

SAMOAN AND TONGAN MIGRATION:  
THE CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE

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Paper presented to the "Education in Oceania" conference, March 5-9, 1980, at University of Victoria, British Columbia. This paper is in rough draft form and is not to be quoted or circulated without the permission of the author.

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Introduction

American Samoans and Western Samoans have been immigrating to urban-metropolitan America for the last thirty years, while Tongan movements into the United States began as recently as 1968. There has been a great deal of research on the Samoan community in Hawaii, and this interest indicates the visibility and impact of the Samoan there. My research with the Samoan community in California began in 1974 and I have considered the Samoan case from both the island and urban perspective.

FROM SAMOA TO THE STATES

Within this presentation I will discuss the Samoan case in much greater detail than the Tongan case and although much of the discussion about the Samoan cultural response to population growth and migration can be applied to the Tongan case, the Tongans, without political affiliation to the United States, have immigrated in fewer numbers, with a slightly different urban-adaptive response. However, the movements of Samoans and Tongans into urban America has had similar effects on island development and educational systems.

Historical Setting and Background

The imaginary line from Hawaii to New Zealand that demarcates the western boundary of the "Polynesian Triangle" is approximately 4400 miles long. The Samoan Islands, consisting of the "unincorporated territory" of American Samoa, and the independent nation of Western Samoa, lie 2600 miles southwest of Hawaii along this line. The division of these islands into two distinct political entities is a long story presented here in condensed form.

Following years of international intrigue, political struggles for dominance, and threats of war involving the United States, England, and Germany, it was agreed in the Treaty of Berlin (1899) that the Samoan archipelago was to be divided. Eastern Samoa, comprising Tutuila with its excellent harbor at Pago Pago, Manu'a and Ta'u islands, came under the jurisdiction of the United States. Western Samoa, comprising the much larger islands of Upolu and Savaii, along with Manono and Apolima, came under German rule. England was given exclusive rights of negotiation in Tonga, Western Samoa became an independent nation in 19 Tonga has remained an independent, sovereign nation throughout its history. In 1845, Tonga was unified under the leadership of the "Tui Kanokupolu" George Taufa'ahau, later to be called George Tupou I. Although English "negotiations" reached their height in the early 20th century, Tupou II was able to maintain the Kingdom's independent status. Queen Salote Tupou III, famous libertarian, and the current ruler, King George Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, brought the Kingdom of Tonga into the modern era.

Western Samoan Population Growth and Migration - 20th Century

*CAED*

Epidemics of dysentery, influenza, typhoid, and measles, led to high mortality and slow and steady population growth in Western Samoa, 1900-26 (See Table I). In 1926, medical systems modelled after systems in American Samoa began to take hold. According to Pirie:

*In 1900, an epidemic of influenza swept over W.S. ... 20% of the pop. in a 7 week period, bearing heavily upon adults of reproductive age, particularly boys.*

*1900 1905 1910 1915 1920 1925 1930*

Dr. Lambert, an American doctor, working for the Rockefeller Foundation, described the health program in 1926 as 'unexcelled in the tropics'... Infant mortality was reduced from more than 200/1000 live births before 1924 to a mean rate of 79/1000 between 1926-30. The crude death rate was reduced from an average of 35/1000 between 1905-1917 to 13/1000 by 1927. (1970:496).

Population growth has accelerated since this initial mortality transition Population growth, particularly in the period. 1945-56, ...

*CAED*

*carrying capacity prob.*

and continuing to the present, has severely strained the island's ability to support the Western Samoan population. One response to this rapid population growth has been emigration.

*LABOR FORCE*

Western Samoans have always maintained close ties with their American Samoa 'aiga (extended family) members. Artificial political boundaries had little effect on the traditional practice of frequent visiting (malaga) to "keep relations warm". Park(1979:13) reports that in 1903 both Germany and the United States tried to enforce "Malaga Regulations" in an effort to limit the size of parties travelling between the islands. These malaga movements were bidirectional and balanced each other with no significant population loss or gain.

In the 1940's, Western Samoans were attracted into American Samoa by sudden, large-scale financial investment by the U.S. Naval Administration. Immigration of Western Samoans in the period totalled 953 people. Park states that most of the inter-island immigration occurred in the first five years of the decade, and that there was equal, balanced moves of population between American Samoa and Western Samoa in the second half of the decade. Western Samoans returned to their home village with increased wealth, which apparently allowed them to have larger families, stimulating rapid population growth, 1945-56. (Park. 1979:18).

*1940-1945*

*1920*

*1940s*

*1940-45 WS → AS*

*1945 - 1950 WS ← AS*

*population increase due to age at marriage  
increase in longevity due to better health care*

In 1951, Western Samoans began to immigrate to New Zealand. This migration flow was dominant throughout the period, 1951-74. In 1962, another large-scale American investment in American Samoa attracted Western Samoans east. In 1963, the opening of a second fish cannery and a can manufacturing plant created more jobs for all Samoans. The possibility of sustained economic growth in American Samoa continued to attract Western Samoan laborers throughout the 1960's but this island-island migration was only supplementary to the main migration flow to New Zealand.

However, in 1974, New Zealand was no longer able to absorb large numbers of Western Samoan laborers. Samoans entering the country on tourist visas, instead of work permits, overstayed these visas and as an economic situation worsened the "overstayers issue" hit the front page of the newspapers. Dawn police raids and subsequent deportatio created frictions throughout Samoa and the South Pacific community. New Zealand developed an innovative guest worker scheme, attempting to meet the needs of Island laborers. However, with further immigration restrictions in 1976, only migrants with badly needed skills were considered within the work scheme. In 1976, Western Samoan net migration into New Zealand was on the negative side for the first time in twenty years.

From 1974-present, Western Samoan migration has been primarily into American Samoa. <sup>AS MIGRANTS to US</sup> Data on the period, 1957-76, indicates that approximately 30,000 Western Samoan-born individuals are currently residing in New Zealand, American Samoa, and the United States, <sup>NOT of NON AS born INDIVIDUALS</sup> (Western Samoa Migration Report, 1976. South Pacific Commission Population Report, 1972. <sup>very few in AUSTRALIA</sup> American Samoa Census, 1974.).

American Samoan Population Growth and Migration - 20th Century

In 1899, the Treaty of Berlin formalized American jurisdiction over the islands of Tutuila, Manu'a, and Ta'u in Eastern Samoa. One year later the Naval Administration conducted a census of the American Samoan population which showed a total of 5,679 people. Censuses were conducted at irregular intervals in the early period of American administration and the 1912 estimate shows a population increase to 7,251 persons. Census

In 1918, a strict quarantine established by the American Samoan Governor enabled the population to avoid an influenza epidemic that was ravaging Western Samoa, <sup>1918</sup> and the world. The epidemic would have had serious implications for American Samoa where population density has always exceeded the density in the western islands of the group.

By 1919, American public health services were firmly in place. The public health system had been providing vaccinations for nearly two decades, sanitation had been improved, pure water was supplied to a large number of villages, and although pneumonia, tuberculosis, and typhoid remained major health problems, "within the limits of contemporary medical knowledge, American Samoa was a model of tropical public health." (Pirie.1970:495). A

Although there were significant improvements in the health field, population growth maintained a steady climb to 8,056 people in 1920, when American Samoa was first included in the United States decennial censuses, and to 10,055 in 1930. Thus, in the first thirty years of this century the population did not quite double. (As we shall see, this trend in population growth-- a near doubling every thirty years-- repeats itself in 1960 and may repeat again in 1990)

In the 1940's American Naval support activities created an almost unlimited demand for Samoan labor. Park (1979) states that the total American Samoan population increased from 12,908 in 1940 to 16,500 in 1945. These figures represent an annual natural increase of 3.7%, and a total annual population increase of 5.0 per cent. The 1950 census shows a total population of 18,937 which represents a natural increase of 2.8 per cent per annum in the period, 1946-50.

1940	Total Population	12,908
	3.7% natural increase	2,599
	West Samoan migrants	993
1945	Total Population	16,500
	2.8% natural increase	2,437
1950	Total Population	18,937

1900-1940  
1940-1950  
Deaths - Deaths  
1908  
Checkbook  
over  
1940-1950

The large financial investment in American Samoa not only attracted Western Samoans, but <sup>apparently</sup> led to increased fertility. Samoan ~~men~~ <sup>couple</sup> were able to earn relatively large sums of money <sup>through agricultural produce +</sup> and support larger families. <sup>What</sup> A fair # of children born in A.S. to U.S. ~~servicemen~~ <sup>FATHERS + SAMOAN MOTHERS.</sup> is more difficult to explain is why the annual natural increase declined by almost a full percentage point in the second half of the decade. If there were numerically balanced movements between American Samoa and Western Samoa, 1946-50, then possible losses due to migration to Hawaii and California may have occurred before 1950. This would add time depth to the migration of Samoans to the United States.

any  
fair  
1940-1950

In the 1950's, migration north and east, to Hawaii and California, becomes significant. The departure of the Naval Administration in 1951, marked the end of large scale monetary outlays associated with the war effort, and administration of the territory was handed over to the Department of the Interior. \* One indicator of the difficulty Interior faced in American Samoa was the need to appoint four different Governors in the first two years of their administration (HCIIA, 1972). \*

Senator Burton

During the war

A large number of Samoans who had learned technical skills in communications, shipping, and transportation, found themselves unemployed when the U.S. Naval Administration pulled out. In 1952, about one thousand Samoans were taken by the Navy to resettle in Hawaii. This first wave of Samoan migrants probably had more employable skills than the migrants that would follow later. (As American Nationals, these American Samoans and those to follow, enter the country without any distinct enumeration from the Department of Immigration and Naturalisation. This status as an American "National" is poorly defined and this has caused problems in human services delivery to Samoan urban communities.)

Important point →

OMIT

In the early 1950's a drought sharply reduced food supplies, and the reserves of cash and goods accumulated during the war years depleted rapidly. At the same time, the Department of Interior discontinued programs for educational and vocational training (Lewthwaite, 1973:134). American policy in the islands took a sudden shift, and in 1953, the Governor of American Samoa reported, "It is impossible for the majority of Samoans to maintain the standard of living to which they have become accustomed" (Knaefler, 1965:A-5).

A census conducted in 1956, in conjunction with the Western Samoan census, shows only a .6 per cent annual population increase to 20,154. There was a population decrease to 20,051, in the three and a half years between 1956 and 1960 censuses. Fertility remained high during the decade but outmigration almost completely negated the population increase. According to McArthur, "The net loss through emigration was

3,000 against 4100 of natural increase" (1968:144-145). Approximately

3500

2450 (11)

census decrease 113

1950-1960  
64  
1450-1460  
check this

omit



omit  
 1100 of these migrants went to Western Samoa and 1800 went to Hawaii (and California.) Park reports that:

During the period 1956-60, there were about 2450 more births than deaths while there was a decrease of 103 persons in the total population. These figures suggest a net loss of 2550 due to emigration, or an average annual emigration rate as high as 3.6 per cent. (1979:16-17).

The population nearly doubled in the thirty year period, 1930-60. This represents the same doubling time as in the first thirty years of the decade. This doubling time represents 2.3 per cent per annum growth.

1950	Total Population	18,937
	Natural Increase	4,100
	A. Samoans to W. Samoa	-833
	A. Samoans to Hawaii-California	-1,871
	W. Samoans in A. Samoa to W. Samoa	-179
1956	Total Population	20,154
	Natural Increase	2,450
	A. Samoans to Hawaii-California	-2,553
1960	Total Population	20,051

omit  
 Another major change in American policy in the islands manifests itself in the 1960's. The change in policy reverses the population growth trend. A massive infusion of American dollars attracts Western Samoan laborers and a natural increase of 8400 is recorded for the decade. <sup>to carry</sup> The intercensal increase is 7108, implying an annual growth rate of ~~3.1~~ per cent and 1292 net emigration. This figure, combined with an influx of 2831 Western Samoans, 990 American-born (mostly government personnel), and 955 other foreign-born, suggests that as many as 6000 persons may have emigrated from American Samoa in the period. In addition, 416 American-Samoa born returned from Western Samoa, suggesting a possible 6400 emigrants.

3000  
 0 Aug 1960  
 1950-1960

1960	Total Population	20,051
	Natural Increase	8,400
	Western Samoan influx	2,831
	American Samoa born influx	416
	American born influx	990
	Other foreign born influx	955
	Emigration	- 6484
1970	Total Population	27,159

B-D U.S. STATES

6500 emigrants

From 1970 to 1974, the population maintained a natural increase of 3.0 per cent, with an increase of 2849 Western Samoans. To attain the 1974 census figure of 29,190 (Levin.1979) at least 4225 American Samoans have migrated to Hawaii and California.

1970	Total Population	27,159
	Natural Increase	3,407
	Western Samoa influx	2,849
	American Samoan emigration	-4,225
1974	Total Population	29,190

70-74

4225  
1970-1974

1970-1974 WS - AS. 4225 N.Z. 4,225 AS. 1975-76 alone

If one assumes that this rate of emigration has continued to the present then it is entirely possible that approximately 20,000 American Samoa-born individuals are currently residing in the United States.

Immigration and Naturalisation Service data from 1963-78 show that approximately 2800 Western Samoans have entered Hawaii and the United States mainland. Probably, at least 23,000 Samoans have entered the United States in the period, 1950-78. 80.

1953-1979 20,000

Conclusions

Only after 1951 does migration emerge as a significant response to rapid population growth in Samoa. Western Samoan movements have been primarily to New Zealand, especially in the period, 1960-74. In this same period Western Samoan migration into American Samoa also increased accelerating in the period 1975-76.

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Significant numbers of American Samoan nationals began to leave the territory for Hawaii and California in 1952. The number of American Samoans migrating to those two states has increased steadily over the last quarter century.

WESTERN SAMOAN POPULATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

YEAR	NUMBER	DENSITY/ Km <sup>2</sup>
1900	32815	
1902	32612	
1906	33478	
1911	33554	
1917	35404	
1921	32522	13
1926	36688	14
1936	52266	20
1945	62422	24
1951	80153	30
1956 *	91833	34
	97327	
1961	114427	40
1966	131377	46
1971	146461	52
1976	149774	55

DATA FROM:  
 McArthur. 1968  
 South Pacific  
 Commission. 1972  
 \*Data for 1956 is  
 not in agreement.

AMERICAN SAMOAN POPULATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

YEAR	NUMBER	DENSITY/ Km <sup>2</sup>
1900	5679	29
1912	7251	37
1920	8056	42
1930	10055	51
1940	12908	66
1950	18937	96
1956	20154	102
1960	20051	102
1970	27159	138

DATA FROM:  
 Park. 1979

Most social scientists are impressed with the strength and resiliency of the Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan Way) in the post-contact period, 1722-present.

Holmes is clearly impressed with this cultural stability and brings together statements from early Samoan ethnographies to confirm his investigations; (1957:420-1)

Mead characterizes the Samoans as possessing,  
"All the strength of the tough willows, which bend and swing to every passing breeze, but do not break." (1928:495)

Sir Peter Buck feels that,  
" The Samoans are...more conservative than other branches of their race and their satisfaction with themselves and their own institutions makes them less inclined to accept the change that foreign governments consider would be of benefit to them. Their viewpoint is bounded by their own immediate horizon. The Samoans are self-contained." (1930:5)

Another student of Samoan culture, Reverend J.D. Copp, suggested to Stanner,  
" The consequence (of European contact) was a conflict of choice, of great poignancy and irresolubility. In such circumstances, Fa'a Samoa remained not <sup>only</sup> deeply "right" but also became a place of refuge. Fa'a Samoa was home." (1953:315)

Oliver comments that the Samoans,  
" Provide a fascinating and almost unique example of Polynesians surviving the strong impact of westernization without changing their everyday lives and without losing their numbers, their strength, their dignity..." (1951:158)

Although the Samoan islands have been politically separated for eighty years,"the entire Samoan archipelago reveals a remarkably unified identity and striking homogeneity...There is a shared commitment to a large number of kinship and political institutions " (Shore:Preface.1977).

*In Samoa*

Population growth is a demonstration of this shared commitment to the 'aiga (the extended family) and the matai (the chief). The 'aiga is more than a single extended family; it is a localized segment of widely dispersed descent groups. Numerous extended families may overlap in one localized segment and an individual always belongs to several different 'aiga through relations with both his mother's and father's family. As Tiffany notes:

Indeed, it would be most difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to meet the political, economic, and psychological obligations involved in maintaining active membership in all 'aiga to which he could

conceivably claim consanguinity...The presence of multiple 'aiga membership in the Samoan system of nonunilineal descent means that some members of an 'aiga will be geographically dispersed, while other members who choose to reside on that 'aiga's land will constitute the localized core, or nucleus (1974:36).

The 'au aiga is a wider extension of kinship ties, covering great geneological and geographical distance. There is considerable <sup>individual</sup> movement between localized segments. Shore points out, "...the ambiguous and shifting character of boundaries defining residence groups" (1977:38). Manpower requirements, ceremonial observances, and malaga (group travel, visiting) all work to reenforce an intricate network of family ties.

Children are highly valued by the 'aiga because they provide evidence of the fertility and virility of the 'aiga, they represent additional wealth for the matai, and they will support and care for their parents and grandparents in later years (Keene, 1979:23). Adoption is a common practice in Samoa. Children move into the households of different members of the 'au 'aiga where they help with the supervision of younger children, and take care of the elderly. This movement outside the nuclear household reenforces in the child the idea that an individual's family responsibilities extend beyond the nuclear family and immediate kin. Levin (1979) reports that as high as forty percent of children in Western Samoa are not the biological children of the mother of the household where they are living.

Some intervillage movement is directed at providing better supervision and care for younger children and the elderly, but a significant amount of this mobility is the movement of taule'ale'a (untitled men) to meet the needs of the family and the matai. Each 'aiga has a matai with a titled status relative to other matai within the 'au 'aiga. The most consistent indicator of the strength or status of a matai title is the quality and quantity of the land he controls. Farrell states, "the land provides a special status to the matai who holds authority over it." (1965:325). <sup>Ember</sup> comments on the relationship between land, the matai, and the 'aiga:

One of the constituent extended families of the clan has usufruct rights over certain house sites and cultivable lands because it is headed by the holder of the senior matai title. (1971:18)

The matai controls the land, mobilizes and supervises the manpower producing from the land, and allocates the resources of the land to the 'aiga. At special life-cycle events like births, weddings, funerals, the matai demonstrates his ability to mobilize the entire 'aiga into a production unit. The product of the men's labor--fish, taro, breadfruit, pigs, chickens, beef-- and the women's labor--fine mats (ie toga), mats, tapa, necklaces-- are displayed. It is at these large gatherings that a matai may advance his status. These displays of wealth and power will be munificent if a higher title to which the matai aspires is unfilled.

Samoa culture revolves around the interplay of matai, 'aiga, and 'au 'aiga.

The Fa'a Samoa is resistant to change because its elaborate social and political organization is self-perpetuating. The matai derives his power from the land and from his ability to mobilize and supervise the manpower exploiting the land. The resources of the land assure the survival of the 'aiga. The value the 'aiga ascribes to children assures a perpetual source of manpower to exploit the land. As long as 'aiga numbers grow, children and the elderly will always have children and young adults to care for them.

Elaborate displays of wealth by matai at crucial life-cycle events--births, weddings, funerals-- make known the 'aiga's ability to incorporate demographic change into the cultural continuum. Population growth and mortality decline in the 20th century have required that the Fa'a Samoa absorb increased numbers of births and weddings.

*the rest of the community*  
*display his relative chiefly power and provide for the welfare of the community*

## THE CULTURAL RESPONSE TO MIGRATION

The self-perpetuating nature of the Fa'a Samoa is based on its relationship to the land. This has been recognized by westerners since the late 19th century when land claim courts were established to return land to the Samoans and to restrict any future "expatriation" of Samoan soil.

Twentieth century economic development efforts were framed within this relationship to the land. These efforts were making steady progress and in 1964 some optimists were predicting a boom in the Western Samoan economy. But, in 1966:

Western Samoa was devastated by the worst hurricane in the South Pacific in seventy-five years. Hurricanes struck again<sup>in</sup> 1968. The important banana industry, already decimated by bunchy-top disease, was almost eliminated. The hurricanes curtailed production of the other two export crops, copra and cocoa...Although copra production rebounded dramatically, falling prices led to new lows in agricultural revenues. (Shankman, 1976:27)

(The rhinoceros beetle, initially a scourge to agricultural production, remains a persistent problem in current rural development efforts.)

In the period, 1966 to the early 1970's, production from the land declined sharply and this created the potential for change in the Fa'a Samoa.

In 1965, the American Samoan population was deriving less and less from the land, ~~In this lengthy quote~~, Farrell discusses the relevant factors in this changing relationship to the land:

The land provides reasonable sustenance, it performs a useful function in traditional custom...Prestige for most Samoans however, may be obtained more readily away from the land by non-agricultural pursuits and service, and by paid employment either on Tutuila, in Hawaii, or on the mainland. As a result the lure of paid employment reduces the number of young farm workers and the people as a whole become considerably less dependent on their environment than one would normally expect...farmers receive little or no encouragement from the administration to plant crops...Development of the rural economy in American Samoa is a thorny problem and the territory is likely to develop education, health, transport, and commerce while land remains in comparison virtually undeveloped. (1965:325-327)

While the vulnerability of rural development was becoming more apparent in Western Samoa, and the influx of federal dollars was changing the American Samoan relationship to the land, the population continued to grow. The

\* cultural response of the matai, the 'aiga, the Fa'a Samoa, was ~~to send~~ the taule'ale'a to the cities instead of the plantations. By 1965, earlier Samoan migrants had established Samoan communities in Auckland, Honolulu, and the United States west coast. In the later migration flow, the 'au aiga remains geographically extended and resources via remittances become increasingly important to the 'aiga in the islands. As Douglas states:

As time goes by migration becomes more widespread, more institutionalized. Young adults expect to get the opportunity to migrate (rites of passage) and those left behind in the village expect to receive the monetary benefits that should accrue. (1979:12) (Parenthetical remark from Pitt.1975).

But what effect does emigration have on economic development within the islands? Shankman is the first to focus on this question and comprehensively discuss its implications:

\* When viewed as a third sector, next to the agricultural and government sectors in the Samoan economy, the migrants were, and continue to be, the most productive sector in terms of personal revenue generated. They are indeed Western Samoa's "most valuable export." (1976:28).

The Western Samoan Migration Report reiterates many of Shankman's concerns:

It is clear that the country would find itself in an overly critical situation without the alternative of migration, and it is also clear that the overseas migration has a conserving effect on the large numbers of people engaged as homemakers and unpaid family workers. It is also conceivable that those with better skills and higher incentives dominate in the group of migrants and that as such, the depletion of the potential for generating economic activity takes place as a result of the large overseas migration. (1976:17-18).

Until other forms of economic development are underway in Western Samoa, external migration will remain a viable source <sup>of</sup> per capita income for many Samoans. If an increase in per capita income represents economic development, then emigration will be a viable form of economic development. As long as emigration is a viable form of development, the more motivated Samoans may be leaving the country, and rural development in the islands will remain a difficult challenge.