Will the matai system actually be existent as we and the next generations come into it? Because as we move towards equity and equality, I noticed that the matai system might be a hindrance to it, and this is me analysing it from a more systematic and organisational point of view. This being that when we move towards things that will improve the life style of people, we need to analyse our systems of authority and how we can deconstruct those so that everybody has a fair chance. One of the reasons why I speak from this perspective is because in part of my research, I too am part of the research process, so I identify as a transgender Samoan woman. That means I was born with the sex of a man or male, and I transition or affirmed my identity as a woman over time. So basically, everybody in this room would probably see me as fa'afafine, but I don't see myself as fa'afafine. I see myself as a woman who happens to be trans. We've got to understand that fa'afafine within a Samoan context is a very different identity compared to the way we understand trans people here in New Zealand.

Here in New Zealand trans people are most likely associated with the process of affirming their identity by taking hormonal therapy, and participating in surgery to make your face more feminised, whereas, in Samoa you can be what we would call a gay man and still be identified as fa'afafine, and that's something I tend to stay away from, because it removes the journey that I've come through as a woman. So, one of the reasons why I don't consider being a matai is because where do I fit within the matai system? That's something that is very binary. The gender systems are so

apparent, and I don't know how I can slip into that. I have come across a person who is trans and has gotten a matai name, and then it comes to the question: What does that give you though? Like does it just give you the authority to be a matai within your family and within your social context or is it actually giving something back to you as a person and to your family. So, there are those layers of things that I have to consider as a person before moving into that area.

*Sili Mireta Pita*: I know that being a matai has never crossed my mind, and in saying that it's because I believe that when the time is right it will come, but for now I share the same sentiments as our keynote speaker yesterday Dr. Luafata, who spoke on: "Ā o'u matai nei o ai tautua le matai o lo'u tina?" We are the lima malosi and loto alofa behind my dad's matai and so I see it as service to that.

*Natalie Toevai*: I think I have one more question just to wrap it up, and I know this has come up in a lot of the keynotes, as well as the panels in terms of the future of the fa'amatai, and I guess it would be of value to hear from our youth, because as we know, we usually describe our children or our youth "o fanau o lumana'i o aiga, nu'u ma ekalesia", and so we children or the youth are the future of our families, villages and denominations. Therefore, in regards to the fa'amatai and the future, especially e uma atu matou matua, matua o matou matua, it's us that's left to hold the fort. I guess this has been a very special journey, and I was with the Marsden team too for the Measina Conference [2016], and even that, I guess it was an eye opener for myself as a youth to really remind myself that, yea, actually we do hold the future of our families, villages and communities. So, our final question which is one of our questions from one of our Professor's Lisa who couldn't be here, but obviously there's a lot of anxiety and hesitations around fa'amatai especially with our Samoan youth - both in Samoa and abroad. But with that being said, in your views, what do you think, or where do you think the fa'amatai is heading? What is the future of the fa'amatai, and what is your contribution to that future whatever it may be?

*Elise Aolua*: Ia fa'afetai mo le fa'afesili. O'u te talitonu e tumau pea le tatou pulega fa'amatai. Pei lava o le upu o le fuata ma lona lou. There will be a change in the years to come. Ma ou te talitonu po'o le a lava ni itu lelei ma itu le lelei I believe fa'amatai will still be there in whatever form it takes and you know pei lava o le upu o le Tusi Paia, ia tatou fa'aaloalo ma ava pea i pulega so'o se lava pulega e aofia lava ai faia'oga, mata, leoleo, ma mea faapena.. Po'o le a lava fo'i le leaga o le tatou matai fa'aaloalo pea. Pei lava o le fa'atooto lea o Iesu i le totogina o tax ia ave mea ia Kaisara ae ave mea o

le Atua i le Atua. Ia o le uiga o le tala lena po'o le a lava le leaga o Kaisara ia fa'aaloalo pea i le itumalo ia Kaisara. Ia pei la o nei - po'o le a lava ni suiga fou ia fa'aaloalo lava tatou i tatou matai. Ia o so'u manatu lava le na i le future of matai.

*Sili Mireta Pita:* Fa'afetai mo le fa'afesili. I think the fa'amatai will continue. E sui le faiga ae tumau le fa'avae. So, I think going forward, our system, it remained with us for how many years, and I think it's going to continue going forward, and yes, e sui le faiga ae e tumau lava le fa'avae, e tumau lava le fa'amatai. Fa'afetai.

*Seraphine Ekita Williams:* I have the same opinion as well. Is that even these days with the ways in which the fa'amatai system has worked, it's changed, depending on the context that it sits in. So, I think, yes, the concept will remain the same, but the way in which we practice it is going to change. I'm not so sure at what point we won't see it anymore. I'm not so sure if it's going to reach that point, but I do definitely see that it's going to change with time. People are going to practice it and generations will practice it with the way they feel more appropriate.

*Dillon Misa:* Fa'afetai mo le fa'afesili. Just like my colleagues here, I believe the matai system is not going anywhere any time soon. I think our system of leadership has worked in the Pacific, and I guess we owe it to our matai system for the political stability that we have in comparison to other islands in the Pacific. So, yea I don't see it going anywhere any time soon.

## CONCLUSION

### FAAMATAI: A GLOBALISED PACIFIC IDENTITY

#### LUPEMATASILA MISATAUVEVE DR MELANI ANAE

##### Abstract

Many social scientists - anthropologists, sociolinguists, economists, historians, and social theorists - view transnationalism and globalisation as the movement or flow of people, goods, services, and ideas between nation-states or countries, as well as the complex connections between all of these (Appadurai, 1996; Bauman, 2001; Blommaert, 2010; Brettell, 2003; Castells, 1996; Giddens, 1999; Harvey, 2005; Hobsbawm, 1992; Marcus, 1995; Stiglitz, 2006; Tsuda, 2003; Wallerstein, 2004). This chapter is about how transnationality – the condition of cultural connectedness and mobility across space – which has been intensified by late capitalism and transnationalism - is used to refer to the cultural specificities of global processes, tracing the multiplicity of the uses and conception of ‘culture’ (Ong 1999: 4). Are Pacific nation-states being transformed by globalisation into a single globalised economy? How are global cultural forces impacting on Pacific peoples, cultures and identities? These questions will be explored with a focus on the links between cultural logics of human action, and on economic and political processes within the Pacific, focussing on the Samoan transnational chiefly system (faamatai) amongst transnational Samoan chiefs (matai). Refuting claims about the end of traditional faamatai and the nation-state, what follows is an account of the cultural logics of globalisation and development, and an incisive contribution to the study of Pacific modernity and its links to global social change.

**Keywords:** Pacific transnationalism; globalisation from below; comparative advantage; faamatai: Samoan chiefly system; transnational reincorporation

##### Introduction

This chapter explores the sacred tenet of Samoan faamatai leadership – O le ala i le pule o le tautua (the way to power is through serving) by emplacing pule (power) and tautua (serving) within a transnational framework - migration as development without return - and as transnational expansion of leadership through ‘transnational reincorporation’ (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003: 588; Mahler, 1998). In their leadership of their families and communities across the globe, transnational matai and their families have



intensified travel, communications, repeat visits, and remittances to the homeland. This process creates economic, political and social mechanisms that enable transnational Samoans to participate in Samoa's development process over the long term and from afar (Mangnall, 2004: 14). In doing so, it is argued that previous studies have mistakenly viewed transnational faamatai as necessarily detrimental to the Samoan culture and the nation-state of Samoa, and have ignored transnational matai agency in developing Samoa through the large-scale flow of people, images, and cultural and economic forces across borders and back to the nation-state. Homeland individual/family decisions to migrate, and global markets have induced transnational matai to blend strategies of migration and of capital accumulation, and these transnational subjects have come to symbolise both the fluidity of capital, and the tension between national and personal identities.

### **Pacific transnationalism**

Transnationalism is the wave of future studies in population movement and mobility in the Pacific, and offers a meeting point between a shrinking world, facilitated by infrastructures that enable space-time compression and an expansionist globalisation (Lee & Francis, 2009). In this regard, the study of ethnicity is critical in delving deeper into people's worldviews, perceptions of each other, and relationships and sense of identification, to help us uncover some of the deeper perceptions and meanings of social change as seen and shared by cultural groups as they adapt to the fast-changing world. To better inform ourselves of the complexities of ethnicity and relationship to contemporary global developments and challenges, an approach which is people-centred, balanced, comprehensive and research-based is timely.

*Migration and Transnationalism: Pacific perspectives* (Lee & Francis, 2009) is the first edited volume to link a wider literature on transnational studies to specific cases in the Pacific, and illustrates that, rather than focusing on migration alone, Pacific transnationalism views migration in the broader context of indigenous movement and mobility. This perspective emphasises kin-based agency in the negotiations and meanings and arrangements in diasporic settings. My work extends kin-based or aiga (family)-based agency to the focus on matai – family heads – as the leaders of aiga and their agency in which migration, remittances and their experiences can now be viewed as extensions of local faamatai traditions as much as they are a result of the incorporation of Pacific communities into a global economy. That is, we can now view the home society and host society as a part of a single social field, with families through the faamatai using indigenous conceptions of appropriate behaviour to mediate new situations (ibid.; Small 1997: 193).

As Nahkid (2009: 215) states “Pacific transnationalism is a way of life.” However, while there are other features of transnationalism, we cannot understate the value of remittances. Our interest in, attention to, and sustainability of remittances based on why billions of dollars are remitted to Samoa on an annual basis, and why transnationals and their family leaders persist in maintaining a set of multi-related social relations that bind them and connect them and link their countries of origin with their countries of transnational settlement (Glick-Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1992), is crucial in understanding how and why Pacific transnationalism is indeed a way of life. The “myth of return” (Walton-Roberts, 2004: 80, 92) provides the affective tie when transnationals balance the desire to return with the reality of settled life and fuels transnationals, especially matai to meet their cultural roles and responsibilities as aiga heads and leaders to meet social, cultural and financial obligations.

### **Transnationalism and development**

The relationship between transnationalism and development – and how best to study it - is emerging as a major international policy concern. Recently, transnational theory and research has stressed that the networks of socio-economic relations of individuals and groups which embrace migrants’ country of origin and destination, are of paramount importance in the study of migration and return (Mangnall, 2004; Byron & Condon, 1996: 102; Nyberg-Sorensen et al., 2002: 18; Transrede, 2001: 5). These studies also suggest that “people connected by transnational networks” is the most important resource for developing countries (Mangnall, 2004: 8), Nyberg-Sorensen et al., 2002: 24).

Mangnall states that the advantage of transnationalism as a framework is that it recognises that neither return nor integration is the whole story for the study of international migration and development” (ibid.). Rather than doing one or the other, many migrants prefer to develop transnational lifestyles ‘between’ or ‘across’ two countries, economies, cultures and lifestyles (Transrede, 2002).

International migration has been shown to be a similarly “highly diverse and flexible phenomenon”, with outcomes ranging from permanent settlement abroad, to sporadic or regular returns home for longer or shorter periods, to permanent return (Gustafson, 2001: 374 cited in Mangnall, 2004: 9). So, transnationalism is ideally suited to the study of faamatai as heads of the transnational corporation of kin, and development, and vice versa.

Mobility is at the heart of transnationalism literature. High rates of return and repeat visiting are considered a hallmark of mature transnational communities (Bedford, 1997; Bertram & Watters, 1985; Faist, 2000: 13). Despite this, the scale and nature of the different types of transnational mobility remain largely unexamined, along with the importance of their contribution to transnational ties, identities and development compared with other exchanges such as phone calls, goods and remittances.

Faist's (1997) framework for such research is based on two premises. Firstly, international migration and return cannot be adequately described by focusing solely on countries of origin and destination. Instead, they must be studied as unfolding in "transnational spaces" within which flows of people, goods, capital and services cut across the borders of nation-states (ibid: 206). Secondly, return must be regarded as a factor of the strength of social ties and social capital within transnational spaces, as well as a strategy for social capital's transfer. The skills, knowledge and contacts gained in the process of forming and expanding these social ties can be used to transfer human, financial, cultural and other kinds of capital and, in the process, develop transnational identities and loyalties (Mangnall, 2004: 8; Ammassari and Black, 2001: 30; Faist, 1997a: 204; 2000, Levitt, 2001: 202-203).

The creation and maintenance of these transnational ties and identities depends upon the interaction of physical and metaphoric return. Metaphoric return – or the 'myth of return' - is the talking and thinking about return to their country of origin undertaken by those transnational migrants who decide to settle in the host country. At a personal level, the act of migrants talking and thinking about return can "create stable moorings" by bringing past and present, home and host countries closer together. Metaphoric return can also lead to physical returns – resettlement and visiting (Mangnall, 2004: 9). It also plays an important role in encouraging activities which keep ties to the homeland – teaching children their culture and language, joining cultural groups, remitting money and goods, exchanging letters and phone calls, fund-raising for home village development projects, and taking on matai titles and leadership roles in the host community. These activities reinforce the transnational ties of reciprocity and loyalty or affective ties which are essential for return visits on a wide scale

In the transnational view, migration, host settlement and repeat homeland visits have two main development impacts. First, they have created a 'continuous socio-economic field' (Mangnall, 2004: 22) flowing between Samoan communities in modern nation-states, the 'traditional' families, villages, and bureaucratic sector in Samoa, and ultimately capitalist

metropolises. Within this transnational field, the benefits of migration are evidenced by the circulation of people, remittances and goods within the aiga and faamatai networks. My Marsden research project, “Samoan transnational matai: ancestor god ‘avatars’ or merely title-holders?” is a longitudinal project which examines intergenerational experiences of transnational faamatai across three nodes of meta-Samoa (Australia, Hawaii, and San Diego). Findings reveal that key indicators of the stability of this socio-economic field are the four directional flows of remittances or tautua (cash to families and villages, cash to families, villages and Samoa through saofai (matai installations), cash to Samoa via tourist dollars, cash to families and villages, and Samoa via family reunions and funerals, evidenced by high levels of repeat visits to Samoa, including malaga-transnational funding for community projects (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2004; Franco, 1991), and aumalaga (visiting families as tourist visits). See Figure 7.



Figure 7 ‘Tautua’ findings from survey.

Secondly, migration has led to an increase in the total Samoa population within that transnational field (see Table 1), documented as approximately 200,000 in Samoa, and a conservative 420,000 in the western metropolises of New Zealand, Australia and the United States alone. Considering the fact that over a half of all Samoans now live overseas, the faamatai has clearly become transnational in scope.

**Table 1 Samoan population in Samoa and i fafo 2000-2018**

Year	Samoa <sup>1</sup>	NZ <sup>2</sup>	Australia <sup>3</sup>	Hawaii <sup>4</sup>	Mainland US <sup>5</sup>
1990s-2000	162,866				
2000	174,610				
2001		115,000			
2002					
2003					
2004					
2005	179,929				
2006		131,103	15,244		
2007					
2008					
2009					
2010	186,205			37,463	147,077
2011			55,843		
2012					
2013		144,138			
2014					
2015	193,759				
2016	195,125		75,755		
2017	196,440				
2018	197,695	160,000*			

1. <http://www.worldmeters.info/world-population/samoa-population/>
2. <http://teara.govt.nz/en/interactive/1566/samoan-population-in-new-zealand-1961-2013>
3. <http://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/samoan-culture/samoans-in-australia>
4. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samoan\\_Australians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samoan_Australians)
5. *Samoa Population by County, Island and Census Tract in the State of Hawaii: 2010*. State of Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism Research and Economic Analysis Division Hawaii State Data Center February 2012, p.5
6. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samoan\\_Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samoan_Americans)

\*= Estimate

### **Samoan transnationalism**

Governments of Pacific nations now recognise the influence that globalisation is having on their countries. Since the 1970s they have been influenced by a set of economic drivers known as economic rationalism or neoliberalism. Leading known players influencing government policies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the blatantly increasing role of China in the Pacific, all ascribe to this theory (Gough, 2006: 83). How then have Samoans risen to this challenge? Through faamatai, Samoan individuals and families have responded strategically to both the challenges and opportunities impacting on them. Samoans are recognised for their adaptation to new circumstances, for striving to take from the new what suits them without relinquishing what is of great importance. They have demonstrated a tireless ability to survive through great change, such as the three C's – colonialism, Christianity, capitalism (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2009). Their response to the current globalisation era is no different: they have carved out their market niche and adjusted to new circumstances. They are part of a group of new transnational Pacific communities that are experiencing migration as a process of empowerment, a process referred to as “globalisation from below” (Kennedy & Roudometof, 2003: 6 cited in Gough, 2006: 83).

Gough (2000: 84) refers to the period 1850s to 1914 – the opening up of Samoa by whalers, the first missionaries, foreign shipping companies, and ‘commercialism’ as the “first period of globalization” as Samoa’s economy commenced integration into the global economy. This period of the three C’s was articulated by Samoans as occasions of “opposition” (Anae, 2002: 163). Such occasions have fuelled an enduring and persistent Samoan identity both in Samoa and amongst its transnational communities (Anae, 1998). It is this enduring sense of Samoanness and adhesion to the ancient centrality of the well-being of the family through faamatai that has sustained Samoa and Samoans through many eras of transformation, including finding their niche in a neo-liberal globalised world.

### **Faamatai**

Today, Samoa is a nation governed by matai - titled family heads. The role and responsibilities of the matai in Samoa is to ensure the wellbeing of his/her family both domiciled in the village and in transnational spaces. The role and responsibilities of transnational matai domiciled out of Samoa is the wellbeing of both his/her family in the host country, and the family in Samoa, as well as other transnational spaces. In 2016, 70,000 registered matai and 146,481 matai titles accounted for 37% of the population in Samoa

(Meleisea, 2016). Only matai can be elected to Parliament, and universal suffrage introduced in 1991 to replace the former electoral system that had restricted the right to vote to matai only, has enabled all Samoans aged 21 and over the right to vote in elections. Prior to 1991, a crisis arose in Samoa, precisely because only matai could vote or hold elected office. In order to increase the numbers of their voters, senior chiefs began to split lower matai titles among several holders or created new titles. This inflationary practice became so common that Samoans referred derisively to these new voters as matai pālota (ballot chiefs) (Chappell, 1990: 287).

This reform movement drew criticism from some scholars. Meleisea states “Western notions of individual rights and freedoms have been promoted by mass education and emigration” (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1983: 111). The matai system, including splitting titles and creating new ones, had been exported overseas in diaspora to New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Western-educated Samoans are earning better incomes, acquiring pālota titles, and entering politics. “The foremost source of change in Samoa today is from New Zealand,” Meleisea says. “There is hardly a family in Samoa without relatives here, and there are few Samoans in New Zealand who do not maintain a relationship with their homeland” (Meleisea, 1992: 63-64).

It is a well-known fact that Samoans in New Zealand are the power house of faamatai in Samoa and in transnational spaces (see Figure 8). The Demographics chart shows that of 550 responses, 58% matai survey responses came from New Zealand compared to 31% from Australia and 7% from USA). Kane (1995) also states that economic indicators of remittance/cash flows are mainly coming from New Zealand.



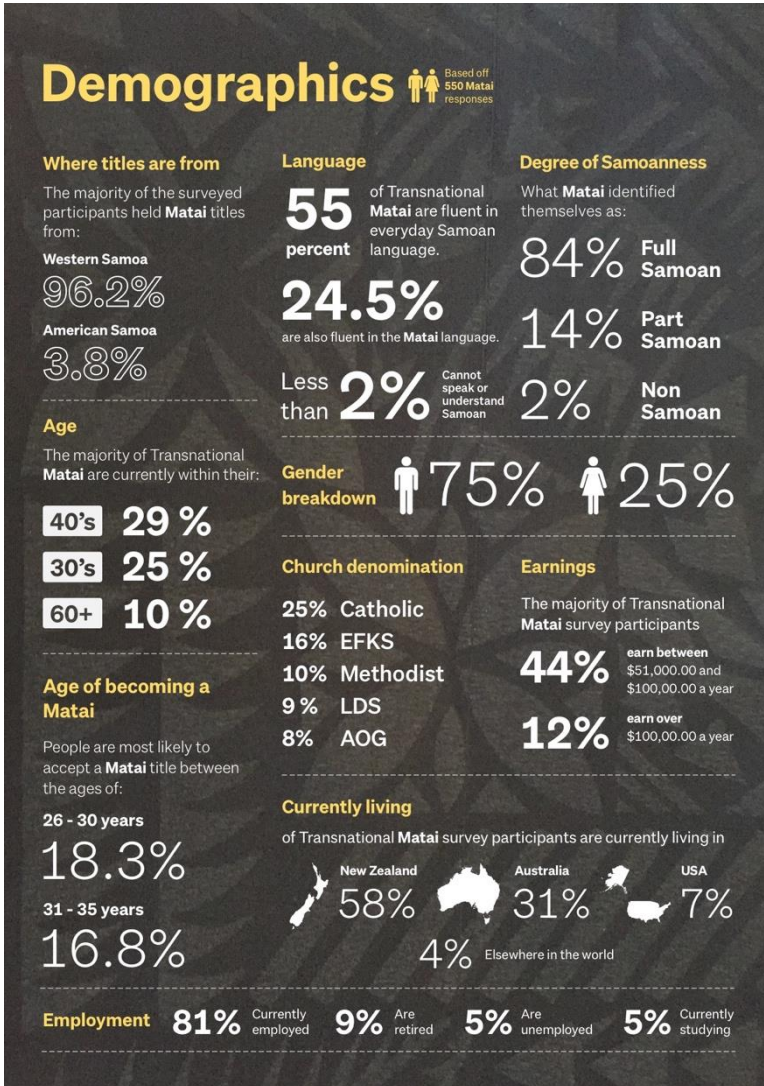


Figure 8 Demographics from survey.

A HANDBOOK FOR TRANSNATIONAL MATAI (CHIEFS)  
TUSIFAITAU O MATAI FAFO O SAMOA

An examination of the entire 41 books of the Matai registers held in the Samoa Land and Titles Court in 2016 revealed that there was a total of 70,000 registered matai (Meleisea, 2016), and 146,481 registered titles (Potogi, 2016: 126).

From a further examination of the matai registers in September 2018, I can now reveal that of the 70,000 registered matai, 2,083 of them were born out of Samoa (born i fafo). This number is a very conservative number which does not take account of all registered matai born in Samoa and domiciled i fafo given that the Samoan population in Samoa is approximately 200,000, while the Samoan population overseas numbers approximately 420,000. Of the registered matai born i fafo, 83.5% were born in New Zealand, 6.6% born in Australia, 6.3% born in United States, and 3.6% born elsewhere in the world.

**Table 2 Matai Registrations of matai born out of Samoa (i fafo)**

No.	District	Born in NZ	Born in Australia	Born in US	Born elsewhere	TOTAL
1.	Vaimauga Sasae	70	4	2	1	77
2.	Vaimauga sisifo	59	5	6	6	76
3.	Faleata Sasae	7	0	0	0	7
4.	Faleata sisifo	18	2	2	0	22
5.	Sasaaa le Falefa	54	1	10	4	69
6.	Sasaaa le Usoaa	66	3	8	3	80
7.	Aana Alofi Nu.1	59	1	3	2	65
8.	Aana Alofa Nu.2	8	0	0	0	8
9.	Aana Alofa Nu.3	80	9	1	3	93
10.	Aiqa I le Tai	73	7	4	2	86
11.	Falelatai & Samatau	34	5	5	1	45
12.	Lefaga & Faleaseela	91	6	2	5	105
13.	Safata	66	1	2	0	69
14.	Siumu	33	1	2	2	38
15.	Falealili	43	0	2	1	46
16.	Lotofaaa	10	1	1	0	12
17.	Leoa	10	1	1	2	14
18.	Aleipata Itupa i	4	0	3	0	7
19.	Aleipata Itupa i Lalo	26	2	0	2	30
20.	Vaa o Fonoti	20	0	2	4	26
21.	Anoamaa Sasae	43	1	3	1	48
22.	Anoamaa Sisifo	16	0	2	2	20
23.	Fasaleleaaa Nu.1	171	17	10	6	204
24.	Fasaleleaaa Nu.2	92	2	12	4	110
25.	Fasaleleaaa Nu.3	24	1	4	0	29
26.	Fasaleleaaa Nu.4	22	5	4	2	33
27.	Gaaamauqa Nu.1	44	2	5	3	54
28.	Gagaemauga Nu.2	63	7	2	2	73
29.	Gagaemauga Nu.3	30	19	0	0	49
30.	Gagaifomauga Nu.1	22	1	2	0	25
31.	Gaaifomauaa Nu.2	29	2	0	2	33
32.	Gaaifomauaa Nu.3	6	2	0	2	10
33.	Vaisiaano Nu.1	12	1	3	1	17
34.	Vaisiaano Nu.2	16	1	1	2	20
35.	Falealuoo	12	2	1	2	17
36.	Alataua Sisifo	116	10	11	0	137
37.	Saleaa	45	4	3	1	53
38.	Palauli Sisifo	36	4	9	0	49
39.	Satuoaita	33	2	0	1	36
40.	Palauli Sasae	53	4	5	6	68
41.	Palauli le Falefa	30	2	0	1	33
				133	76	2083

Add to this NZ-born cohort, the 50% Samoan-born transnational matai domiciled in New Zealand respondents from the transnational matai survey - the math produces some strong trends. While we cannot be certain that these samples are representative of the entire population of Samoan matai, these results suggest that a very substantial proportion of transnational Samoan matai live in New Zealand (of the 420,000 Samoans who live outside of Samoa, over a quarter of them live in New Zealand - Samoan population in New Zealand according to 2013 census was 144, 138, with projected population as 160,000 in 2018 (see Table 2 above).

Such concerns are echoed by others. The Macphersons (2009) in their sociological study of the impact of globalisation on a Samoan village, presaged the role of globalising forces on the shift from chiefly and religious authority, to a questioning of democracy in Samoa when they wrote that migration has created new, dispersed multi-nodal forms of the Samoan family and village that have become more dispersed and more complex than ever before, and that the capacity of traditional faamatai in Samoa to manage change in religious and secular spheres is being challenged by transnational faamatai “because the criteria for membership in these elites have shifted over time, membership of family and village elites is no longer homogeneous as it once was” (2009: 191).

Findings from my Marsden project (Anae et al., 2017 and Gough, 2006, 2009) provide an important counter-claim to this assertion. A counter-claim which marks these shifts among transnational faamatai as Samoa’s comparative advantage in a globalising world. These shifts are occurring on the edges, Samoa i fafo (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2004). After all, Samoa cultural evolution is not merely a growth in complexity. It will involve stronger political controls, more exploitative relationships, more violence, more conflict, more risk taking and greater general insecurity as transnational matai negotiate the edges of the transnational spaces. At the same time though, we observe growth of skills of transnational Samoan skills in all fields – sports, academia, the arts, music, and politics - and in the arts of poetry and film making. Transnational matai, especially in New Zealand are playing a prominent part in promoting their comparative advantage in a globalising world, the precursor of high space-age progress (Anae, 2006).

Journalist Gilbert Wong (2002) sums up Pacific Islanders’ achievements in New Zealand:

All that first-generational migrant drive for children to make the most of education has resulted in the police officers, nurses, teachers, bank

managers, lawyers and doctors...Some have attained the higher reaches of society...professional associations have sprung up...a critical mass of Pacific people forming a new identity a few hours by 747 from their home islands. New Zealand is close enough to the springs of Pacific culture for those living here to be refreshed and constantly renewed, whatever they choose to call themselves. And wherever, in terms of class, they end up.

In this context, transnational Samoan matai must create challenges in the religious and secular spheres and not accept meekly the increased pressure of adhering to arbitrary authority. At the same time though, this comparative advantage is driven by their commitment to achieve peace and harmony, not only for their families in transnational spaces but also for a transnational tenet of faamatai expressed by research participants as ‘to be lima malosi and loto alofa’ (to have strong hands and a loving heart) which delineate the effective and affective ties to being a matai and the faamatai practised in transnational spaces (Anae et al., 2016). In these illustrative injunctions we see the emergence and resurgence of a moral and ancient relational ethical code – o le ala i le pule o le tautua. This research shows that major cultural fundamental changes resulting from the impact of globalisation are still anchored in the intensification of traditional widespread Samoan faamatai practices, which enables transnational matai to develop Samoa from afar.

### **O le ala i le pule o le tautua: ethnographic data**

Based on ethnographic data from my Marsden Research Project, and findings based on a survey of faamatai experiences completed by 550 transnational matai, the sacred tenet of Samoan faamatai leadership – O le ala i le pule o le tautua will now be discussed. Transnational faamatai experiences/meanings and attitudes are important indicators of the sustainability of faamatai and faasamoa (Samoan culture) in transnational spaces and ultimately in Samoa and should be acknowledged.

The literal translation of o le ala i le pule o le tautua is ‘the way to power is through service’. Pule infers secular authority and economic strength (malosi) and is the effective tie; tautua is to serve with reverence and dignity (mamalu) and is the affective tie.

### **Knowledge of faamatai**

The title only has meaning if the family is together...otherwise it's an empty symbol.

A strong theme emanating from the data is that of 'the reluctant matai'. Most matai preferred to stay at the back "cooking the pig" – the work of untitled men of the village- rather than take on a matai title. Many hesitated and procrastinated about this important decision before deciding to take on matai titles. Almost all matai participants recalled this 'reluctancy', but still decided to accept the call from aiga in Samoa. Reasons for accepting their matai titles varied, but all participants had a strong sense of their service to village, family, church and the Samoan community where they lived and in Samoa. Many expressed that their reasons for accepting titles were for love of mother and/or love of mother. Other common reasons for accepting were because the title acknowledged their service and support for faasamoa, to honour a parent's wish to take on a title, and to help their family. Some saw being a matai as exciting, a blessing from God, or a chance to use leadership skills from careers in the military or public service. Many resisted initially, but changed their minds because of family wishes, the death of a parent or the need to help in a family emergency like the 2009 tsunami.

Growing up, all the men knew about faasamoa and faamatai was the work - the umu (oven), killing the pig, and other feau (work). For most their first real education was serving a matai, usually their father. Service was "being a good son", learning by watching and doing rather than talking. The women usually learned from a parent, especially if their mother was a matai, but also from taking on leadership in their communities overseas, especially teaching the Samoan language and customs.

Being a good matai was seen as "taking care of your family so they're happy" rather than exercising power. For another "the power of the matai [is to] develop your family". It was also important for matai overseas to tautua mamao (provide service from afar) to be "loved" when they return to Samoa. A transnational matai also needed to understand and combine faasamoa and democracy. The women also stressed the need to understand "path of the matai" – having the right attitude, ethics, language and respect.



Figure 9 'The reluctant matai' findings from surveys.

## **Tautua**

Tautua, or service, was seen as the most important requirement of a transnational matai. One young matai described it as the “best part” of Samoan culture. A pioneer matai agreed but lamented that “money carries more weight” than actual physical service.

For the pioneer generation, tautua embraced a range of community and church activities - organising flag days and other anniversary celebrations, setting up cultural and language programmes, radio and TV programmes, hosting official delegations from Samoa, and raising help for villages. For the younger matai, showing respect for elders was important. Those born overseas tended to focus their tautua around the church. Their lack of confidence with the language and lack of extended family nearby were cited as reasons for them being less involved as matai at family occasions.

Support for family and villages in Samoa and elsewhere was an important part of tautua for all the matai. That included leading the extended aiga monotaga (traditional contributions to the village or to family social obligations), and faalavelave (service in terms of money, time, hosting, and visiting during ritual occasions) for weddings, funerals and ‘Church things’.

Faalavelave at a distance from family and villages in Samoa caused misgivings for many overseas-born and raised matai. For some, it was a “burden”, with relatives in the islands making excessive demands for excessive spending on funerals, or not being honest about what the money was spent on. But one young matai felt those who complained did not understand faalavelave was reciprocal and a way to “work together so then the work load is easier and lighter”.

## **Inter-generational challenges:**

### **Loss of knowledge of faasamoa and faamatai**

This was identified as the most important challenge by both older pioneer (original migrant generation), and younger matai. Incompetency in tautala faasamoa, Samoan language, was seen as the biggest problem for matai raised or born overseas. One pioneer matai felt “kids are hesitant” because they did not know the correct “respectful language” required by matai when speaking and by others when talking to them. A younger matai admitted he hesitated over accepting a title because of the injunction to “educate your mouth first before becoming a chief”.



Younger matai gained confidence from speaking at church, learning from elders and at family faalavelave. Some enrolled in Samoan language classes or memorised from books. The absence of village meetings outside Samoa also contributed to the lack of understanding about the faamatai. Classes were a poor substitute for learning “from observing, on top of service”.

As a result, young Samoans overseas felt “being a matai brings hardship”. Many were turning their backs on faasamoa and faamatai because these were perceived as being just about faalavelave and giving money.

### **More alii titles**

A trend identified by some participants was for transnational matai and matai tamaitai to be given alii (sacred chief) titles rather than tulafale (orator chief) or speaking titles. It was seen as further constraining young matai whose “faasamoa is weak” from taking part in discussions and decisions. Some female matai suggested it reflected views that women needed to be protected from potential political conflicts as tulafale, or that the faamatai was the domain of men.

### **Transformations:**

#### **The Church**

For countries overseas there are no villages, so the church is the village.

As substitute villages, the churches were seen by the pioneer generation as the “the backbone” for maintaining the faasamoa and faamatai and passing them on to younger generations. There was a symbiotic relationship between pioneer matai and faifeau (Church ministers) of the various denominations. However, younger matai had concerns. Although the churches were “the primary school where you’ll be educated and advised - how to speak formally”, if they did speak, they risked public criticism for their lack of Samoan language and knowledge of the faasamoa. Misgivings were also expressed about the churches’ influence over faasamoa and faamatai and the lack of coherence with practices in Samoa. One younger matai felt the villages and the chiefs “don’t really have a say anymore because priorities are firstly given to the leaders of denominations...they act as if they’re chiefs in the village”.

### **Matai tamaitai**

The Matai tamaitai expressed strong views about difficulties being recognised as ‘real’ matai.

They themselves believed their titles reflected “ability” and “because the elders have faith in me”. The main obstacles were from male matai who were “ignorant” about why female matai existed, and from those who did not believe female matai should exist at all. Living overseas had provided ways to challenge such attitudes that would perhaps be unavailable in Samoa. In Hawaii, for example, a female matai used her Samoan radio programme to challenge a male matai who had told a female tulafale she could not speak at a wedding.

Some of the matai tamaitai were acknowledged by their male counterparts for their leadership and strong service, particularly for promoting Samoan language and customs. A pioneer matai said opponents of female matai would do well to remember Salamasina, “one of the greatest traditional leaders in Pacific history” whose era marked “a moment of peace [and] the flowering of our race in voyaging and building fale (houses) and all of the art forms and the medicine”.

Fiti-Sinclair et al. (2017) report the presence of cultural obstacles to women’s political participation in villages (see Meleisea et al., 2015 also). This found that although most villages in Samoa do not formally or overtly discriminate against matai tamaitai that there are barriers of Samoan ‘custom and usage’ to women’s participation in village government.

Few matai tamaitai sit in the village council (fono) but those who do so have a better chance to make themselves known as decision-makers in the community. In some villages there is an unspoken convention that male matai are the decision-makers, so women who want to take a public role in politics (compared to advising their menfolk privately) need to be quite courageous in taking their places and speaking in the councils (ibid.: 48).

Some also referred to the importance of holding a title of high rank and seniority as a consideration for a person aspiring to become an MP. This is because a senior, high ranking title carries more prestige than a more minor matai title, and can be more influential, they said. The issue of seniority was alluded to by one of the candidates, who said that while she attended the village council, she did not speak, in deference to a senior holder of the same title as her own, who had that prerogative. These cultural considerations are very important in the Samoan system of politics and governance.

The matai tamaitai participant narratives argue that being overseas has opened up new opportunities for matai tamaitai not available in Samoa. For matai tamaitai in Sydney, Hawaii and in San Diego, one of these opportunities is the overt exertion of her pule (secular authority), malosi (economic strength), mana (spiritual power) and mamalu (reverence, dignity and social power) in the absence of a traditional ‘village’ and thus male-dominated village councils and suffocation of the dominance of churches and faifeau (Anae et al., 2016). In essence the transnational space away from Samoa provides the opportunity for the revitalising of Samoan matai tamaitai as leaders of Samoan transnational communities (Anae, 2017).

### **New forms – the Atoalii in Hawaii**

A unique development of the faamatai in Hawaii is the Atoalii, formed in the early years of Samoan settlement there, and whose members act in similar ways to village matai in Samoa. Initially the council was instrumental in organising faalavelave, annual flag days, hosting visiting Samoan groups, and working with social agencies to help with Samoan youth. But the Atoalii’s prominence has faded in later years amid disagreements over the acceptance of government money to run flag days and the Atoalii bestowing some matai titles on members.

### **The future of faamatai**

Some participants were pessimistic. One younger matai feared the faamatai was “tottering on the edge” because of arrogance by some matai. One pioneer matai suggested faasamoa would be overwhelmed by “the American life” and “after the old generation is gone, the children will not have anyone to listen to”. But most believed the faasamoa and faamatai would survive outside Samoa, because “we are the faasamoa...that’s part of who we are”. One younger matai felt it would survive but “require much more to maintain it...financially”.

Reinforcing that the faamatai could not be separated from duties to Samoa was important for some pioneer matai. It was essential to maintain Samoa as the “sacred place”, the spiritual source that would sustain faasamoa “wherever we go and no matter how many generations we move”. Among the younger matai, there was more emphasis on the need to respect elders in the aiga and church, and to know that despite hardships - the constant demands on money, time and services, this was the path of a chief. Most felt giving was central to maintaining faamatai overseas and “if you don’t give, then you won’t get blessings...matai i fafo need to realise this”.

Some pioneer matai suggested changes to the way transnational matai were chosen and trained. Aiga should define the qualities needed to be a good alii or tulafale, then identify a young person and “shape and mould” them for the role instead of “conferring to somebody in his eighties and then you know five years later...it’s all over”. It should also be the “best Samoan not the best male Samoan...gender is irrelevant”. As well, young overseas matai or matai-in-waiting could be sent back to Samoa “to do the village life, to learn”.

The best way forward agreed by all participants was to teach younger generations born overseas about Samoan aganuu (customs) and language and, especially, the faamatai – to “implement the power of the matai, that’s the power of the matai [to] develop your family”. The need to teach Samoan language from pre-school age to university level was stressed by several matai, as was the need for parents to “force” their children to speak Samoan.

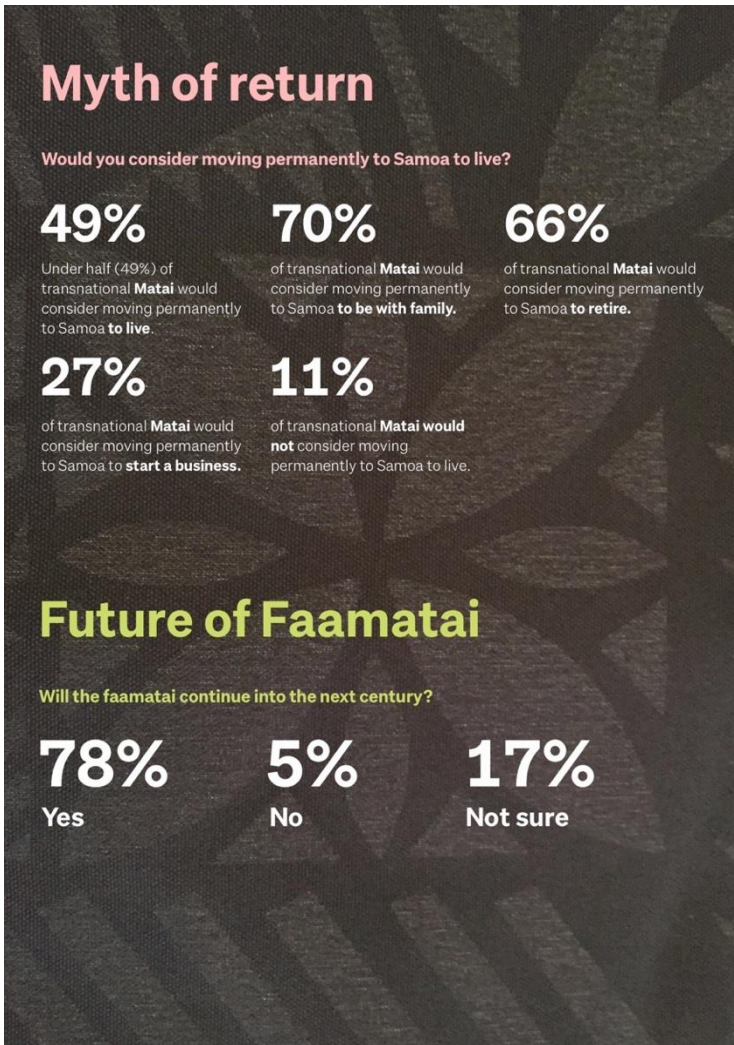


Figure 10 The 'future of faamatai' survey findings

Criticism of matai outside Samoa for eroding faasamoa and not practising ‘real’ faamatai drew differing responses. One younger matai recounted shaking with anger on overhearing criticism from matai in Samoa, which he put down to them being “jealous because we were able to sustain the culture outside of Samoa”. One pioneer matai observed he had seen “more erosion in Samoa than I saw outside of Samoa...so I see more integrity trying to preserve our faasamoa [overseas]”.

This a very salient observation given that the Samoan observer has been documenting crucial attacks on the faamatai in Samoa propelled by global pressures, socio-political upheavals through legislation, the Lands and Titles Court, and research directly impacting sa’o (paramount chiefs), monotaga (contributions to village of title), tautua (service), and Samoan custom (Consultation looks at legislating the authority and roles of family Sa’o [Wednesday 2 November, 2016]; Pule a le matai Sa’o Discussion: Have Your say [7 November, 2016]).

Transnational matai experiences of faamatai, development and the transnational framework are particularly useful, as it allows for an integrated analysis of the relationship between social and symbolic ties, physical, metaphoric return, and repeat returns and the transfer of people, goods and money between transnational corporations of kin, matai and Samoa. The transnational framework (Faist, 1997, 2000 cited in Mangnall, 2004) proposes that a migrant’s choices of physical or metaphoric return – whether to stay, return or visit - are conditioned by their symbolic and social ties to host and origin countries. At the same time, those transnational and local social ties can be used to transfer human, financial, cultural and other kinds of capital to the origin country through physical and metaphoric and real return via repeat visits.

All the key elements for the transnational framework – physical and metaphoric return, social and symbolic ties, various kinds of capital – are to be found in the participant narratives and survey responses presented above. They describe many kinds of physical return between Samoa and their host societies, including sporadic and regular visits, and more importantly reasons why the faamatai and matai identity is important to them. As leaders of families in the transnational space, this makes them doubly responsible for personal as well as familial tautua to their families in Samoa and across the globe. Their leadership roles are more significant amongst matai tamaitai. The narratives describe metaphoric return activities designed to keep ties to the homeland, and to maintain Samoan culture and identity through education programmes, language pre-schools, church services, community

groups, phone calls and letters. Local and transnational social ties are forged by matai participants including spouses, children and grandchildren, individuals and groups in the community such as churches, social and sports groups.

Samoans and matai across the diaspora still express their migration in terms of *tautua* – an obligation to *aiga* – everywhere. *Aiga* encapsulates migrant identity, facilitates a wide range of overt functions, such as raising money, providing housing and employment, coping with life crises, and it gives its members the security of living in a traditional, secure, well-loved group (Pitt and Macpherson, 1974). Gough (2006) makes the point that not only is commitment to the traditional institution of *aiga* one of the major motivations behind migration, but also that its replication across the diaspora is one of the key reasons that Samoans have been able to establish such successful diasporic communities and, ultimately, why these communities flourish. Samoans both personally, and as part of a kin group led by their matai, represent Samoa's comparative advantage; Samoans engaging successfully in the world economy in unique ways while retaining faithful links to traditional practices. Cultural practices based in a tradition have provided the framework for their engagement, enabling the comparative advantage that Samoa needs in order to ensure a sustainable future in a globalising world.

Gough (2006: 91) points out that Samoa's engagement in the globalised world, no matter how seemingly successful to date, is not without risks. Continued engagement is dependent on market opportunities and favourable migration policies of labour-importing countries, moreover the lives of transnational Samoans' are now entrenched in the diaspora. Globally, they are considered 'labour migrants' and the remittances they send home form part of the estimated \$65 billion per annum that is returned to labour exporting economies (Kane, 1995). In the case of Samoa between 30-50% of the GDP of the country, more than all the exports and aid, is remitted each year. Opportunities to participate in the global labour market have boosted per capita GNP, and as a result, assisted development in Samoa. Community services and opportunities, like access to health services and education have broadened significantly.

There are costs however, like changing consumption patterns. When people favour imported food over local produce, this threatens to undermine local market opportunities. Moreover, there are "long-term social and cultural implications" which need to be balanced against the benefits. There is a strong argument too, that emigration hinders development because of

brain drain and skill export (Ahlburg and Levin, 1990 cited in Connell, 2003). There are pressing issues concerned with modernity on Samoan society, such as social disturbances alcoholism, physical/sexual abuse, rise in crime, 'unrest' amongst the youth and suicide.

### **Conclusion**

In their efforts to negotiate the global economy through aiga links and transnational corporations of kin, Samoans have created a meta-Samoa with links across a well-established diaspora. Their competitive edge is founded on three key aspects of Samoan life – the acculturation of mobility, the remaining true to one of the key tenets of faasamoa – the welfare of the collective (Gough, 2006: 39), and a leadership, a faamatai, which is intent on attaining and maintaining peace and harmony for aiga and for Samoa. By participating in Samoan life across the diaspora, Samoans reinforce their relationships and fulfil their obligations and commitment to extended family and village. At the same time that they are becoming socio-economically and politically successful in their countries of birth – the western metropolises, they are reproducing the social relations that ensure the reproduction of faasamoa. By doing this, they are demonstrating their comparative advantage in a neoliberal world.

Of course, there are limitations. A strong remittance economy, is a fragile economic MIRAB strategy (Bertram and Watters, 1985) which depends on positive market forces and friendly migration policies, and relies on an on-going ability to balance the dialectical relationship between western acculturation aspects of the individualism associated with participating in a neo-liberalised world, and the collectivism of the faasamoa. But more importantly, the most crucial limitation is that diasporic Samoans are severely constricted in their practice of the faasinomaga in terms of deep interaction with the homeland. Their faasinomaga (identity) has been compromised by their contexts, and for some, may only exist in remittances to Samoa. Nevertheless, they still see themselves as 'Samoan' and identify strongly with the faasamoa, thus creating transnational nodes of this meta-Samoa. However, homeland Samoans may not see them as such. Despite diasporic remittances and the tourism dollar being a large part of Samoa's economic albeit fragile sustainability, 'real' Samoans for them will always be those who are born in Samoa and who are rooted in their faasinomaga, and who are physically 'seen' to be serving their aiga, villages and country in Samoa. Thus, it depends on the ability of the Samoan diaspora to face these challenges with strategic foresight.



By emplacing pule and tautua within a transnational framework - migration as development with repeat returns, and as transnational expansion of leadership through 'transnational reincorporation' - economic, political and social mechanisms have been created, which enable transnational matai to participate in Samoa's development process over the long term and from afar. Transnational faamatai experiences/meanings and attitudes encapsulated in the research findings and data are important indicators of the sustainability of faamatai and faasamoa in transnational spaces and ultimately in Samoa and should be acknowledged.

Having no control of erosion, some say corruption of faamatai customary practices happening in Samoa, transnational matai are nevertheless continuing to value and act on their tautua to their diasporic Samoan communities, their families and Samoa through their loto alofa ma limamalosi affective ties. Affective ties are much more than merely emotional ties. They are emotional ties of O le ala i le pule, o le tautua by acting on these emotional ties through effective action of loto alofa and lima malosi in the remittances through comprehensive cash flows to Samoa's development through - aiga cash remittances, their tourist dollars and visits, their saofai contributions, and aiga reunion and funeral dollars and visits which are providing the bulk of Samoa's development capital. Despite complaints of transnational Samoans and matai reading articles in Samoan Observer about challenges to faamatai from the Government and Land and Titles Court in Samoa, very few transnational matai have totally departed from its practices. It is an integral part of their lives despite its alleged faults and ambiguities, and Samoa's sustainable future depends on it.

Soifua.

## Reference

- Ammassari, S., Black, R., 2001. Harnessing the potential of migration and return to promote development: applying concepts to West Africa. /IOM Migration Research Series No. 5 Geneva: International Organization for Migration. Available at: <http://www.iom.int>.
- Anae, M., 2017. Tama'ita'i toa: Samoan womanist agency and reflections on Nafanua. New Horizons in Samoan Faamatai (chiefly System) in the 21st Century Symposium, University of Auckland, 23-24 November 2017.
- Anae, M., 2006. 'Samoans' in Settler and Migrant Peoples of New Zealand. Albany: David Bateman Ltd, pp. 230-235. Published with the assistance of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage Te Manatu Taonga.

- Anae, M., 2002. Papalagi Redefined: Toward a New Zealand-Born Samoan Identity, (pp. 150-168) in P. Spickard, J. L. Rondilla and D. H. Wright, eds., *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and Across the Pacific*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Anae, M., 1998. *Fofoa-i-vao-ese: The identity journeys of NZ-born Samoans*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland.
- Anae, M., Tominiko, F., Lima, I., and Fetui, L., 2017. Transnational Samoan chiefs: views of the faamatai (chiefly system). *Journal of Samoan Studies*, Vol 7, No., 38-50.
- Anae, M., Tominiko, F., Fetui, V., and Lima, I., 2016. *Faavae o matai: Transnational matai tamaitai voices*. Measina a Samoa, Conference Proceedings, Volume 7, 185-204.
- Appadurai, A., 1996. *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bauman, Z., 2001. *Community: seeking safety in an insecure world*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bedford, R., 1997. Migration in Oceania: Reflections on Contemporary Theoretical debates. *New Zealand Population Review*, 23, 45-64.
- Bertram, G., and Watters, R., 1985. 'The MIRAB model twelve years on'. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 11(1), 105-138.
- Blommaert, J., 2001. Investigating narrative inequality: African asylum seekers' stories in Belgium. *Discourse & Society*, 12, 413-449.
- Brettell, C., 2003. *Anthropology and migration: Essays on transnationalism, ethnicity, and identity*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira Press.
- Byron, M., and Condon, S., 1996. A comparative Study of Caribbean return migration from Britain and France: Towards a context-dependent explanation. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 21:91-104.102.
- Castells, M., 1996. *The rise of the network society*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Chappell, D., A., 1999. Transnationalism in Central Oceanian Politics: A dialectic of Diasporas and Nationhood? *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Volume 108, No. 3, 277-304.
- Connell, J., 2003. An Ocean of Discontent? Contemporary Migration and Deprivation in the South Pacific. *Migration in the Asia Pacific*. (pp. 55-77) In R Iredale, C. Hawesly and S. Castles, eds. Cheltenham, UK Northampton, MA, USA, Edward Elgar.
- Faist, T., 2000. *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Faist, T., 1997. The crucial meso-level. (pp. 187-217) In T. Hammar, G. Brochmann, K. Tamas, and T. Faist (Eds), *International Migration, Immobility and Development: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Oxford: Berg.
- Fiti-Sinclair, R., Schoeffel, P., and Meleisea, M., 2017. *Women and Political Participation: The 2016 Election in Samoa*. Apia: National University of Samoa.
- Franco, B., 1991. *Samoan perceptions of Work: moving up and moving around*. New York: AMS Press.
- Giddens, A., 1999. *Runaway world: How globalisation is reshaping our lives*. London: Profile.
- Glick-Schiller, N., Basch, L., and Blanc-Szanton, C., 1992. Towards a definition of transnationalism: Introductory remarks and research questions. In N. Glick-Schiller, L. Basch, and C. Blanc-Szanton (eds), *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity and Nationalism Reconsidered*. New York: Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, Vol. 645, pp. ix-xiv.
- Gough, D., 2006. Mobility, tradition and Adaptation: Samoa's comparative advantage in the Global market place. *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* 4, 1 (2006), 31-43.
- Gough, D., 2009. "Cultural Transformation and Modernity: A Samoan Case Study." Unpublished PhD Thesis, New South Wales: University of Wollongong.
- Gustafson, P., 2001. Retirement migration and transnational Lifestyles. *Ageing and Society*, 21, 371-394.
- Harvey, D., 2005. *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E., 1992. *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kane, H., 1995. *Worldwatch Chapter #125: The Hour of Departure: Forces that Create Refugees and Migrants*. World Watch Institute. Washington DC, World Watch Institute. 2005.
- Lee, H., and Francis, S., 2009. *Migration and Transnationalism: Pacific Perspectives* Canberra: ANU Press, 2009.
- Levitt, P., 2001. *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Levitt, P., and de la Dehesa, R., 2003. Transnational Migration and the Redefinition of the State: Variations and Explanations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26(4), 587-611.
- Lilomaiva-Doktor, S., 2004. *Fa'a-samoa and population movement from the inside-out: the case of Salelologa, Savaii*. PhD Thesis in Geography, University of Hawaii, Manoa.

- Macpherson, C., and Macpherson, L., 2009. *The warm winds of change: globalisation and contemporary Samoa*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
- Mahler, S., 1998. Theoretical and empirical contributions towards a research agenda for transnationalism. (pp. 64-100) in M.P. Smith and L.E. Guarnizo (eds), *Transnationalism from Below*. Comparative Urban and Community Research, Vol. 6 New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Mangnall, K., 2004. *Retiring to Niue*. MA Thesis in Pacific Studies, University of Auckland.
- Marcus, G., 1995. *Ethnography in/of the world system: the emergence of multi-sited ethnography*. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95-117.
- Meleisea, M., 2016. 'Afterword' in *Aganu'u ma Agai'fanua o Suafa Matai ma Fanua Samoa: The cost of the silence of the Land and Titles Court's Practices Relating to Matai Titles and Customary Land*, T.T.K.K Potogi. Suva: University of the South Pacific (USP) Press.
- Meleisea, M., 1992. *Change and Adaptation in Western Samoa*. Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre.
- Meleisea, M., and Schoeffel, P., 1983. *Western Samoa: "Like a slippery fish"*. *Journal of Politics in Polynesia* 1983:81-112.
- Meleisea, L., Meredith, M., Schoffel, P., Lauano, S., Sasa, H., Boodoosingh, R., Sahib, M., 2015. *Political Representation and women's empowerment in Samoa*. Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, Apia, Samoa.
- Nahkid, C., 2015. 'Conclusion: The concept and circumstances of Pacific migration' in Lee, H., Francis, S.T. 2009 *Migration and Transnationalism: Pacific Perspectives* Canberra: ANU Press, 2009.
- Nyberg-Sorensen, N., Van Hear, N., Endberg-Pedersen, P., 2002. *The migration-Development Nexus: Evidence and Policy Options*. IOM Migration Research Series No. 8 Geneva: International Organisation for Migration. Available at <http://www.iom.int>.
- Ong, A., 1999. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Duke University Press.
- Pitt, D., Macpherson, C. 1974. *Emerging pluralism: the Samoan community in New Zealand*. Auckland: Longman Paul.
- Potogi, T., 2016. *Aganu'u ma Agai'fanua o Suafa Matai ma Fanua Samoa: The cost of the silence of the Land and Titles Court's Practices Relating to Matai Titles and Customary Land*. Suva: USP Press.
- Small, C., 1997. *Voyages: from Tongan villages to American suburbs*. Cornell University Press.

- Stiglitz, J., 2006. *Making globalization work* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Transrede, 2001. *Migration, Return and Development in West Africa. Report of a Workshop at the University of Sussex.* Available at <http://www.geog.sussex.ac.uk/transrede>.
- Transrede, 2002. TRANSREDE Project. *Harnessing migration potential for development: examples from West Africa.* Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, July 2002.
- Transrede, 2001. TRANSREDE Project. *Migration, Return and Development in West Africa. Report of a Workshop at the University of Sussex, 25 May 2001, [Online report].* Transrede Research Project. Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex. Available at: <http://www.geog.sussex.ac.uk/transrede>.
- Tsuda, T., 2003. *Strangers in the ethnic homeland: Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective.* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wallerstein, I., 2004. *World-Systems analysis: an introduction.* Durham: Duke University Press.
- Walton-Roberts, M., 2004. 'Returning, Remitting, Reshaping: Non-Resident Indians and the Transformation of Society and Space in Punjab, India'. In *Transnational Spaces* (P. Jackson, P. Crang, C. Dwyer. London: Routledge pp. 78-103.
- Walton-Roberts, M., 2004. *Transnational Migration theory in population geography: gendered practices in networks linking Canada and India.* *Population, Space and Place* 10, 361-373.
- Wong, G., 2002. 'Pride of the Pacific', *Metro* 256 (October 2002), 106–107.

### **Transnational Faamatai Symposium Closing Prayer**

Listen for a word from God in this poem.<sup>78</sup>

We don't have the spirit  
We are spirit  
We don't have land  
We are the land  
We don't have the ocean  
We are the ocean  
We don't have relationship  
We are relationship  
We don't have stories  
We are the story  
Rooted  
Connected  
Fixed yet fluid in bonds of  
Being in Areness  
Born from the depths  
Of Inness  
I am 'in' the community  
The community is  
'In' me.

God of Our Understanding, we thank you for bringing us safely through the night and into the light of a new day.

We ask for your blessing and protection today as we prepare to leave the safety of the reef and go out again into the deep blue uncharted waters of Transnational Fa'amatai.

Give us courage to risk losing sight of the safety of shore and all that is familiar and comfortable in the hope of discovering new understandings, knowledge and wisdom.

We ask for patience to help us navigate the ebb and flow of discussion, for wisdom in our speaking and listening, for generosity in the sharing of ideas and experience.

---

<sup>78</sup> Excerpt from Vaai, U.L. We Are Because We Don't Have. *The Relational Self: Decolonising Personhood in the Pacific*. U.L. Vaai & U. Nabobo-Baba (eds.) 2017. Suva: USP Press, pp. 283-284.

God of Our Understanding, we give thanks for the gift of Fa'amatai for the people who have carried it across generations and for those who will shape its future.

Give us the confidence and the wisdom of our forebears to watch the pattern of the stars, the pattern of the waves, the shifting winds, and the turning of the seasons, all of which speak of change and when to adjust our sails and even to set a new course.

We ask a blessing on the people of this community who are here, and who over the next few days will be making long journeys home. We thank you for the empowerment and affirmation that comes with sharing what we have with each other.

God of Our Understanding you stretch out before us The Great and Infinite Star Path that in our following of it we might enjoy the fullness of life. Help us always to follow this way so that at journeys end we may find our true home.

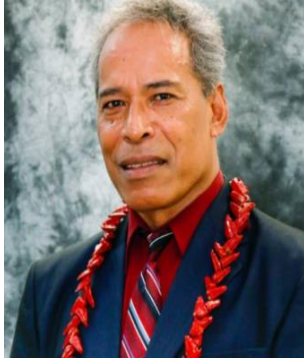
The Peace of God be with you and all whom you love and all whom you find hard to love, today and always.

Amen.

Reverend Alexander Toleafoa

## BIOGRAPHIES

### **MAMALU TAU'AVE: KEYNOTE SPEAKER**



#### **Professor Fui Le'apai Pua'i'aunofu Muā'autau Tu'ua Lau 'Īlaoa Galumalemana Salapō**

Former Vice Chancellor and President – National University of Sāmoa

Paper: **The status of the fa'amatai in Sāmoa, in 2017: A personal experience**

Professor Fui Le'apai Pua'i'aunofu Muā'autau Tu'ua Lau 'Īlaoa Galumalemana Salapō. Professor Fui was the fourth president and Vice Chancellor of NUS on April the 6th 2009 to June 2019. In 1989 he graduated with a Master of Arts with honours from Waikato University and his Doctor of Philosophy was completed in 1997 from the Australian National University. He is a former director of the Institute of Samoan Studies which later became the Centre for Samoan Studies from 2001 to 2008. Following the merger of the Samoan Polytechnique in NUS in 2006 he was appointed as Deputy Vice Chancellor until 2009. Professor Fui hails from the villages of Savaia Lefaga where he holds the high chief title Leapai. He also has the titles of Fui, Lau and 'Īlaoa as mentioned earlier.



## **GUEST SPEAKER**



### **Honourable 'Aupito Su'a William Sio**

Minister for Pacific Peoples. Assoc. Minister for Courts and of Justice, MP for Mangere

**Paper: O a'u o le matai Samoa I Niu Sila – I am a Samoan matai in New Zealand**

Honourable 'Aupito Su'a William Sio arrived in New Zealand as an eight year old when his parents migrated from Samoa to live in Otahuhu in 1969. His father comes from the village of Letaupe in the district of Lotofaga in Samoa while his mother's side is from the village of Satapuala. 'Aupito William Sio has been a Labour Party Member of Parliament for Mangere since 2008. Previously he was a city councillor in Auckland for the Otaru ward and the first Pacific Deputy Mayor of Manukau City. In 2017, he was sworn in as Minister for Pacific peoples as well as the Associate Minister for Courts, Associate Minister for Justice. 'Aupito William Sio is passionate about advocating for diversity and the needs of Pacific peoples. In addition, he has been very vocal about climate change and how it is affecting smaller islands and atolls in the Pacific region.



**Leituala Galumalemana Taiaopo Tuimaleali'ifano**

Leituala Galumalemana Taiaopo Tuimaleali'ifano was educated at Vaiola Sogiatu in CCWS Pesega Samoa. She is the instructor of the Samoan language and culture pharington adult school. She is a member of the fa'asamoa committee and Samoa Mua taeao cultural group. As a strong advocate for Polynesian communities Leituala was appointed by the Governor-General state of Hawai'i to the commission of housing and community Development Corporation. She currently works as the liaison for the State and Federal Hawai'i Public Housing. She joins us today from Honolulu, Hawai'i where she is heavily invested and engaging in mobilizing the Samoan community.



**Asiata Ulugia Taofiga Snell Clements**

Asiata Ulugia Taofiga Snell Clements was born in Samoa and grew up in Vaigaga, Vāiusu. He attended Apia Primary School, St. Josephs College and Samoa College. Asiata moved to Australia in 1988 for further education. He is the eldest of eight children and is blessed with four children of his own – two boys, and two girls. A proud and devout Catholic, he joins us from Sydney, Australia.



**Tonumaipea Peter Stephen Po Ching**

Tonumaipea Peter Stephen Po Ching was born in Auckland 65 years ago. His parents, Edward and Nancy Po Ching, were amongst the first lot of migrants from Western Samoa as it was once known. Tonumaipea is a title he has held for 25 years. He works in consultation with the Head of his family, former Head of State, Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi on family matters and projects relating to genealogy of Auckland relatives. He considers himself no academic, and considers his most significant achievement to be the mastering of the Samoan language.

## **MATAI TAMA'ITA'I TOA: KEYNOTE SPEAKER**



**Loau Luafatu Simanu-Klutz**

Assistant Professor, Samoan Program – University of Hawai'i at Manoa

**Paper: Matai Tama'ita'i at the Intersections of Family, Fa'alelotu, and Fa'amatai in Diaspora: Myth and Meaning for a Mother and Daughter as Chiefs in Hawai'i.**

Loau Luafata Simanu Klutz is an Assistant Professor at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa's department of Indo Pacific languages and literatures where she teaches second and third year Samoan language, literature and history. In upper level courses on traditional Samoan literature, Samoan woman writers the works of Albert Wendt and other modern Pacific island writers. She is also in the Faculty of Centre for Pacific Islander Studies. She is currently a member of Manoa faculty Senate where she serves on the committee of Academic and Policy Planning and the Hawai'i Asian and Pacific Board. She was extremely influential in the Marsden Team's focus groups in Hawai'i from which she joins us.



### **Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop**

Professor of Pacific Studies, Auckland University of Technology

Paper: **Women matai: a case of the more things change, the more they stay the same?**

Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop is currently the professor for Pacific Studies at AUT and before that she was director of Aumanu Pasifika down in Wellington. Before she came to New Zealand she worked as a lecturer at Alafua School of Agriculture Teacher's College in Samoa. She worked as a consultant for some of the UNH's including UPP and UNESCO, UNIFAM and so on. After all those her major achievement is her five daughters and their children.



**Associate Professor Penelope Schoeffel**

Associate Professor of Development Studies and Samoan Studies – National University of Samoa

Paper: **Structure, Agency and Women Matai: A Post-Colonial Conundrum?**

Penelope Schoeffel is Associate Professor at the Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa where she leads the postgraduate program in Development Studies. She previously taught anthropology and courses in the Development Studies program at the University of Auckland and as a visiting lecturer at universities in Thailand and Bangladesh.



**Lupematasila Misatauveve Dr. Melani Anae**

Senior Lecturer, Centre for Pacific Studies – The University of Auckland

Paper: **Matai tamaitai: Samoan womanist agency and reflections on Nafanua**

Lupematasila is Senior Lecturer in Pacific Studies, and Postgraduate Advisor in Pacific Studies, Te Wānanga o Waipapa, at the University of Auckland. In 2014 she was awarded a prestigious Marsden Grant from the Royal Society of New Zealand for her project ‘Samoan transnational matai (chiefs): ancestor avatar or merely title-holder?’ Focussing on issues of ethnic identity for 1st/2nd-generation Pacific peoples born in the diaspora, her transformational work has successfully developed strategies for improving research outcomes for Pacific peoples/families and communities across the sectors of education, health and wellbeing to improve well-being for Pacific peoples, families and communities in New Zealand. She is part of a large extended Samoan aiga, and is a grandmother and mother of three children.



## MATAI TAUTUA



### **Seulupe Dr. Falaniko Tominiko**

Director of Pacific Success, Pacific Centre of Learning Unitec

**Paper: – E sui faiga, ae tumau le faavae. Transnational notions of service: ways of doing may change, but the foundations remain the same.**

Seulupe Dr Falaniko Tominiko is currently the Director of Pacific Success at the Unitec Institute of Technology where he has held previous positions as Director, Pacific Centre for learning, teaching & Research; Principal Academic advisor and Pacific Special Projects Coordinator. His PhD Thesis research completed in 2014, was titled: ‘The changing roles of the Polynesian paramount chief’ and this went on to his becoming a Marsden research Fellow in 2015 as part of Lupematasila Misatauveve Dr Melani Anae’s Marsden Research Project: Samoan transnational matai (titled chiefs): ancestor god 'avatars' or merely title-holders?



**Fonomaaitu (Fono) Tuvalu Fuimaono**

Pacific Responsiveness Adviser, PHARMAC

Paper: **Tautua ai taumalele; Serving from afar!**

Fonomaaitu Tuvalu Fuimaono a replica, a future of the Pacific and his genealogy. He is an orator and his orator title is Fonomaaitu. He is genealogically connected to the villages of Salani, Vaie'e, Faleasi'u, Eva and Fagaloa. Fono led the work within Pharmac engagements with Pacific communities and that is to be expected with his genealogy and the implementation of the Pacific responsiveness strategy 2017-2026. His role included finding balance and authenticity for Pasifika with te ao Maori. Fonomaaitu-Tuvalu is currently the Principal Advisor at Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children.



**Muliagatele Vavao Fetui**

Emeritus Lecturer: Centre for Pacific Studies – University of Auckland

Paper: **Tautua: a relational obligation?**

Retired emeritus lecturer/professional teaching fellow at the Centre for Pacific Studies, Auckland University New Zealand 1995 – 2017. A PhD candidate at the Centre for Pacific Studies, the University of Auckland. 2020 will be Muliagatele's third and final year of his study supervised by Lupematasila Dr Melani Anae, the principal researcher of the Transnational Matai Project, 2015 – 2020, funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund. An examiner for scholarship Samoan with New Zealand Qualifications Authority since 2011. He was one of the writers of the Samoan Curriculum Statement "Ta'iala o le Gagana Samoa i Aotearoa Niu Sila" for Aoga Amata, early childhood education, primary and secondary schools in New Zealand.

## **TEU LE VA: KEYNOTE SPEAKER**



### **Leasiolagi Professor Malama Meleisea**

Director and Professor for the Centre of Samoan Studies – National University of Samoa

**Paper: Authority of the Matai Sa’o in Contemporary Samoa at home and abroad**

Leasiolagi Professor Malama Meleisea has taught at the University of the South Pacific, Canterbury University in Christchurch who was the founding director of McMillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies and the University of Auckland as the director for the Centre of Pacific Studies. He has also worked as the UNESCO regional advisor for social and human sciences for Asia and the Pacific based in Bangkok. The UNESCO representative in Afghanistan and Bangladesh and the Judge of the Samoan Land and Titles Court. His historical work on political development, governance and Samoa's extensive history has been the corner stone for Samoan Studies and Pacific Studies courses in all levels of education globally. Emerging scholars and academics look to his scholarship for indigenous thought and empowerment.

## TEU LE VA



### **Professor Serge Tcherkezoff**

Professor of Anthropology and Pacific Studies – French University Institute of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences

Paper: **The Matai tautua and the word “matai” through time and space**

Serge Tcherkezoff is a professor at the French school of Advanced Studies and the Social Sciences and Pacific Studies at ANU. He also had a significant involvement in the McMillan Brown Centre in Christchurch Canterbury. His books bring together studies in Samoa during the 1980s and 90s with an ethno-historical critique of European narratives about Polynesia. His 2008 piece 'First contact with Polynesia the Samoan case' coedited Oceanic Encounters Exchange desire violence in 2009. Mainly it is on Western interventions of the Pacific regional rational divisions Polynesia and Melanesia. Recently he published a study of gift giving and historical times - the Masel publication for the moment is in French. His current work now focuses on gender and transgender in Samoa.



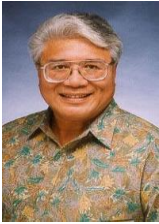
**Luamanuvae Associate Professor Morgan Tuimaleali'ifano**

Senior Lecturer, School of Social Sciences – University of the South Pacific

**Paper: Aga'ifanua ma aganu'u – localized and universal village practices – toward a better understanding of indigenous systems: a case from Falelatai, 'Upolu, Samoa.**

Luamanuvae Associate Professor Morgan Tuimaleali'ifano is an Associate Professor, a coordinator of history and School of Social Sciences faculty of Arts and Law at USP. He's a member of the Pacific history association as he served as past president, the convener of two conferences in Samoa in 2002 and in Fiji in 2008. His teaching and research interests are indigenous and introduced government systems special emphasis on the loss of autonomy in the 19th century and the possibility of losing it again. His postgraduate course on Pacific island diaspora communities explores a Pan Pacific identity for the region citizens in a future united Pacific islands. He's the current head of social sciences and they offer six academic programmes at USP in history, psychology, sociology, social work, gender studies and Pacific policing. He has served on the University of the Counsel for the last few years and is a current member of the Senate.

**LOTO ALOFA, LIMA MALOSI: KEYNOTE SPEAKER**



**Papali'i Dr. Failautusi Avegalio**

Director for the Pacific Business Centre Programme – University of Hawai'i

**Paper: A Modern Matai: Reconciling Modern Knowledge with Ancient Wisdom**

Papali'i Dr. Failautusi Avegalio is a director of Pacific Business Centre Programme and Executive Director of Honolulu Minority Business Enterprise Centre at the UH Manoa Shudla College of Business. A former research fellow of the Pacific Islands development programme at the East West Centre Papali'i is the first native from Oceania to become a professor at the Shudla College of Business. Deeply involved in developing and delivering NDPTC courses in American Samoa and throughout the Pacific he has consulted extensively for governments, colleges and universities, financial institutions and businesses throughout the Pacific. He also has been the primary organiser of many events such as the University of Hawai'i's stars of Oceania in the global breadfruit summits in Hawai'i including the 2017 Summit Plan for Apia, Samoa. Papali'i received his BS in Education and BA in Social Sciences from Emporia State University in Kansas. His MA from Truman State University in Missouri and his doctorate in Educational Administration from Brigham Young University in Provo Utah. A Polynesian Ali'i he holds the traditional title of Papali'i from Savai'i, Samoa.



**Anae Lupematasila Lima Arthur Anae**

Anae Lupematasila Lima Arthur Anae comes from the villages of Falelatai and Siumu in Samoa. He was a former New Zealand politician on the National Party, being the first Pacific Islander MP. He was MP from 1996 to 1999, and again from 2000 to 2002. He also served on the Auckland Council and has contributed significantly to not only the development of Aotearoa New Zealand during his time in Parliament and Auckland Council but is also a strong believer in the value and practice of the fa'amatai system.





**Tuifa'asisina Eseta Motofoua Iosia**

Tuifa'asisina Eseta Motofoua Iosia is 57 years of age and is a New Zealand born-Samoan in the early 1990s. She was bestowed an ali'i title Tuifa'asisina from the village of Faleasi'u. This title is one of a few titles from her grandfather the late Leaupepe Peresia Peteru bloodline which had been dormant for a number of years and was then resurrected. At the time of her receiving the title there were only a few women holding titles and it has only been since the 1960s that women were given titles and even less to those born outside of Samoa. It has been and still is something that she is very proud to hold. The matai system is very important to the structure and life of Samoa and integral to the identity and also to being Samoan and she believes that as a matai we can make changes for the better not only for our country in Samoa but for people, families, churches and communities.



**Talamatāvaio Peteru Sone Iosia**

Peteru Sone Iosia holds the title of Talamatāvaio which is a tamaali'i title of the Aiga Sā Le'aupepē family from Filia in Faleāsiu. Talamatāvaio is an active and financial member of the Aiga Sā Le'aupepe-Talamatāvaio in Auckland that meets monthly and which holds an annual reunion service in Auckland atrennial combined service with the Wellington chapter.

## **TALANOA: FOTU O MĀLAMA**



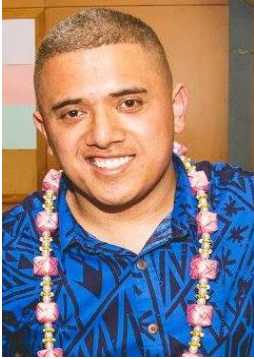
### **Leitulagi Natalie Maulolo Toevai**

Natalie Toevai is of Samoan descent, born and raised in New Zealand. She is a Graduate Teaching Assistant with the Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland and was crowned Miss Samoa NZ this year, has recently submitted her Masters thesis under the supervision of Lupematasila Misatauveve Dr. Melani Anae. A proud Samoan, she hails from the villages of Afega, Vaisala and Vaialele.



### **Seraphine Ekita Williams**

Seraphine Ekita Williams is currently enrolled in the Master of Science programme at the School of Psychology. Her research surrounds the experiences of Pasifika transgender men/women in employment, specifically looking at organizational safety practices and personal resilience. Outside of work and university, she enjoys watching anime, reading manga and keeping fit.



### **Elise Peleti Fuimaono Alolua**

Elise Peleti Fuimaono Alolua is a current student at the University of Auckland doing a Bachelor of Theology in his final year. He comes from the villages of Salani and Sapunaoa in Falealili on his father's side, and Malie in Sagaga le Usoga, and Salelesi in Anoamaa Sasae on his mother's side. Growing up in a very "Samoan" family the faasamoa and the faamatai system was the foundation of his family just like any other Samoan family. Thus, it has allowed him to have a fair understanding of the Samoan worldview especially of that of the matai system. As the last Samoan who will ever graduate with a Bachelor of Theology from UoA (since the course has now shifted under the BA programme) it has allowed him to understand concepts and topics from a scholarly and biblical understanding which has enabled him to see and raise conversations about the role of the faasamoa in the Christian world. His dream is to one day attend Malua Theological College and strive for change for the Ekalesia (EFKS).



**Misa Nanai Dillon Misa**

Dillon Misa is a Pacific Studies student at the University of Auckland, and a senior Fale Pasifika staff member who takes interest in Pacific affairs, culture and politics with a special focus on the Samoa islands. Born in Long Beach California, but raised in Tua’efu Samoa – this proud Marist St. Josephs Old boy has witnessed the change of Samoan culture over the years and has his own opinions and views on these matters. He created a Samoan Facebook page called, “LE FALEOO” where he shares archival footage of Samoan culture and its peoples, and also engages in dialogue with some of the past and current issues that Samoans face in today’s society. Dillon holds the titles Misa and Nanai from his father’s village of Matautu, Falelatai.



### **Sili Mireta Pita**

Sili Mireta Pita comes from the villages of Leauva'a on her father's side and Aleipata Lalomanu on her mother's side. She is a Graduate Teaching Assistant with the Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland and has recently submitted her Master's thesis that focused on incest in Samoa.

## **FONO ADMINISTRATORS**



### **Seira Aukuso-Sue**

Symposium Coordinator

Pacific Strategy and Engagement Coordinator, University of Auckland

Seira Aukuso-Sue is a current Masters student in Pacific Studies and also the Pacific Strategy and Engagement Coordinator. Thank you Seira for being an amazing fono coordinator and for all your hard work. Malo fa'afetai.



**Seugalupemaalii Ingrid Peterson**

Symposium Team & Marsden Research Assistant

Ingrid Peterson comes from the villages of Talimatau, Saleimoa, Lefaga and Salelesi. She completed her Bachelor of Arts double major in Pacific Studies and Chinese followed by a BA (Hons) in Pacific Studies. She is currently pursuing her studies in a Bachelor of Laws. Ingrid holds the matai title of Seugalupemaalii from her mother's village of Levi Saleimoa.