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E Mamae Le Tava'e I Lona Fulu

**A study of the impact of the
Congregational Christian Church of Samoa
on Vaigaga's social structure.**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work in the School of
Social Policy and Social Work at Massey University.**

TULI FEPULEAI SAMUELU

1999

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the impact of the Congregational Christian Church on the social structure of Vaigaga. It includes the stories of seven Vaigaga residents who occupy different positions in Vaigaga's social and political structure. They represent different generations so that their information describes different intergenerational experiences which reflect on historical and contemporary Vaigaga.

The focus on the impact of the church is in part a response to the current cultural situation Vaigaga is experiencing. It is argued in this thesis that the dominant power of the church contributes to the erosion of traditional Samoan social structures and values in Vaigaga. This study brings out the main issues that have surfaced as a result of this relationship by providing relevant research material for consideration.

The participants' stories are presented as oral transmissions in their own words but in English translations. They are a contribution to the body of literature on the continuing debate between the church and the culture in Samoa, a body of literature which, although currently disappointingly small, is quite significant.

A primary feature of the study is that Samoan people are central and essential in defining their own research problems, becoming research participants, and being in control in what is being researched. Having a Samoan as the research assistant further validates this. The research is based upon Samoan cultural principles and protocols as outlined in the Methodology chapter of this thesis.

This study seeks to highlight the issues that will contribute to the restoring of a Samoan cultural environment in Vaigaga to promote the celebration of Samoan cultural values that define the uniqueness of being a Samoan.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to two wonderful people:

My father, FEPULEAI SAMUELU MATAIA ETEUATI

and

My Mother, FAAEFALEUPOLU F.S.M. ETEUATI

UPU TOMUA

Ua nunu le toaau o ufi, ua afu lelea le tausaga. O le aso foi ma le filiga o le aso ma le mata'igatila. Ua patipati foi lima o le tamaloa Faleata, ae popo le tamaloa Vaimauga. Aisea? Ua talitonu le faamoemoe, e ao ina tatou ave le faamua i le Atua Paia, o le Tufuga ma le Mataisau, aua o lana pule faasoaso ma lona alofa tulenoa ua mafai ai ona tatou sagisagi fiafia i le faaiuga o lenei sailiiliga. Aua e ioe le taofi, o se tofa paia i Aiga ma se utaga oo ia Pule ma Tumua, Ituau ma Alataua, Aiga-i le-Tai ma le Vaa o Fonoti, ma faleupolu tofia o Samoa, ae o se vaa tu taumua i le vasa o faigata, sou i lagi o peau lagavale ao lenei ua tatou aleaga i Fagalele, ua tatou oaoa ai nei i Faleseu ma ua tatou saa i maaomalie i le agalelei ma le alofa o le Tapaau i le lagi.

Ao lei sagai atu lenei itu e faailo faiva o le tai i se sailiiliga vaivai poo se taumafaiga le tua, ou te ioe ma ou mautinoa, e faleoo manatu iinei ae faletele iina sona atoatoaga.

I le faaaloalo ou te faafetai atu ai i le paia o ou Tama i Aiga i lau tofa marnao faapea ma le mamalu i Pona-oo i lau tou faautautaga loloto ma le fesoasoani. Ou te faafetai atu foi ia Vaigaga, le nuu e pele, i ou tama ma tina, uso ma tuagane aemaise o le fanau iti, i lo outou amanaia o lou tautevateva i le sailiiliga o lenei mataupu. Tau ina ia fai se aoga o lenei sailiiliga mo lo tatou agai i luma aemaise o le manumanuga i la tatou aganuu.

Avea ia lenei avanoa, ou te faatoese faaaloalo atu ai i le paia i Aiga ma a latou Tama, o Tama foi ma o latou Aiga e fia, faapea le mamalu ia Tumua ma Pule, Ituau ma Alataua, Aiga-i le-Tai ma le Vaa o Fonoti, ma le aoao o Samoa aua o le atunuu mamala. Faamolemole, faamagalo mai lo outou afafine i se upu ua le tonu i au suesuega i lenei pepa.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Who am I?

Taking a journey to explain my culture and its social structures has been a rather 'swampy task' (Finau, 1988:64) trying to weave through the web of different and opposing perspectives already developed by people who are not Samoans, but who claimed to be 'scientifically trained outsiders' (Holmes, 1987:139). It has also become a self-resurgence exercise of trying to reaffirm who I am and where I belong. I am fully aware of my cultural limitations given the fact that I spent five years in Western institutions and as a daughter of a *matai* who does not have a cultural role in Vaigaga's social structure. But given twenty one years of growing, experiencing, observing and participating in the Samoan culture, I believe I am qualified to speak of my perspective as a Samoan.

My parents were both born on the big island of Savaii, in Western Samoa. They grew up in villages in which the *aganuu* (culture) was clearly defined, understood and respected. *Aganuu* is the basis of the *Fa'aSamoa* (Samoan way of life). While the church played an influential role in community development, their villages were organized, structured and administered by the village council of chiefs and orators. Their sense of belonging was clearly identified whereby their roles in the village and the *Fa'aSamoa* were separate from that of the church. They did not have to make a choice between which social structure they should adopt.

Fa'aSamoa and church are two complete things. *Fa'aSamoa* incorporates the whole culture of the Samoan that defines its being. Church was an introduced mechanism brought into Samoa by the missionaries in the spreading of Christianity. However, it has been integrated into the Samoan way of life, therefore becoming very much a part of it. The church exerts a tremendous influence on the customs and social life of its people. Churches abound and religious ceremony is integrated into daily life. Within this broad description, Samoans have come to treat the church as part of the Samoan culture in the way the culture has developed, changed and adopted even though the two are completely different in origin.

However, when we shifted residence to Vaigaga we, the children, became the new generation of a changing social structure. In our homes, we grew up being taught the Samoan way of doing things, however, in the community, the influence of the church teachings was obvious. For us, the practice of the Samoan culture was increasingly based on the church's social structure. This change occurred because Vaigaga unlike many other villages in Samoa, had no Council of Matai to direct and administer the way things should be done. Vaigaga's existence as a community without the influence of a Council of Matai has further strengthened by the development of the church.

Being a young person, expectations and pressure have been placed upon me by society to show how good I am in the performance of my cultural activities as a *tamaitai* (daughter of *matai*). This means, knowing how to speak the proper language, knowing how to behave, knowing how to address the older people correctly, knowing how to walk and sit. However, as Vaigaga society is vainly structured by the church the opportunity is not provided to learn how to do all of these. Recently, there is effort by the youth group to teach some basic roles of the Samoan culture to the youth such as knowing how to serve the *ava*. However, it only benefits a small minority of young people, in fact, only those who belong to the church youth group. Those who are not in the church or those who are in the church but do not join the youth group, are left on their own to find ways and means to learn the Samoan cultural practices. Regardless of whether we join the youth group or not, Vaigaga society labels us as 'youth' and our cultural status and standing as sons and daughters of *matai* is often ignored. Our sense of belonging as Samoans therefore is redefined by the church's social structure. It is my opinion that this redefined identity is becoming a major constraint in the development of young people to better equip them with cultural knowledge to enable them to carry on the cultural Samoan identity and culture in the future.

What is evident in Vaigaga today is the reluctant participation of young people in cultural affairs. Some young orators show little interest in making the time and effort to learn to speak the formal language. It is becoming clear that with no pressure on them to learn and speak the formal language, they are developing a 'do not care less' attitude. The time that I have spent with the youth group made me realise that Vaigaga is a community with no

real sense, understanding and value of its culture. There appears to be little or no attempt to correct cultural norms, protocols and practices if they are carried out incorrectly. An example, is in the order of eating. Untitled men were served first in the youth group rather than the *tamaitai* that a *Fa'aSamoa* structure would dictate. Perhaps this is one of the negative effects of the church. As Meleisea (1987) noted, the church encouraged the idea that women should cook and automatically became those who served as well.

As a community in the urban area, Vaigaga is caught up in a unique system which is only vaguely culturally defined but its residents are still expected to know what the Samoan culture is and how to live that culture. It is a system in which culture and church have become one, with the church playing a major role in development. As a young person, I am faced with the reality that I do not know what my role is as a Samoan *aualuma* (association of unmarried women) in any cultural event. *Aualuma* is the association of unmarried women in each village, who used to organise the reception of visitors, minister to the *taupou* (title of village maiden)¹, and perform several other duties. This is the nurturing place for any young girl to learn the roles, values, etiquettes and cultural practices of a Samoan woman. I rely heavily on my mother's information when we both have time to sit down and discuss these issues. However, the fact that there is no *aualuma* group in Vaigaga has meant that I can use that as an excuse to not bother approaching my mother for help. Most of the young people are often blamed for not knowing their cultural duties and obligations yet those in society who criticise no longer assist in fulfilling these obligations. The cost of the church's profound development in our society is measured by the gradual loss of our basic cultural traditions. It is my hope that this study will help to develop a strategy that will assist our society in maintaining our culture while still maintaining our church community.

The aim of this study is to explain the role of the church in historical and contemporary Vaigaga, in particular, explaining the influence of the church on the social structure of Vaigaga. I hope this explanation will help contribute to our understanding of assessing the church's role as a wheel of change or as a preserver of culture.

¹ *Taupou* is a position held according to Samoan custom by a virgin singled out for her charm, looks and manners. Among her duties is the preparation of the kava.

Currently, there is limited literature concerning the direct influence of the church on the Samoan social structure. This is simply due to the fact that researchers have not looked at this area because it is not perceived as an interest area by the general population. What is obvious is the fact that *Fa'aSamoa* has been taken for granted and is sometimes completely ignored as a result of more emphasis being placed on the development of the church. I am not wanting to draw any conclusions at this stage about whether the church is a 'friend or foe' (Tiatia, 1998:2) but I sought to explore this area myself by interviewing seven people from the community of Vaigaga. They reflect a sample of seven different generations all of whom have different roles to play in Vaigaga society. Their experiences and how they perceived the role of the church, the social structure of Vaigaga and their understanding of the Samoan culture are quoted extensively in chapters that follow.

My interest in working on this thesis topic grew directly out of my concern about the current cultural situation in which Vaigaga society has found itself. My involvement with the youth group has widened my perspective and has led me to consider the influence the church has on the lives of different groups, and on the village's social structure. To clearly understand who we are and where we come from provides a positive direction for development of ourselves in coping with the issues affecting our daily lives.

In helping me to understand my role as a youth member and appreciate my role in the culture, social work provides the link to developing a critical analysis for this study. Social work is about people, their social world and the social structures affecting their social world. The practice of social work provides the framework within which to undertake this study, of looking at the social structure of the church and how it affects the social world of Vaigaga.

Furthermore, my position as a Tagata Pasifika (native of the Pacific) not only underpins the theoretical basis of this study but perhaps gives more weight to this research.

Outline of the Thesis

Chapter one will provide a geographical and historical background to Samoa and an introduction to the traditional social structure of Samoan society. It has focused on Vaigaga, providing an historical portrait and a glimpse of the community in 1999.

Chapter two reviews literature on Pacific and Western perspectives of Samoa, its history and culture. It discusses issues which have emerged following the introduction of Christianity to Samoa and invites further consideration of those issues in contemporary times.

Chapter three outlines the research process. It highlights in particular the issues encountered by the researcher as an insider from Samoa studying in a New Zealand university, returning to gather data from the community as a researcher. The research issues confronted in this study are described and discussed here.

Chapters 4-6 contains an in-depth analysis of the key issues identified by the seven residents of Vaigaga who were interviewed for this research. Their key concerns were identified as follows: land ownership, power relations, traditional practices and contemporary society, changes in the 20th century Samoa, and the impact of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa on social structures in the Vaigaga community.

The final chapter summarises key themes which have surfaced as a result of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Western Samoa: Islands in the Pacific

This chapter provides an overview of Western Samoa as islands in the South Pacific. It provides general information on the geographic context, historical context and introduces the cultural context for this study.

Geographic Context

Western Samoa lies in the heart of the South Pacific between latitudes of 13 degrees and 15 degrees south and longitudes 171 degrees and 173 degrees west (Turner, 1979:1). Between Samoa and New Zealand runs the international dateline separating today from tomorrow - so that if it is late Monday in Western Samoa, it is already late Tuesday in New Zealand. The Samoan group of volcanic islands is situated approximately 2400 miles from Sydney, 1600 miles north west of New Zealand and 80 miles from Pagopago, capital of American Samoa (Davidson, 1967).

Western Samoa comprises two large adjacent islands of Upolu and Savaii and two smaller islands between them, Manono and Apolima, a total of approximately 2860 square kilometers of land area (Kirk, 1996). There are five other smaller uninhabited islands of Fanuatapu, Nuulua, Namua, Nuutele, and Nuusafee. There are no towns apart from Apia which is both the administrative capital and commercial center of Western Samoa.

Population

Documented records about the population of the Samoan group before the arrival of missionaries in the early 1830s appears to be unreliable (Wendt, 1965).

'In 1837, Wilkes estimated the population to be 47,000. A London Missionary Society census in 1845 numbered it at 45,000. The New Zealand authorities in 1917, claimed there were 35,404 people in the group' (Wendt, 1965:3).

The accuracy of these figures still remains doubtful because of the unrecorded numbers of those lost through civil wars, epidemics and also unsystematic methods that were used to record population.

Today, reliable population figures are available from the census carried out every five years by the Department of Statistics. The population count in 1991 was 161,298, 84,601 males and 76,697 females. There was a noticeable low population growth of only .5% in 1991 compared to .6% in 1986. This Report (1991) indicated that the low growth rate is a result of the continuing emigration of Samoans to New Zealand, American Samoa, Australia and the United States of America (Department of Statistics, 1991).

The population of Samoa remains largely rural. While the majority of villages are located on the coastal flatlands, the main settlement area is the capital Apia. In 1991, 34,126 people lived in Apia, a quarter of Samoa's total population (Department of Statistics, 1991). Apia has become attractive for better education and job opportunities.

The age structure of Samoa reveals a concentration in the lower age groups. About 41% of the population is in the 0-14 age group (Department of Statistics, 1991). This means, Samoa's future population is likely to experience a dramatic increase given the majority of the population is currently approaching their productive years.

Religion

The population is predominantly Christian. According to the 1991 census, while the Congregationalist and Catholic Churches remain the most popular, relative support has declined since 1986. Congregationalists noted a drop from 47% in 1986 to 43% in 1991 while 22% of the total population attended the Catholic church in 1986 compared to 21% in 1991. Other denominations like the charismatic churches have recorded an increase in membership.

Unemployment

It is difficult to clearly define the concept of unemployment in Samoa due to its large subsistence sector. For the Samoans, one does not have to be in waged employment in

order to be economically active. The 1991 census discovered that people earned money by turning their hands to fishing, food gathering and arts and crafts. It is acknowledged that issues associated with unemployment have arrived in Samoa, however, the tendency for people to engage in some form of economic activity using customary land suggests caution in measuring unemployment.

Climate

The climate of Western Samoa is pleasantly tropical with two major distinguishable seasons, the wet and dry seasons. The dry season extends from May through October during which period living is pleasant and comfortable because of the fresh trade winds from the southeast. Officially the wet season is from November to April. During this time, tropical rainfall may become exceptionally heavy with very high humidity that makes the group vulnerable to irregular incidences of tropical hurricanes (Handbook of W.Samoa, 1925). In 1990 and 1991 two strong cyclones struck the country. These two cyclones damaged forest, houses, plantations and seriously affected the economy.

Structure

The structure of the islands is very important in influencing and shaping Samoa's mode of life. Being of volcanic origin, the soil is inherently fertile, suitable for farming and for intensive agricultural systems. However, prospects of extensive agricultural development are limited since most of the land is covered with lava fields with thick bush grown over it. All the islands are surrounded by barrier reefs that provide warm lagoons and good fishing grounds for the people. There is an abundance of clear fresh water in rivers, lakes and waterfalls (Handbook of W. Samoa, 1925).

Diet

Western Samoa's traditional diet depends on marine resources especially fish and sea-shells and subsistence agriculture of root crops such as taro, banana, yam and breadfruit for everyday living. Pigs and poultry are also an important part of the diet.

Economy

The economy of Western Samoa is based on agriculture. The village communities are largely subsistence - agricultural farmers producing copra, cocoa and bananas for export (Handbook of W. Samoa, 1925). Remittance from overseas families is a major contributing factor to Samoa's foreign exchange. Recently, Samoa has become a tourist destination. This could be regarded in a positive light due to the contribution to the Samoan economy. Some negative effects may be the pollution of the environment and increasing importance taken of outsiders' views.

Historical Context

Archaeological evidence in Western Samoa shows settlement dated back about 2,000 years.

One feature with an age of at least 2,000 years in Samoa, is the small underground storage pit, probably for fermented breadfruit paste or other food product. (Davidson & Green, 1974:281).

This archaeological finding confirms the existence of a society in Samoa long before European contact. However, there is still a debate surrounding the original settlers of Samoa. The three main Western theories underpinning the settlement of Samoa focused on the works of Buck (1953), Heyerdahl (1968) and Emory (1971) whose work was later developed into the archaeological discipline or the Lapita theory.

The Lapita theory suggested that the first wave of migration saw the settlement of Samoa in which Savaii is the legendary island Hawaiki, the original home of Polynesians from South East Asia passing through Melanesia. From Samoa, there was a second wave of migration back to these Melanesian islands, Eastern Polynesian, and yet another wave explored the Pacific from Hawaii to Easter Island and New Zealand. These waves of settlement of Samoa represented incredibly sophisticated navigation skills (Campbell, 1992).

The Samoans have their own history of settlement as told in the legend of Tagaloaalagi. Tagaloa created everything from the rock on which he stood. This is why Samoans firmly believe that they are indigenous to Samoa (Meleisea, 1987).

European Influence

The first European who sighted the Samoan Islands and made brief contact with the population of Manu'a island (American Samoa) was the Dutchman Jacob Roggeveen in 1722, followed by the French navigator De Bougainville who named the Samoan group, 'The Navigators Island' (Davidson, 1967). Like many other Polynesian islands, Western Samoa became a destination for visits from sailors, whalers, beachcombers and escaped convicts, many of whom landed by chance (Wendt, 1965).

The emergence of the 'Industrial Revolution' in Europe in the nineteenth century would eventually affect the whole world. The Industrial Revolution not only saw the emergence of advanced technology but was also the period in which World powers were competing to establish themselves as empires. One way through which this was carried out was the promotion of Christianity by the Roman Catholics (French) and the Protestants (British). It has always been argued (Meleisea, 1987) that the 'cross went before the flag'. Mission was often followed by colonial annexation. This was how the Pacific was colonised, though there were also economic and military reasons.

The first notable group of European contacts who settled in Samoa were the missionaries. The arrival of John William of the London Missionary Society in the 1830's saw the rapid conversion of Samoans to Christianity. Their influence on the Samoan life quickly became physically evident with '...concrete churches anchoring villages' (Wendt, 1965:11). Christianity's profound influence in Samoa was seen mainly in the areas of education, and in changes to the culture (Meleisea, 1987).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Germany had laid claims on Western Samoa motivated by the interest of the plantation company Deutsche Handels and Plantagen Gesellschaft (D.H.P.G.) (Meleisea, 1987; Davidson, 1967). This period marked the

beginning of a period of extensive land purchase in Samoa. The Germans showed great interest in Samoa's fertile soil for coconut plantations. The overall economic needs of the white population were much more demanding which was why Samoa was needed for its land (Howe, 1984).

Together with the development of Christianity was the growth of trade. In Wendt's study (1965) he found that 'the new converts' thirst was not only for Jehovah and muskets, but for the other goods of the Europeans'. These goods were of little monetary value but of great appeal to the Samoans, and were later traded for land. Between 1850 and 1900, Europeans alienated substantial areas of land from the islanders by purchase, fraud and confiscation (Crocrombe, 1989:108). From the year 1864, Samoa experienced extensive land alienation mainly on the islands of Upolu and Savaii. One of the companies responsible was the 'Godeffroy Firm of Germany' (Davidson, 1967). Expanding world market forces and a demand for coconut oil resulted in the land being attractive and in high demand (Davidson, 1967:39). This also led to the importation and exploitation of Chinese and Melanesians as labourers to work on the plantations. The justification for importing labour - 'the natives were lazy'.

Samoa has had a turbulent history of European administration. While colonisation brought new opportunities and new resources, it tended to disrupt the existing balance of power in the villages, an issue which will be discussed more extensively in this thesis. The defining of 'new politics' (Busch et al., 1994) in Samoa saw the powers of traditional kinship institutions (such as the 'Council of *Matai*') responsible for governing being shifted to the state. This was the beginning of many new changes affecting the Samoan society.

New politics developed when the Germans began administering Western Samoa in 1900. After some initial problems¹, the German administration was relatively stable and Samoa prospered in the fourteen years of Germany's ruling. In 1914 New Zealand assumed the

¹ Some of the Problems encountered such as the acquisition of customary land by foreigners and the importation of labourers.

occupation of Western Samoa, and in 1919 was granted a League of Nations mandate to administer the country. Over the years challenges to the New Zealand authorities grew, especially from amongst the *matai* (title holders) the traditional leaders, who organised themselves in opposition which resulted in the Mau Movement² (Davidson, 1967). Discontent grew among the locals at the way they were administered by New Zealand (Wendt, 1965) and the enormous alienation of land (Crocombe, 1973). Attempts to crush the resistance failed. Finally, in 1936, with the Labour Party in power in New Zealand, the Mau Movement was recognised as a legitimate political party.

New Zealand continued to administer Samoa after World War II when Samoa became a Trust Territory, administered for the United Nations. It was during this time that the United Nations recognised Samoans need for independence after the whole country voted for an independent status from colonial rule. In 1953 preparations started for the transition to independence which was finally obtained on the 1st of January 1962, making Samoa the first South Pacific nation to achieve such status.

Colonisation ended in Samoa when it gained independence in 1962. However, its long term impact will always be felt in the way we live, in technology, the infrastructure, the economy, land, politics, religion, and how we govern ourselves (Crocombe, 1973). While our culture is very much alive today, European imperialism has become an important influence in creating forces of change (Crocombe, 1989:24). One of these forces is 'Christianity'. Religion has exerted tremendous influence on the customs and social life of the Samoan people (Meleisea, 1987). This thesis will examine the influence of Christianity on the people of one community and the debates which continue today as a result of the church's ongoing influence.

² The Mau movement was called 'Mau a Pule'. It was a movement formed by the Samoans to attempt to reinstate their independence and assert their authority in their own country. It was formed during the German administration and continued during the New Zealand administration of Samoa. Its success is marked by Samoa gaining its independence from New Zealand on the 1st of January 1962.

Cultural Context

Samoa belongs to the Polynesian cultural area of the Pacific. In contrast to the egalitarian nature of the Melanesian culture, the hierarchical system of chieftainship in Samoa is very important (Crocombe, 1989). Status is determined by birth in that if anyone is born into a chief's family, there is little one can do to change that (Crocombe, 1973). Authority is centralised to the village council and each village is independent of the other villages' councils. Division of labour is well organised and structured.

The poem by Figiel (1996:135) best describes how the Samoan cultural concept of communality operates.

'I' does not exist
 I am not
 My self belongs not to me because 'I' does not exist
 'I' is always 'we'
 is a part of the '*aiga*'
 a part of the '*nuu*'
 a part of 'Samoa'

In the Samoan cultural context we define ourselves in a communal setting. There is no 'I', the individual, there is only 'we', the community. Traditionally, everyone has lived in accordance with the communal nature of *Fa'aSamoa*. At the end of the twentieth century, however, there is a concern that Western influences may now be eroding *Fa'aSamoa*. This concern will be further addressed in this thesis.

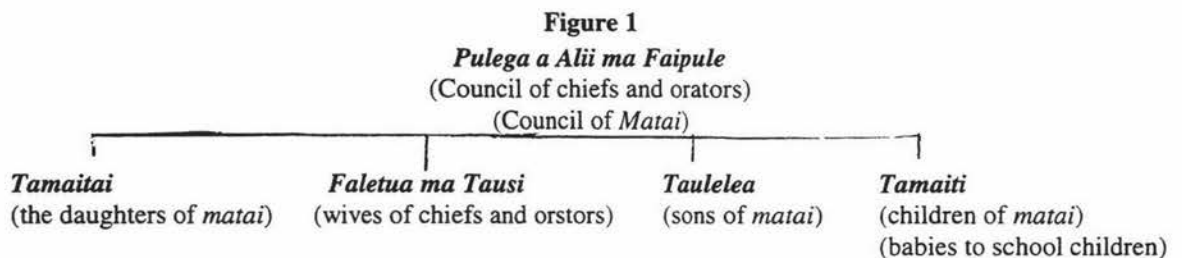
The Basic Social Unit

The basic unit of Samoa is ordered by the diversity of its kinship relations. Today as in the past, the main social unit of the Samoan life is the *aiga* (family). Each *aiga* is headed by at least one main *matai* who may be either an *alii* (chief) or *tulafale* (orator). Every *matai* is appointed with the consensus of the whole family.

Each *matai*'s behaviour must do honour to the title s/he bears and to the people s/he represents. In return for the *matai*'s leadership, all members of the family have a duty towards her/him. Members of the *aiga* must serve the *matai* and this is rendered through the process of *tautua* (service).

This system of strong kinship relations gives protection and security to all members of the family. Older family members are responsible for the welfare of the younger ones who are well looked after. The first part of socialisation is where children are taught about the values, customs and norms of the Samoan culture and what is expected of them by the family, the village and the society. The emphasis is not on becoming individuals rather the emphasis is on being a community. It is very important for the young people of Samoa to know about their values, customs and traditions as they may one day become *matai* and leaders of society. As Le Tagaloa (1992:119) argued, 'for the culture of Samoa insists that the young humans must be reared and fed on words, words, words, that is sweet, polite and appropriate words.' The whole Samoan society depends on these kinship relations as rooted in them, are the mutual obligations and rights of each family member.

A number of *aiga* make up the *nuu* (village). Status and prestige of the different *matai* within a *nuu* is quite clearly defined according to its *faalupega* (a list of ranks in a village). Each *nuu* is politically autonomous with its own hierarchy of leaders governing the community (Meleisea, 1987). In such a system, a *nuu* is made up of five main social status tiers. In other words it has five tiers of its social structure.



Each group performs a range of roles and obligations in order to achieve 'social integration' (Marsh et. al., 1996:44) of the whole community. A number of *nuu* in a specific locality that are linked through titles, and have marital and historical connections

are grouped into combinations (Wendt, 1965). These combinations make up Samoa. In the 1991 census, there were 330 villages making up 43 combinations.

The Social Structure

Giddens (1996) defined social structure as a system in which patterns of interaction between individuals or groups are structured and emphasised that the social life does not evolve in a random fashion. Activities are organised and structured in a repetitive way. The social structure is like the girders which underpin a building and hold it together.

The Samoan social structure is a highly organised hierarchical system. This is physically evident in having activities and roles for each group of Samoa's society structured and organised in a regular way. What holds it together is the *aganuu*.

Council of Chiefs and Orators

In every village, the village council is the highest level of the Samoan society. It is composed of *matai* (chiefs and orators) who represent every family in the village. Therefore if there are 20 families in the village, there should be 20 *matai* on the village council which dominates life in the village (Wendt, 1965).

Role of Matai

The *matai* have two main roles to play. First, as a head of the *aiga*, and second as a member of the village council.

In the *aiga*, a *matai* must show qualities of leadership, judgement and hard work. The *matai* assumes responsibility for the welfare of the family, directs the use of land and their cultivation, for the housing and other assets belonging to the family and even for the behaviour of members of the family.

The diversity of social kinship in Samoa includes ceremonies for marriages, funerals, and feasts for all occasions, and economic functions such as fishing and building. For

assistance, the family looks up to the *matai* for direction, advice and leadership. (Su'apa'ia, 1962)

In the village council, *matai* manage law and order in the village. Life in the village is constrained by laws and regulations passed by the village Council of *Matai*. They make decisions on matters pertaining to the welfare of the village, direct the use of land, and enforce law and order by imposing punishments. These punishments may range from fines, usually in the form of material possessions and wealth such as fine mats and pigs. Serious offences may result in banishment or eviction of the whole family from the village.

The village council is vested with power and authority to officiate in all community affairs and village functions (Su'apa'ia, 1962). An important part of this function is the division of labour in the village and the determining of the activities of the untitled section - the *aumaga* (untitled men) and *aualuma* (unmarried women).

Stratification of *matai* and interaction among the *matai* depends on the status of the *matai* title one holds, and in exceptional circumstances by the length of time one has been bestowed with a *matai* title. This means if five people are given the same title name (usually in the cases of orators), the recent title holders of such name must give respect to the one who has been bestowed with the same name earlier than them.

Tamaitai (Daughters of matai)

Tamaitai is the name given to daughters of *matai*. The Samoan culture places importance on the role of *tamaitai* as the:

healer, teacher, priestess, maker of currency and wealth (the *faioa*) and the peacemaker

(Le Tagaloa, 1992:118).

The status of the *tamaitai* in the Samoan culture as the '*feagaiga*' or covenant (Le Tagaloa, 1992:118) is of profound importance. The Samoan culture defines the *feagaiga* as the man's sister towards whom he owes special duties. It is the most sacred

relationship between the brother and sister such that the brother must serve his sister with honesty and dignity even if he is becoming a *matai*. The brother must also protect his sister as she is generally referred to as the 'pupil' of the brother's eye.

Traditionally, a *tamaitai* or her heirs shall not become *matai*. However, there have been instances of *tamaitai* becoming *matai* which is a result of changes occurring in Samoan society, and it is generally quite acceptable in villages. This is because being a *matai* carries a lot of responsibilities and the *feagaiga* is not supposed to do such work. On the other hand, the *tamaitai* or *feagaiga* has an influential say in the deciding of a suitable candidate to become a *matai*. The bestowal of a *matai* title in the family would not be possible without the approval of the *feagaiga*. This literally means, the *pule* (authority) rests with the *feagaiga*.

Faletua ma Tausi

Faletua and Tausi are wives of chiefs and orators. Although they are the non-heirs of the *matai* title, they hold influential power in their roles as wives of the *matai* where they are the advisors. As mothers, they are significantly influential in the rearing and shaping of *tamaitai*, *aumaga* and *tamaiti*.

They do not have the authority to make decisions in families and the village unless it is within their own women's meetings. They do not have the authority of *tamaitai* while occupying the status of *faletua* and *taus* in their husbands' villages. Their role is mainly to look after the health of the village, ensure that young girls are properly trained in all the responsibilities of arts and crafts, and look after the children. Other duties include weaving of roof thatches, weeding of plantations, collecting sea shells, and other duties as may be allocated by the village council.

Women's meetings are mainly to fulfil their communal work such as sewing thatch for a guest house, welcoming visitors and the general welfare of the village. If any problem arises in women's meetings, it will be brought before the village council meeting of chiefs and orators to be solved as this is the only forum where conflicts and problems can

be resolved. Women's patterns of interaction are shaped by their status as either a 'faletua' or 'tausi'. Generally, a faletua holds a more prominent status than that of a tausī.

The roles and responsibilities of women as wives and daughters, sisters and children have been clear in traditional society and it can be argued remain clear today. Lines of authority and obligations are clearly defined. They remain clearly defined in villages, in communities, they are not. When these lines of authority and obligations are ignored, confusion is the result. The roles and responsibilities of men and boys, fathers, sons and brothers are also clearly defined.

Aumaga or Taulelea.

They are the sons of *matai* who represent the untitled sector of society. There is no specific age to begin or end one's status as a *taulealea* (untitled men). When young boys stop attending school, they automatically become 'aumaga' (Le Tagaloa, 1992:119). In the Samoan culture, one can be a *taulealea* for many years, even until death. The Samoan culture defines, that one will always remain a *taulealea* until he is bestowed with a *matai* title.

There are no formal cultural schools to teach the *taulealea* about the Samoan culture. It requires one to listen, observe, and obey the directions given by the *matai* to learn about customs and traditions. This is why village meetings are important. This is the classroom for learning the traditions, customs, and speeches which will prepare them to become *matai*. They will prepare the *ava* (kava) ceremony, prepare food, listen to the words spoken by chiefs and raise any issues relating to their roles in the village. After every village meeting all *taulealea* will be blessed by *matai* for their *tautua*. The culture insists that the way to authority is to become a servant first (*O le ala i le pule o le tautua*) (Taulealeausumai, 1997).

Their pattern of interaction with *matai* is guarded by the cultural norm of rendering *tautua*, in which case, they will honour their *matai* by serving them. *Taulealea* are generally known as the strength of the village upon which the village council depend (Le

Tagaloa, 1992). Their roles and responsibilities as defined by society are best summarised in Le Tagaloa (1992:118):

They are the tillers of the soil; the planters; the tautai (fishermen on literally those who are involved in the sea and marine activities); the catchers-snarers of birds; the builders; the makers of weapons and tools; the preparers; the cooks and servers of food and drink; the poets; the singers; the dancers; the entertainers; the sportsmen and the fighters in times of war.

Taulelea are usually rewarded with the bestowal of a title name for their *tautua*.

Tamaiti

Tamaiti are the young children, babies to those who are still in schools. They are the sons and daughters of *matai*, and they will remain tamaiti as long as they are in schools. It is very important to teach the children from an early young age how to speak, walk, sit, respect, obey, and know the difference between good and bad. Tamaiti are the heirs to *matai* titles and are important in the consultation and selection processes of bearers of any *matai* title (Le Tagaloa, 1992). There have been cases where tamaiti have filed cases in the Land and Titles Court at Mulinuu against older *matai* titles of their families because they were not consulted in the selection process for *matai* (Le Tagaloa, 1992). All of these levels of the Samoan social structure are stratified according to the status the *matai* title one's family holds.

For any village in Samoa, this social structure is the basis of life. It holds society together. In most villages of Samoa, the people continue to observe *Fa'aSamoa*. In the Vaigaga community, this was so until the mid-1800's when changes began to take place which have resulted in Vaigaga becoming a community which stands out because it is different - it does not reflect a traditional Samoan *nuu*.

Historic Background of Vaigaga

Before European contact, Vaigaga was originally a part of the village of Vaiusu. It organised itself into the Vaiusu hierarchical structure of authority. This means, family members were ranked under a *matai* of their own choosing, who represented them at the council of chiefs and orators in Vaiusu. The council became the focal point of political authority to govern and administer both Vaigaga and Vaiusu. Power and authority were vested in the council to officiate in all community affairs and village functions. They passed laws and regulations, and they decided on all public matters which concerned the welfare of the villagers. This structure of authority was held in order by a *faalupega*.

Life in Vaigaga was shaped and determined by the Council of Matai of Vaiusu. Everyone's role in the village was clearly defined as belonging to the groups as discussed above. However, changes became inevitable with the influence of outside factors such as the European contact and the establishment of the London Missionary Society Church which later became known as the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. This marked the break away of Vaigaga from Vaiusu as one village to exist on its own having its own political structure governed by the church.

A General Description of Vaigaga Today.

Vaigaga is a community of about 700 residents (Department Of Statistics Census, 1991) situated on the north coast of the island of Upolu. It is five to six minutes drive to the west of the capital, Apia.

Today, Vaigaga's status as part of the village of Vaiusu has changed enormously. When in 1864 95% of Vaigaga land was bought by European resulting in it becoming freehold, Vaigaga's links with Vaiusu gradually weakened. Only those families with kinship ties by *matai* title still attend the Vaiusu council of chiefs and orators' meetings. However, given that their lands have become freehold, their relationship with the Vaiusu council is now limited to title names only. This means, the Vaiusu council of chiefs and orators do not hold any authority over Vaigaga land and what they do with it.

Vaigaga is now a community in its own right. While it has not developed traditionally by *faalupega* which defines a Samoan village, it has created a settlement of people all united under the umbrella of the church. It has its own centralised system of political authority which is the church. They make the rules and laws which govern the general welfare and public matters relating to the whole community. Residents who are not members of this church are expected to obey the rules and laws laid down by the church. One of these influential rules is the evening curfew. Everyone in Vaigaga must observe the times allocated for the curfew especially those residents living around the area where the church is located.

It is through the church that every development in Vaigaga occurs. Sports are approved by the church. Education is run by the church and the primary school building is owned by the church. The mayor is appointed from within the church, even though this is an important matter for the whole community, including those who are not followers of this church.

There have been enormous changes in Vaigaga since the establishment of the church. Vaigaga is structured by the church rather than the village council even though there are *matai* living in Vaigaga. Vaigaga's local government is as follows:

Faifeau

Parish minister.

Ulu matafale

Elders session. Matafale refers to all families within the church. Ulu refers to the head of those families. *Ulu matafale* then is the word to define the head of every family within the church. It can be either a *matai* or non-*matai*, a woman or a man.

Mafutaga a Tina

Women's fellowship. All the women belong to this group whether unmarried or married.

Autalavou

Literally means the 'youth' group. However, the concept is not restricted to youth³, the youth group in Vaigaga involved both young and old regardless of marital status.

Tamaiti

All the children who are at primary and secondary schools.

As a society going through different stages of life, it is obvious that Vaigaga society can not remain static when Samoa in general is experiencing changes as well. Changes are seen in our lifestyle, the way we do things and the way we order ourselves in doing things. Changes can be from within or from outside. As Le Tagaloa (1996a:1) pointed out:

Change is a conspicuous feature of life, of living and of being alive. Biologically, physiologically, mechanically, physically, in fact, every consideration of life admits changes as endemic, as inherent and entrenched. Change is synonymous with growth and expectations of survival.

Faced with this, Vaigaga simply can not promote everything Samoan and diminish everything European from the process of change in social structures. That would be unrealistic given each family's European history, life, upbringing, and the general way Vaigaga society has been organised today. However, one can not escape the cruel reality Vaigaga's society is facing now - the threat of losing and understanding the art of basic Samoan culture and the loss of one's belonging to the Samoan social structure. This study gives the residents of Vaigaga an opportunity to reassess the position and provide some background measures to the current order. The residents might wish to take the opportunity to evaluate the current set up knowing that the children of today risk becoming dispossessed of their cultural identity tomorrow. Perhaps by understanding some of the current issues in Vaigaga, we will be able to reflect on a trend that is

³ In Vaigaga, the concept of youth refers to all those belonging to the youth group. However, its official definition by the Department of Statistics is restricted to all the youth between the ages of 10 and 34 years (Statistical Report, 1994 : 16)

occurring throughout Samoa. We have taken our culture for granted for so long that we have perhaps not consciously worked to ensure its survival. The development of church communities in place of a traditional Samoan community is growing. If they ignore our basic cultural values and practices, they will contribute to the loss of Samoan culture. We should consider this possibility before further erosion of our values and beliefs occurs. These issues and concerns are further discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review: Outside Perspectives

This literature review is presented in three sections. It discusses the conflicting views and interpretations the Western world holds of the Samoan social structure in contrast to the view held by Tagata Pasifika themselves, in particular the Samoans. These perspectives contribute to our understanding of ourselves, our culture, our identity, and the influences that have impacted on our communities and our way of life. Le Tagaloa's (1992) framework of the 'faamatai system' explains the Samoan social structure including the status and levels within the hierarchy. This framework underpins the main theoretical understanding of the Samoan social structure for this review.

The first part discusses the definition of culture from Western perspectives and the Tagata Pasifika perspective, each of which contributes to our understanding of the concept of 'culture'.

The second part of this literature review, examines the Samoan culture within the perspectives and framework of the Western world. It discusses views of the missionaries, outside writers and field researchers. Samoan definitions of culture are presented. It then examines the Samoan social structure in greater depth giving an overview of the *matai* system, its complexities, inter-relationships, and obligations. The role of women and girls is described, analysed and link to the hierarchical structure of Samoan society.

The third part, examines the relationship between culture and the church, the impact of the church on the culture and the social structure. It takes into account gender issues, status and place in society. The impact of Christianity and the church as powerful agents of change is analysed.

Part I Culture

Western Disciplines

Culture has become a concept of continuing discussion and debate due largely to different contexts in which various thinkers have used the concept (Knutti, 1996). Its richness in meaning and implications are influenced by the discipline from which the writer views the world.

Taylor from an anthropological perspective (1871:1) gave a classic definition of culture as follows:

Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society.

For Taylor, customs, material objects and meaningful relationships were the principal elements of culture.

The symbolic aspects of culture were stated by another anthropologist, White (1947:693):

Culture is an organisation of phenomena, acts (patterns of behaviour); objects (tools, things made with tools); ideas (belief, knowledge) and sentiments (attitudes, values) - that is dependent upon the use of symbols. Culture began when man as an articulate, symbol-using primate, began. Because of its symbolic character ... culture is easily and readily transmitted from one human organism to another...Culture is therefore, a symbolic, continuous, cumulative, and progressive process.

Sociologists preferred a much broader, less subjective and impartial definition. Marsh et al., (1996) refer to culture as the values, customs and acceptable modes of behaviour that characterise a society or social group within a society. According to Haralambos et al., (1996) culture is the learned behaviour that is shared by members of a society. Parson and Shils (1951) whose definition of culture has been widely used considers culture as a

system of action. The individual develops a personality that is more or less adjusted to the demands of that society.

Linton (1955:29) also contends that:

...a society is an organised group of individuals. A culture is an organised group of learned responses and characteristics of a particular society.

Bidney (1953:30) focuses on the intellectual quality of culture:

A culture consists of the acquired or cultivated behaviour and thought of individuals within a society, as well as of the intellectuals, artistic, and social ideals and institutions which the members of the society profess and to which they strive to conform.

Merrill (1969:83) developed his own definition of culture, which incorporates most of the aspects of the above definitions:

Culture: (a) is the characteristically human product of social interaction; (b) provides socially acceptable patterns for meeting biological and social needs; (c) is cumulative as it is handed down from generation to generation; (d) is meaningful to human beings because of its symbolic quality; (e) is learned by each person in the course of own development; (f) is a basic determinant of personality; and (g) depends for its existence upon the continual functioning of the society.

In the context of this study, it is relevant to consider the definition given by one of the working committees of the World Council of Churches Vancouver Assembly in 1983 (cited in Kamu, 1996:15):

Culture is what holds a community together, giving a common framework of meaning. It is preserved in language, thought, patterns, way of life, attitudes, symbols and presuppositions, and it is celebrated in art, music, drama, literature and the like. It

constitutes the collective memory of the people and the collective heritage which will be handed down to generations still to come.

From these definitions, culture becomes very important because, without it, there is no sense of belonging, no identity and no sense of direction. It defines our sense of being and our own uniqueness. It is the collective framework which describes and interprets the interdependencies of the existence of human beings and nature. Culture is unique because it has its own set of characteristics which each society develops to suit its own needs and demands. In all societies, some of the most important and common characteristics involve 'values', 'roles', 'behaviour', 'material culture', 'norms', 'structure' and 'traditions'. In many societies, particularly Tagata Pasifika, culture is important because it defines what it means to be a Tagata Pasifika. And the way people experience and do things whether in the South Pacific or anywhere else is very much influenced by this culture.

Tagata Pasifika's Perspectives

Tagata Pasifika's perception of culture focuses on the collective concept of communality with special inclusion of nature and everything that defines their being as societies of 'oral traditions'. However, culture is constantly changing and the new generation of Pacific Island people like myself will continue to use written material to further validate oral traditions. However, Tagata Pasifika still focus their understanding and definition of culture on oral traditions.

Rakau (1988:87) when asked what culture is in the Pacific responded:

...look at the dance; listen to the songs; see how people live; observe what people do, individually and collectively.

Unlike the written cultures of the Western world defined by the various disciplines, the Tagata Pasifika approach emphasises the oral tradition of its culture. This view is also expressed by Kyaw-Hoe (1996:103), the principal of Moamoa Theological College in Western Samoa:

...culture is people. It is about their growing, education, training, their way of life.

Likewise, Refau's (1991:33) definition of Pacific culture is:

... the vessel that carries our identity from one generation to another and makes us proud to belong to our own society.

Tagata Pasifika perceptions of culture based on oral traditions ties was defined by Crocombe (1973:48) who spent years of working in the Pacific:

Culture can be broadly defined as a way of life and the way we think, believe and behave, as well as the way we make, do and use things. Culture is the way a people express themselves - not only verbally, but in dress, lifestyle, beliefs and practices. Again all culture can be seen as language, for all we do and the way we do it is communicated to others.

He also contends that an important aspect of the Pacific culture is language. Without language, how can culture be communicated and transmitted. However, it is unfortunate that it is this important aspect of culture that is fast disappearing from the cultural identity of Vaigaga and other communities. As Tagata Pasifika are unique in their own context and identities, culture is important and needs to be preserved. Within the scope of this study, it is essential to define culture within the Samoan context. Culture in Samoa means its organisational structure (Kamu, 1996), way of living, upbringing, relationships, kinship networks, obligations, roles, respect, sense of belonging, genealogy, legends, land, language, titles, ceremonial events, status, norms, values and material culture. Furthermore, Samoan culture has been defined and perceived differently by Samoans and outsiders to this cultural reality. As a result, conflict of opinions leads to misinterpretations and misuse of culture. Samoan people should write about their own culture because they understand the complexity of their language and the lines of their power relations better than outsiders.

Part II Samoan Culture

Western Perspectives

Since the arrival of Christianity in 1830, most of the literature on the Samoan culture from a Western perspective is seen by Samoan people as over-generalising and not reflecting the true reality of Samoan culture and society. For many of these writers, they used their own world views as a basic for developing perceptions and conclusions about the way Samoans lived, interacted and operated as a culture. Most did not know and understand the complexity of networks of authority, boundaries and the values of the *Fa'aSamoa* (Taulealeausumai, 1997). One of the key elements of this complexity is the understanding of the language. In Samoa, language defines its social reality and social structure. There exists in Samoa two forms of language. Common or everyday language used mainly in types of informal (*parole*) (Marsh et. al., 1996) communication. And formal language which is governed by 'rules of conduct and meaning, or *langue*' (Marsh et. al., 1996). The *langue* type is the most complex form of language in Samoa. Marsh et. al. (1996:94) explained this language:

...it is this system we unconsciously learn and use to impose sense and order upon the world. We do this by learning to apply correct words to relevant concepts.

In the Samoan culture, one example in which correct words are applied to relevant concepts is the formal language called *gagana a failauga*. The formal language in the Samoan culture is what Tamasese et. al., (1997:14) refer to as the:

...the language of ritual, that is, its mode of transmission is highly allusive. It is within this language that knowledge is appropriately and most often imparted. When speaking in the formal language, the presence of protocol and etiquette is mostly keenly felt.

Occasions in which the formal language is most evident has been called '*faalavelave*' (O'Meara, 1990). While O'Meara's account of Samoan life proved reliable, the implicated use of the word *faalavelave* is very much disputed. The use of the Samoan

word *faalavelave* in O'Meara's writing connotating 'search for money' directly implies that the Samoan reality of *faalavelave* is economically determined. Its implication evoked images of economic life and commercialism which loses the cultural nuances of this concept. Maybe O'Meara in his experience has noticed families in which *faalavelave* has been abused for the family's benefit as in the example he used of funerals. Nevertheless, it should not be implied that the concept itself means a search for money. *Faalavelave* is our cultural obligation in which we lend a hand to our kinship relations if there is a funeral or major cultural event. To be used in a commercialised capitalist context, is not only an insult to our culture which gives meaning and conduct to this concept, but it also puts value on the aspect of kinship that is central to our cultural identity.

The misconceptions of Pacific Island cultural concepts has now encouraged Tagata Pasifika to speak out in their own defence. One such writer was Rika Nacamieli. In her article, 'Is Kinship Costly' (1975), Nacamieli examines the value of kinship which is often misinterpreted by Westerners as being an obstacle to a better life in the spirit of modern development. Modern development frowns upon having lots of families as being expensive and one is encouraged to be independent and to be an individual if one wishes to be economically successful in this world. According to Nacamieli, kinship only appears costly because of the value imposed upon it by capitalism. Given that *faalavelave* is an integral part of the kinship network in Samoa, it only appears costly when it is measured with greed and disrespect with its impersonal emphasis on profit and loss (Nacamieli, 1975).

These misinterpretations by outsiders of some of the concepts crucial to the identity and culture of a Samoan has often led to the view that the Samoan culture is a 'social constraint' to development and especially individual enhancement by those same outsiders.

Missionaries

In the process of establishing the Protestant faith in Samoa, Dr. Turner (1884:161) of the London Missionary Society viewed the existing nature of the Samoan culture as a hindrance to development and individual progress:

The communistic system is a sad hindrance to the industrious and eats like a canker worm at the roots of individual and national progress. No matter how hard a young man may be disposed to work, he can not keep his earnings, all soon passes out of his hands into the common circulating currency of the clan.

Monfat (1890:154) further notes this negative attitude of the missionaries towards the Samoan social structure:

The Samoan social structure appeared less favourably in the eyes of the missionaries. The French missionaries referred to the chiefly system as 'wicked aristocracy' and the London Missionary Society compared them to unjust Biblical taskmasters.

It was evident from the start that the Samoan chiefly systems were not commented upon favourably by the missionaries. Consequently, rather than promoting the islands cultures, it at times influenced and changed some cultural values and norms (Meleisea, 1987). For instance, the missionaries suppressed some cultural values that were considered unchristian such as dances they called 'heathen'. The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa frowns upon the art of tattoo stating that it is an act of spilling blood and defiling one's temple, that is body in temple.

These misconceptions and misunderstandings have influenced many visitors to Samoa, particularly the missionaries, to try to change Samoan culture in ways which have been detrimental to the 'culture of Samoa'. While change is inevitable it would be more advantageous for Samoans to manage cultural change rather than allow it to be imposed by those with a world view and belief system which misinterprets *Fa'aSamoa*.

Outside Writers and Field Researchers

Holmes (1987) fieldwork on Ta'u, an island of the Samoan archipelago but belonging to the Eastern group provides a reliable account of the Samoan culture in that part of the group. While acknowledging the usefulness of the study by Holmes in developing a framework for the understanding of Samoan culture and its social structures, it is also important to acknowledge the potential danger of such an approach if it is used to

generalise about the whole Samoan archipelago. This is because there are certain traditions and structures in Ta'u's culture which operate to make it different from the rest of Samoa.

However, there are very important issues raised by Holmes, which are of great importance in the understanding of the Samoan culture particularly in comparison with the study by Mead (1963). Mead's study has been largely discredited in Samoa as inaccurate. In *Coming of Age*, Mead's writing on the Samoan culture was often over generalised, claiming the culture was very simple and incompetent. Holmes study (1987) offers a perspective which contrasts with that of Mead. Holmes argued that the Samoans have the spirit to compete in verbal contexts between talking chiefs for the purpose of status, power and prestige, not the marks of a 'simple and incompetent' culture.

O'Meara (1990) on the other hand can be applauded for his carefully argued and well informed account of what the realities of daily village life are about in Samoa. While the study is centred on examining issues relating to traditional and economic development in Samoa, his account of village life and the changing *matai* system as a result of modern economic development provides background information in which this study can be further understood and analysed. Special emphasis is also placed on his analysis of the significance of kinship networks which help to define and put into context the concepts of 'aiga' and 'matai system' used in this study.

There are recognised dangers in non-Samoans making field visits to villages and communities such as in Samoa and warnings for those who attempt research without support and input from local experts. In New Zealand, Maori academics (Irwin, 1994; Smith, 1991) provide warnings to non-Maori researchers about attempting to undertake research in the Maori community. It is perhaps time that Samoan researchers provided similar guidance to outsiders visiting Samoa. The issue of language competence to enable a deep understanding of a culture is addressed by Samoan writers in the next section.

Samoan Perspective – Aganuu

The Samoan perception of culture is best defined by Le Tagaloa (1996b:17) as:

The Samoan culture is defined by the concept '*aganuu*'. *Aga* is the basic nature of being. *Nuu* is the total sum of the learned experience. The Samoan word for culture therefore speaks of a word that recognises the ideal as a complete whole. The basic nature of man that he inherits genetically is as important, as powerful, as influential as his cultural heritage through his language and other activities of Samoan society.

Once again, Le Tagaloa stresses the importance of the language in the recognition and understanding of the Samoan culture as a complete whole. Kallen (1982) described *aganuu* as the total phenomenon, which included Samoa's '...social order, the economic order, historical order and moral order' (Tiatia, 1998:21). *Aganuu* operates on the commitment to the *Fa'aSamoa*. *Fa'aSamoa* is literally defined as the Samoan way of life. It is the bedrock of Samoan identity through 'the conscious and deliberate transmission of traditional values and hierarchical aspects of the social structure of their culture' (Tiatia, 1998:21). From an anthropological perspective, *Fa'aSamoa* is:

At once a world view; a way of life; a cherished heritage; a set of structural principles for ordering social life; a plethora of formidable constraints upon behaviour; and an ideological underpinning for strongly positive ethnocultural identification (Kallen, 1982:35)

Fa'aSamoa includes oral culture, social ethics and protocols, responsibilities and values which govern the day to day behaviour and activities of the Samoans (Tiatia, 1998). For anyone attempting to undertake studies in Samoa, it would be of great advantage to understand and speak the local language and the study will be more valid if the researcher is Samoan.

The Matai System - a political, social, legal and spiritual organisation.

The whole society evolves around the *matai* system which is the basic unit of political organisation. The *matai* system provides the social hierarchy on which society functions. Access to *matai* title is based on ascription, that is, one must have connection with the title through kinship to be eligible for the title. Trompenaars and Turner (1997:230-231) identified some important distinguishing characteristics of ascription culture:

Status is attributed to you by birth, kinship, gender and age...Ascription justifies their hierarchies by power to-get-things-done. This may consist of power over people to be coercive, or power through people which is participative...Ascribing cultures tend to follow characteristics that naturally evoke admiration i.e. older and wiser people, those with dignity and presence.

This description aptly fits the *matai* system of Samoa. Le Tagaloa's (1992:117) discussion on the 'Fa'amatai System' offers the best analysis of this system.

The *fa'amatai* reflects: (i) the importance and the inclusive rights and position of the human being as the heir of a *matai* title - this feature of the *fa'amatai* gives everyone the right to be an heir, even those who are descendants of unions between foreigners and Samoans; (ii) the insistence of the culture on the unity or holistic view of life; (iii) the inclusive decision-making process of *soalauipule*; (iv) the ability of the Samoan culture to handle change and new ideas.

It is definitely in the Samoan ascription system that the *matai* system from time to time exercises its coercive power to get things done. For example, at times of national elections, some village councils of chiefs and orators can influence the way people vote. This is done by laying down village rules which either encourage or force the villagers to vote for a specific person the council has unanimously supported as their candidate in the election. Failure to comply may result in the enforcement of the council's coercive power which has in the past seen families being banished from their land. However, for the most part, the participative role of the Samoan *fa'amatai* system evolves in the day to day

administering of the village, where the 'older and wiser' people provide leadership with 'dignity and presence'.

Notwithstanding one's kinship connection, the family setting requires one to achieve the approval and support of the whole family by serving the family well through effort and merit prior to being bestowed with a *matai*. Tiatia (1998)¹ found that, social hierarchy under the Samoan political structure provides a way of life that is ordered around significant concepts of status; prestige; honour; *faaaloalo* (respect); *usitai* (obedience); and *tautua* (to serve). Fundamental to these social systems are the principles of kinship networks and a communal way of living. Subsequently, its economic organisation is the communal ownership of land within *aiga* and the village (Kallen, 1982:35).

Important to the understanding of the *matai* system are the connotations attached to it. It is not surprising that while Western literature has acknowledged the *matai* as being a hard working person, Western perspectives remain critical of the system. Kallen (1982) like others, viewed the *matai* status as a social institution with economic benefits, political power and prestige. However, in contrast to this Western perspective, Le Tagaloa (1992), Suapai'a (1962) and Taulealeausumai (1997) have argued, that *matai* status also carries with it a greater sense of obligation and commitment in fulfilling the expectations and responsibilities of the family and the village.

Samoan culture is in fact deeply complex. The *matai* status must be able to accommodate this complexity as s/he will be looked upon by the family and the village for direction. It is not impossible for someone to know all the traditions and values of each village. Each village has its own genealogy, its own social structure, values, rules and *faalupega*. For example, if there is a funeral in one's village, those coming from other villages will have to know the *faalupega* and how funerals are held in that village. This complexity is defined by Mead (1963) as simple and less competitive especially with regards to the *matai* status. In reality, Samoans promote a spirit of competition. This is seen in their games and the cultural ability to speak the formal Samoan language of orators and chiefs which is generally referred to as *gagana failauga*. Those who have taken the time to

¹ Study entitled Caught Between Cultures.

listen to and learn the formal language of Samoa are often the envy of others and they will be respected for having the ability to learn and know the formal language. Orators and chiefs display their skills of speaking this language whenever there is a cultural function. As Holmes (1987:104) found:

A great pre-occupation with status, power and prestige, and on more than one occasion I observed very competitive verbal contests between talking chiefs for the purpose of enhancing their own or their village's prestige. I felt that Samoans loved to display their abilities, but in general one was respected more for modesty than from conceit, and it was better to have someone else praise one's abilities than to do it one's self.

The intricacies and complexities of Samoan culture are often glossed over in Western literature, particularly when researchers and observers rely on interpretations of events they observe or when they have no knowledge of the formal Samoan language of orators and chiefs. Observation and analysis by Samoans of Samoan events is worthy of close attention since there are occasions where Western observers have misinterpreted what they have seen.

Status and Place

Status and place in the Samoan social structure is determined by birth, kinship and age. Status and place are structured along hierarchical lines with each having its own set of power and lines of authority. These sets of power and lines of authority are determined and directed by the status of the *matai* title one's family holds in the political structure of the village. In hierarchical societies, those at the bottom of the hierarchy are often overlooked by observers and writers and thought to have no place and status in society because of the amount of authority and power concentrated in the hands of the leaders. Mead (1963:64) fell into this trap in her analysis of the status and place of the young people in the Samoan society. Mead claims that young people especially children are not important in the culture.

The community ignores both boys and girls from birth until they are fifteen or sixteen years of age. Children under this age have no social standing, no recognised group

activities, no part in the social life except when they are conscripted for the informal dance-floor.

There is no evidence to support this claim. Mead failed to recognise that in the Samoan culture, everyone has a place in society whether young or old. All are inextricably linked. The importance of children or *tamaiti* lies in their roles as heirs of *matai* titles. The community cannot ignore them and their status and place is described by Le Tagaloa (1992:119):

As heirs of *matai* titles, they have the right to participate in the consultations of all heirs of the *matai* title, especially on the consultation and selection of bearers of the *matai* title.

Given the children's obligation and duty towards their families, it is important to raise and nurture them in the appropriate way, so that when they grow older, they know how and what to do when demands are made of them and responsibilities placed upon them by their respective families.

The heirs of the *matai* title take pride in knowing not only their rank and responsibilities within the social organisation, but also in their ability to speak the proper language and to exhibit absolute decorum. For the culture of the Samoan insists that the young humans must be reared and fed on words, words, words, i.e. sweet, polite and appropriate words (Le Tagaloa, 1992:118).

Gender Issues and The Social Structure

Women have had a significant impact on the history, development and the culture of Samoa. Legends are told that the first person who held all four paramount titles in Samoan genealogy was a woman. Since this time no one has ever done it again. Today, the woman's status as the *feagaiga* gives her authority and power in the social structure. The exercising of such authority and power also depends on her status and place in society. Mead (1963:66) unfortunately defined the roles of women in the Samoan social structure as follows:

The community makes no distinction between girls and the wives of untitled men in the demands which it makes upon them, and because there is seldom any difference in sex experience between the two groups.

Mead's study overgeneralised, misunderstood and misinterpreted the roles and status of women. Unmarried girls do have a higher status than the wives of untitled men. The order of eating at formal ceremonies clearly signifies the hierarchy. On these occasions, unmarried girls are served before the wives of untitled men. There is a huge difference in the demands placed upon them. Only the daughter of the *matai* performs the *ava*² ceremony. No wife of an untitled man will make the *ava*, only unmarried daughters. These special responsibilities distinguish the place of the girls in society.

Mead's comments about the sexual experience of unmarried girls has long been disputed in Samoa where virginity has been highly valued. Within Samoan culture, women were expected to be virgins when married. In general, everyday life in the Samoan society does not permit unmarried girls to sleep and live with their boyfriends before marriage. They are subjected to the strict discipline of their parents and the watchful eyes of their brothers. This is because the brother and sister relationship is the most sacred relationship in that the sister is the brother's *feagaiga*. The brother's role therefore is to serve and protect her.

Mead's observations are indirectly discounted by the analysis provided by Schoeffel (1978) and Faatauva'a (1992). Realistically, the woman's status and role in Samoa is determined by whether she is a daughter, a sister or a wife in the family context she finds herself in (Faatauva'a, 1992). This distinction is clearly described by Penelope Schoeffel:

Samoan women had two clearly defined and contrasting status. As sisters and co-descendants, they were entitled to independent status and rank. But as wives, their status

² Kava, a beverage made with the dried and pulverized root of that shrub mixed with water. This drink is served to *matai* in their Council of *Matai* meetings or in any special cultural event in the Samoan culture where the *ava* is prepared.

and rank derived from that of their husbands. Sisters ranked higher than their brothers, but wives were subordinate to their husbands, and their husbands' sisters (1978:23).

Within her family, the woman becomes the *feagaiga*, no matter where she chooses to live. Her role becomes very effective as she holds an influential position in any family negotiations. However, a married woman's status in her husband's family is determined by the status of her husband. The *feagaiga* relationship does not exist but she must pay allegiance to her husband's sisters (Faatauva, 1992).

A woman's status in the family, either her own family or that of her husband must correspond with the status she must hold in the village social structure. If she is unmarried, she belongs to the *aualuma*. If she is married to an untitled man, she belongs to the wives of the *taulelea* group. If she is a wife of a *matai*, she will belong to the *faletua and tausii* group. Her sisterly or wifely status not only determines the group to which she belongs but also her position within it.

The *aualuma* holds a prestigious position in the village in their status as *feagaiga* and as maidens. This is in contrast to the lower ranking group of women known as *faletua and tausii*. Mead's lack of clarity on the importance of each group of the Samoan social structure is further reflected in her assessment of the *aualuma*.

The organisation of the *aualuma* is a less formalised version of the *aumaga*. While the *aumaga* is centred about the *fono*, the young men meeting outside or in a separate house, but exactly mirroring the forms and ceremonies of their elders, the *aualuma* is centred about the person of the *taupou*, forming a group of maids of honour. They have no organisation as have the *aumaga*, and furthermore, they do hardly any work (1963:66).

Mead's view of the *aualuma* is wrong. *Aualuma* holds importance as an organisation just like the *aumaga*. Its importance is outlined by Meleisea (1987:7):

The *aualuma* represents the honour of the *nuu* (village); for example, when a *nuu* or district went to war, high-ranking maidens would march at the head of the party. Also

when a *malaga* (visiting parties) came to a *nuu*, the *auvaluma* would decorate the guest houses of the *nuu* and see to the reception and entertainment of the guests.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the *auvaluma* comprises all the unmarried daughters of *matai*. They therefore hold higher status than the *aumaga*. The influence of the *feagaiga* concept gives the sister higher status within family decision making. As Holmes discovered in his study (1987:40):

...the female branch has power to veto decisions of the family. Samoans believe that to ignore the wishes of the *tamasa* (child or children of a man's sister) faction would result in family misfortune and sickness or death of family members.

Literally, the brother belonging to the *aumaga* must serve his sister well, as through that he will be blessed. In return, the sister (*auvaluma*) will reward her brother with a *matai* title as a sign of respect and honour for his services (Faatauva'a, 1992). And as previously mentioned by Meleisea (1987), the prestigious position of the *auvaluma* as *taupou* represented the honour of the *nuu*.

With regards to the *auvaluma* roles, Faatauva'a (1992:18) argued:

...the *auvaluma* serves as an educational arena for young women to learn from elderly women the traditional and cultural expectations of girls. This was mainly learning how to weave valuable goods of exchange like *tapa* and fine mats.

In so doing, they learned from the women about life.

Part III Culture And The Church

Literature reveals little or no attention has been paid to the direct impact of the church on the roles and functions specific to each group of the Samoan social structure. In particular how the church may have replaced these roles. However, there are a number of previous

works by Tagata Pasifika on the subject of the relationship between the culture and the church and how each one affects the other.

Several students from the theological school in Suva, Fiji have written on the issues of the church and culture. Some of these articles are worth analysing to provide an understanding of how the church has impacted on the culture.

Boutilier (1985:13-14) argued that:

...missionaries were important agents of change. Their presence, their perceived association with great natural and supernatural powers, their possession of and access to material goods, their esoteric knowledge, and their activities threatened the spiritual and political status quo in the islands.

Wendt (1965) also noted that these changes were happening in Samoa at the time of early conversion of the Samoans into Christianity.

Mason (1988) argued, not all missionaries are regarded as destroying cultures. There are missionaries who have encouraged the retention of culture, history, traditions and language as these are the most important aspects of the Tagata Pasifika's identity. To remove or destroy these means taking away what gives meaning to their lives. Mason believed, the gospel should be expressed in a people's way of life but not be used to put down their identity. However, this is exactly what appears to be happening when examining the present literature in particular the practising of the traditional Samoan cultural context in outside countries like New Zealand. Tiatia's (1998) study of the problems youth are going through in New Zealand defined that problem within a Samoan cultural context. In other words, the problems Tagata Pasifika youth are experiencing with churches are due mainly to the integration of Samoan cultural values into church practices that appear 'constraining and restraining' in the eyes of the New Zealand born Tagata Pasifika. These constraining and restraining values refer to the church adopting the hierarchical nature of the Samoan social structure which places the *matai* at the top. The *matai* therefore automatically assumes responsibility for leadership and decision

making leaving the young people with no opportunity to have their voices heard. Her study perhaps painted a more negative picture of the hierarchical nature of the Samoan culture without considering the fact that the cultural values of Pacific Islands worked with more success before the intrusion of Christianity. How far can the Christian Church, which is seen to represent a European British cultural tradition, go in promoting that culture at the expense of Samoan culture and tradition? How far can the Church's representatives go in promoting their own cultural values and traditions and how far do they go in challenging those of the country in which they live? Mason's article suggests, only those cultural values that appeared 'morally wrong' should be confronted. But, even this creates a dilemma. Both missionaries and Tagata Pasifika have different interpretations of the concept 'morally wrong'. What may be 'morally right' in the culture of the Tagata Pasifika can be considered 'morally wrong' by the missionaries and vice versa. For example, before any kind of material clothing came to the islands, Samoan people used to clothe their bodies with tapa material and leaves. The missionaries came and told them that they should cover their nakedness by wearing Western style clothes. In recent decades, people from the missionaries culture (the British) have come to Samoa on holiday and wear bikinis in public. This created much debate about the ability of clergy and church to comment on moral issues. Western societies have changed to the extent that what was regarded as nakedness in the 19th century is now overlooked as a change in fashion. The church's teachings have also changed over time. For example where divorce was regarded as unacceptable in many churches in the past, it has now become accepted in many churches. The church has therefore been accused of making judgements of what is morally right or wrong and been unable to justify the argument. As Gaquare (Mason, 1988:78) wrote on his experience in Melanesia:

In Melanesia the church is to be Melanesian but at the same time Christian. Indigenisation does not tolerate those who rubbish local cultures as if they are all bad. It appreciates the good elements as God's gifts and tries all it can to work through them and reach the hearts of men with the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

His experience is also affirmed by Kamu (1996:176) who found that to develop an understanding of the Gospel in Samoa it:

... recognises and affirms the importance of the Samoan culture in communicating the Gospel.

Since Christianity came to Samoa, the culture and the church have become inseparable to the point that many are unable to distinguish church and Samoan culture. This close relationship is reflected in the structure of leadership in church communities which mirrors the social structures of villages. As Tiatia (1998) noted:

...the hierarchical framework of village life from the chiefly pinnacle down to the lowly status of the youth, has unfortunately become a mirror image in the structure of the church.

Matai are dominated by men who then become deacons to make decisions in the church. This correlation continues to undermine '...opportunities for young people and women to participate meaningfully in decision-making' (Ernst, 1994b:169). Ernst and Tiatia are critical of the *matai* system and its traditional structure without understanding its complexity and inter-relationships. Evaluations by these writers unfortunately fall into the trap which Gaquare termed as 'rubbishing local cultures as if they are all bad'. The analysis by Ernst can be disputed because today in most churches as in the case of Vaigaga, women's positions are becoming more influential with regards to decision making, without taking into account of the position and status of the woman within the Samoan hierarchy, that is whether she is *auaaluma*, *taupou*, *faletua* or *tausi*.

While it is acknowledged that Christianity has been adopted and later adapted to suit the Samoan needs, culture and Christianity have their particular functions in society. Culture claims to deal with matters pertaining to '*mea fa'a le lalolagi*' (things to do with the world), while the church deals with '*mea fa'a le lagi*' (things to do with God) (Taulealeausumai, 1997). However, the two often clash in matters of dispute (Taulealeausumai, 1997) or blend together in matters of culture. In the mainstream churches, the culture is said to provide status and prestige for the church. An example of this is evident with the highest cultural honour being given to the pastor; the status of

faafeagaiga (covenant), *ao-o-faalupega* (head of rank), *susuga* (excellency or highness), *afioga* (Lordship or Majesty). The irony is, the pastors are no higher than untitled men when the pastor's position is removed. These respectful sayings or protocols are only given to those with king or chiefly lineage with the exception of *faafeagaiga*. *Faafeagaiga* is the concept that defines the sacred relationship between a brother and sister. And all the protocols and values that govern this relationship are now being transferred to the relationship between the pastor and village. As a result, the relationship between the brother and the sister now becomes less important and less sacred. Inappropriate transfer of such honours undermines their cultural significance.

Taulealeausumai's (1997)³ provided a clear understanding of the social structure especially the process of becoming a *matai*. What is expected and who is eligible? This is one of the most important philosophies underpinning the Samoan society. In order for one to become a good *matai*, Taulealeausumai (1997:217) argued that:

...one must first feel the pain and sacrifice which good stewardship and service require...by serving the needs of his or her chief.

Any wise *tautua* will use this opportunity to learn. This is why *Council of Matai's* meetings in the village are important. It is the classroom for the *tautua* to learn all there is to know of:

...protocol, genealogy, language and culture with all its rituals and traditions
(Taulealeausumai, 1997:217)

Taulealeausumai's article also points out an important aspect that people must be aware of when finding the right candidate for the title. This has often become an issue of conflict within families. It is the automatic assumption by sons and daughters that the family titles are theirs through inheritance. It is important to note that titles can only be achieved through inheritance but one can only be bestowed with a *matai* title through

³ Article on 'Pastoral Care: a Samoan perspective'.

fulfilling their ‘...duties as *tautua lelei* (good servants)’ (Taulealeausumai, 1997:217). As Dr. Kramer (1994:34) observed:

As with English nobility, the family name is transferred upon one member, yet in Samoa not upon the first born but upon the best grown, the most fitting, the most obedient and industrious. So it can happen that the head of a family (*matai*) transfers his name and with it dominion over the family upon any one member of the family, indeed even upon an adopted child.

This passing of title on to other members of the extended family is proved through the rendering of *tautua* in the process noted by Taulealeausumai (1997:217):

E le taua le sulii moni, ae taua le maosiosi (It is not the biological tie that is important; what is important are the scars that prove your hard work).

However, the breakdown of this process occurs with the adoption by the Samoans of a Western model in court cases among cousins and siblings who challenge ownership of titles and land deeds that were rightfully earned through service. This is a further example of Western practices being imposed on the Samoan cultural system.

In the second part of this article, Taulealeausumai draws on her experience as member of the Samoan clergy born in New Zealand. She examines social issues facing Samoan families in New Zealand as a result of the teachings of the church and culture. She highlights relevant issues for consideration when debating the role of the church. According to Taulealeausumai, the church in New Zealand is a positive focal point in that it provides a classroom of learning about the basics of the Samoan culture, such as weaving mats, the serving of *ava*, the preparation of *umu* for food, and the growing of Samoan food for children growing in New Zealand. In the New Zealand context, the church has a role in promoting Samoan culture where the dominant culture is a New Zealand *pakeha* one.

The cultural experience in New Zealand for Samoan immigrants has to be confusing. The conflicting identities of young people in New Zealand are increased, as they must decide whether to develop their communal identities as taught at home or to develop their individuality as promoted and taught in schools and the wider society of New Zealand. On top of this, parents place pressure upon them, particularly Samoan born parents who experienced Samoan society and culture before immigrating to New Zealand. As Taulealeausumai (1992:168) observed:

‘..children born into a bicultural existence in New Zealand and Samoan cultures are very much taught the values and culture which their parents choose for them, and that may be palagi, or it may be Samoan, or it may be both. Perhaps then, the New Zealand born Samoan is neither there nor here, perhaps the New Zealand born Samoan exists in a culture of its own, one which incorporates many aspects of the *Fa'aSamoa*, but also one which calculates and thinks as a Palagi.’

For a Samoan to choose the palagi culture would reflect a denial of one’s biological identity. Within this context, young people of Vaigaga society also face this dilemma. They live in a society which incorporates many aspects of the *Fa'aSamoa* which are often imposed upon them, and yet, society does not function accordingly to provide them with a classroom to learn about such cultural roles. The culture as we understand in Vaigaga is centred on the description Pitt (1979:127) offers:

An individual social inheritance which they acquire from parents and others as they grow up. It implies that certain attitudes, values and the way of behaviour internalised by the growing individual are shared by a sufficient number of people for this behaviour to be considered as part of a way of life of these people and not idiosyncratic or typical of any one family. It also tends to imply that there is a location, somewhere, in which these ways of behaviour, values, and attitudes are considered to form part of the accepted pattern of living.

This new cultural identity reflects their own minds and incorporates new traditions, new social structures, open communication and very much contains the concept of individualism (Taulealeausumai, 1992).

Ever since the church became independent of the London Missionary Society, it required a great deal of financial commitment from its members. In some instances this has had a negative effect on the lives of some Samoan families (Ernst, 1994b; Taulealeausumai, 1997). The New Zealand experience has far more serious implications for Samoan families than those still living in Samoa. However, both countries have seen a shift in the churches people now attend. In New Zealand, given that each family lives in isolation and away from the security and protection offered by communal networks in Samoa, the demands for monetary support for church development may have become too great for some families especially those who Taulealeausumai (1997:217) referred to as:

... living just above the poverty line or families with small incomes

Because the Samoans like to display the best of what they have to the rest of the world, most would choose to meet the obligations to the church before their family needs. However, it is this very reason of trying to meet the financial demands of the mainstream churches that has seen most people converting to charismatic churches.

For some people the demands especially the monetary demands have become too great a burden. They have not abandoned their Christianity. Some have shifted to the Pentecostal movements. Others have become Mormons (Taulealeausumai, 1997: 233).

Ernst (1994b) also points out this observation by Taulealeausumai. He noted that there is a decline in the numbers of the people going to the mainstream churches and an increase in the number of followers for the charismatic churches. This is because charismatic churches encouraged individualism and much less financial commitment. Taulealeausumai (1997) acknowledges that the church today is also to blame for the draining of the resources of families and villages, financially and physically, both in Samoa and in the Samoan migrant churches.

The church also strongly influences members with rules and regulations covering modes of dress and ways of walking, talking and modes of behaviour (Refau, 1991). The ideas of covering up of one's body and head, with no long hair and long beards for men have become common regulations in a lot of villages in Samoa. There are also protocols in churches in which women and men must dress up appropriately. For instance, men must wear suits and a tie while women must wear hats and a lavalava during communion services. Dressing in suits and ties is being rejected as foolish when the temperature soars up to 33 degrees in Samoa.

Refau and Rakau best describe the way we clothe ourselves in the Pacific. According to Refau, given our hot climate, we dressed up in tapa or leaves and it was acceptable and natural for girls to go around without covering their breasts. Refau (1991:33) further supported this by saying:

Before the arrival of the Gospel, we did not think much of our nakedness, of the skimpy clothes we wore. Then, in exchange for our tapa cloth and our leaves, we were given cotton material for our *lavalava*, and dresses and blouses, and now we wear trousers, coats and shoes. Before the arrival of the missionaries, we did not see our nakedness as a sin...Yet change came, for we were told by missionaries that God did not want us to do this or that. In fact, this view was only a reflection of the missionaries' Western customs, whose spread throughout Samoa was at a cost to our identity.

Asalele's argument best describes the influence of Christianity on the Pacific Islands cultural values of dress, which is an important aspect of culture. Missionaries did not take changing fashion into account when imposing dress codes and linking these with God's wishes.

Church and Women

According to Taulealeusumai (1997) the role of women promoted in the church is still to be good wives and mothers. The church was and still is considered to be no place for a woman to speak and the role of the pastor was reserved for men only. While the latter still holds true in Samoa, the former is somehow changing as is reflected in the community of

Vaigaga where women are becoming more involved with decision making. However, leadership is still dominated by men.

Taulealeausumai argues, the present existence of churches benefited clergies a great deal. This is also because of the respected status Samoan culture has bestowed on the clergy's position as the *feagaiga*. This status reflects the most sacred relationship in the Samoan culture, which is that of the brother to his sister. All the honour and prestige vested in the relationship between the brother and the sister is now applied to the clergy. According to Kamu (1996), the incorporation of the basic cultural structure of the community into the church as demonstrated by the pastor becoming the *feagaiga* in the village reaffirms and recognises the opening up of Samoa to the outside world. However, he also acknowledges the danger in this opportunity of Samoa becoming vulnerable to the outside. Perhaps two of these dangers on the Samoan culture are the obvious losses in sacredness of the relationship between the brother and the sister, normally referred to as the *feagaiga*, and the status women used to hold in traditional Samoa before Christianity.

The sacredness of this relationship gives the woman equal respect to that of the *matai*. According to Meleisea (1987:28) it refers to the:

...covenant respect between a brother and a sister which gives special honour to the sister

The covenant relationship is clearly discussed by Faatauva'a (1992:16) as:

In this *feagaiga* concept, the brother is obligated to serve and protect his sister for as long as he lives. All of the brother's services given to the sister must be made to her satisfaction, for it is generally believed that the sister has the power to curse him if she is angry or unhappy. These curses are usually thought to carry on for generations in the brother's kinship line and can only be revoked if the sister willingly utters pardon and forgiveness to her brother. The depth of this relationship is clearly defined in our proverb: *o le teine o le i'oimata o lona tuagane*. The sister is the inner core of her brother's eye.

The status Samoan women used to hold in traditional Samoa has been diminished and undermined because of the shift in emphasis in the church's teachings and the influence of beliefs where a woman's relationship is with her husband after marriage and not so strongly with her brother. The discussion of women's roles often focuses exclusively on what they may or may not do in the modern marketplace and political arena. Sometimes these discussions lose sight of an important element - namely, what has become of their traditional entitlements (Hezel, 1992).

Thus this literature review contributes to the understanding of us as Samoans and of our culture. The perceptions and views of Western writers gives some direction and general idea of how Samoan culture and social structure has been defined and analysed by outsiders. An historical perspective has been considered and the impact of changes on Samoan communities examined, particularly changing relationships. The discussion and debate provided by Tagata Pasifika thinkers, writers and analysts, offers a framework and context from which to view the Samoan world and provide a context in which to examine the Vaigaga community and its special differences. The overall influences of the church on the culture and social structure enable us to evaluate and theorise about the influences of the church on the social structure and provides a background from which to examine the views of seven of Vaigaga's residents.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Research Process: A Samoan Perspective

Research methods that are intrinsic to Western cultures are rarely appropriate to explain and interpret the realities of the Samoan world. This is so because when research methods of the Western cultures are applied to non-Western communities, they contribute directly to 'exclusions'. Exclusions, according to Trinh (1989:65-67) underline one way discourses:

... a conversation of 'us' about 'them', of the white man with the white man about the primitive-native man ... a conversation in which 'them' is silenced. 'Them' always stands on the other side of the hill, naked and speechless, barely present in its absence.

However, new traditions in research have pointed out that, when it comes to producing knowledge, the role of the researcher in the production of knowledge needs to be recognised in the context of being inclusive (Stanley, 1990:67). Jones (1992:18) restates Stanley's point on the importance of being known.

'I' is central; that our accounts of the world can only be constructions, made up from the language, meanings and ideas historically available to us, the 'I'.

Notwithstanding the 'I' becoming inclusive, the construction of a cross-cultural methodology that would faithfully reflect the Vaigaga participants' knowledge and interests remains a self-defeating exercise. This is because prevailing scientific thought often gives more value to Western culture as a premise for theoretical development than the culture of minority. However, modern Tagata Pasifika's writers (Tamasese et al., 1997; Smith, 1991) have argued that, it is central to any research project, whether from an inside or outside perspective, to have the methodology and research problem defined within the parameters of the Tagata Pasifika's context. From a Maori perspective, Smith argues that the validity of Maori research methodology depends on who defines the

research problem, who will benefit and whom the researcher is accountable to. Smith's and Tamasese et al. comments provided the base for this research.

In providing a research framework which 'faithfully' interprets the reality of Vaigaga society, value must be given to the individuals and their communities of people, their traditions and culture, their language, their historical and the genealogical origins, in which they exist (Tamasese et al., 1997). Failure to do this almost certainly means that many studies will continue to intrude upon and exploit the vulnerabilities of these communities (Tamasese et. al., 1997). As Peteru (1995:46) argued:

Research methods therefore must not pre-empt the unknown witness with conceptual frameworks that anticipate and address non-Western cultures from biased perspectives.

This chapter is presented in three sections. These are; methodology, research design and ethical issues related to the study.

Methodology

The research methodology was based on 'Qualitative Research Procedures'. It was imperative to use qualitative research methods primarily because of their inductive approach, focus on specific organisational situations, interaction relationships, concern with individuals own accounts of behaviour, and stresses, beliefs and meanings given to events and things (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Maxwell, 1996). Furthermore, qualitative research methods have the ability to explain 'meaning', 'processes' and the 'context' within which Vaigaga's society has been structured since the establishment of the Congregational Christian Church. For this study, the primary means of data gathering was the interview.

The interview was the most appropriate method to obtain information in the oral traditions from the Vaigaga participants. As there is no written research material specifically on Vaigaga the material gathered for this research will become a valuable record of the views of those interviewed at this period in history.

Tamasese et al. (1997) argue in favour of oral research as a mean of gathering data for research purposes, an important consideration regarding oral tradition in the Samoan context. It is rarely addressed within Western writings. They argue that the Samoan traditions of knowledge and history are 'written' into geographical sites and locations, familial names, honorific titles, genealogy, ritual and chant. Oral tradition as such, is the transmission of information and knowledge (symbolically, mentally or spiritually ingrained within the people and their origins of belonging and identity) which has through time undergone its own process of 'validation', 'synthesis' and 'analysis' (Tamasese et. al., 1997).

Oral tradition and transmission of knowledge is often viewed by Western academics to be of secondary value to written knowledge. This view devalues both the presentation of knowledge by elders and those designated to retain the knowledge, the method of transmission that is in stories, song, speeches, genealogy, honorific, ritual and chant. Valued knowledge in contemporary Western societies is written and validated by being written. Oral traditions have connotations of:

...non-educated, non-elite (characterised by) ...transmitted over generations ...by the community of folk rather than conscious individual action (Finnegan, 1992:7).

In the Samoan context, communicating and transmitting information of importance through the Samoan language involves the use of an allusive style of language (Tamasese et al., 1997). This style of language refers to linguistic techniques such as 'riddles' and 'camouflage' (Tamasese, 1994:66). This style plays an important part in the Samoan culture, and is viewed as one characterisation of oral tradition which is restated by Finnegan (1992:6):

... though in one sense they centre on words, in another they involve more than words.

It is important to understand this form and style of language when researching in the Samoan context to avoid misunderstandings such as have occurred with researchers operating in English. Likewise, it is also important to ensure that the formalities required

in greeting and communicating are observed. There are advantages in Samoans researching with Samoans.

Interviews

Conducting interviews for the purpose of research requires a careful planned approach and a consideration of the nature of interviewing as a research technique.

Cannell and Kahn (1957:527-528) define interview as:

..a two-person conversation, initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by the researcher on content specified by researcher objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation.

The use of interviews in qualitative research as a method of data collection involves a more professional approach. According to Kvale (1996:27) the difference between everyday conversation and the research interview is that, the research interview is:

...conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions.

This professional style provides a framework within which to conduct the interview and gives direction to the subjects' own experiences and responses. Given that 'oral tradition' is an important aspect of the Samoan culture, interviewing proved to be an appropriate and effective tool to obtain first hand information about the experiences of the participants.

Technically, the qualitative research interviews were semi-structured in that participants were given questions as a guide prior to the interview taking place. Reinharz (1992:281) explains this approach:

Semi-structured refers to a research approach whereby the researcher plans to ask questions about a given topic but allows the data gathering conversation itself to determine how information is obtained.

The interview guide included suggested questions based on certain themes (Kvale, 1996) that were asked in an open-ended manner. This method encouraged respondents to bring out their own experiences in their own words without the researcher's control over the form, length and content of the possible answer (Cannel and Kanh, 1957). My aim was to obtain individuals' own accounts of their attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, views and interpretations of how events have evolved and changed in Vaigaga especially over different generations. This process allowed people in the community to have their voices heard particularly those who would otherwise not be heard. In the Samoan culture, this is usually the women and the young people. By being interviewed, they are directly involved in the construction of data (Graham, 1984).

Furthermore, the open-ended technique allowed me to listen to what the respondents had to say while at the same time being directly involved in a 'give and take' situation which means a 'mutual negotiation of meaning' (Rivera, 1997). 'Reciprocity' according to Lather (1986) is central to this process and provides opportunity for dialogue between the researcher and the respondents. It makes way for informal conversation with them while avoiding any form of control over the participants.

It has long been accepted in Samoa that Western researchers are experts in their fields and the validity of their studies on minority cultures is widely recognised. I believe that to be able to fully understand and appreciate how things are done in a specific society, one must have personal experience, know how to speak the local language and be a member of such a society, an insider, in order to be able to give a truly accurate account. While being an insider poses a concern for conflicts of interest, it is to a larger extent very beneficial to have existing knowledge:

...of the context of the research and of the micropolitics (Bell, 1995:56).

In this case, of Vaigaga community. I cannot detach my personal experience of being a Samoan woman studying in the Western culture. This means, as a Samoan, I understand the Samoan society in a way that an outside academic is not able to. I believe, my personal attachment as a Samoan with the respondents enhances the quality and validity of this study.

The Research Design

The Selection of Participants

For this study, participants were purposefully selected. Burgess (1989) explained this method of selection can be a cause for concern in that participants are not randomly selected and may not have been representative of the population as a whole. However, given that this study covers the historical aspect of the subject being discussed, the aim was to investigate the views of the participants who had particular experiences about the topic of the study. According to Chadwick et al. (1984), the best way to get close to the data was through experiences of some of the residents. Anderson (1996: 223) defines this approach of interviewing a small number of specified individuals as 'elite'. Elite interviewing is:

...one directed at a respondent who has particular experience or knowledge about the subject being discussed.

The respondents in this study are interviewed as 'elite' individuals. Elite in the Samoan cultural standards can be referred to those with specific knowledge of anything.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994:57) define this approach of purposefully selecting participants as 'maximum variation sampling'. They explained this strategy as:

It is not our goal to build a random sample, but rather to select persons or settings that present the range of experience on the phenomenon in which we are interested. Thus it is our working knowledge of the contexts to select them for initial inclusion in the study.

Maykut and Morehouse's idea is to choose a group of individuals in whom they have an interest. In defining this approach of purposeful sampling, LeCompte and Goetz (1984) prefer the term 'criterion-based sampling' the same idea being to choose a sample based on certain criteria. These criteria include what Holloway (1997:142) refers to as:

...sampling of events and concepts, time, processes and places.

Based on these ideas, participants for this qualitative research were selected on a set of criteria that I believed were important in developing variation in the sample. Most importantly, participants were selected for their knowledge and experiences of events which they can speak about.

The first criteria is age, in particular different age groups. Given that Vaigaga's society has gone through changes in its development, different age groups would provide varied experiences of how the society has been structured over time. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994) argue, age can be used to roughly approximate the amount of experience, because it has the ability to connect new information with prior knowledge and experience. In Samoa, older people are regarded as the most knowledgeable as they provide the links between yesterday and today in history. The younger people of 20 years or more but below the age of forty provided a perspective based on more recent events.

The second criteria appropriate for this study was that participants must have resided in Vaigaga for at least twenty years or more. Here again, I am considering the importance of prior knowledge for understanding new information (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The rationale behind this, is the fact that Samoan people have knowledge specific to their village with regards to historical and genealogical lineage. In particular, participants needed to have connections with the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS)¹.

¹ It was essential for participants to have some form of connections with the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa because of the nature of the study in that it focuses on the impact of church in historical and contemporary Vaigaga.

The third criteria was gender. Qualitative research suggests that there are gender differences in how knowledge is received, understood and integrated (Belenky et al., 1986; Marton et.al., 1984). The study therefore involved both women and men of various ages who provided a balanced view of society from the perspectives of women and men. In order to gain a broad opinion of perception and experiences of Vaigaga, efforts were made to avoid selecting participants from the same families.

The 'social context' (Chanfraudlt-Duhet, 1991) in which I operated compared to the participants was similar to some and different to others. For five of the participants, we had all been original settlers of Vaigaga. For all the participants, we had all been actively involved in the Congregational Christian Church either as deacons, lay preachers, Sunday school teachers, choir members, youth members, women's fellowship members, parish ministers, or just being an attendant at Sunday sermons.

Our interests and level of involvement with the church and the culture varied. Some have their status well defined both by the church and the culture, others by the church only while others are still pondering whether the church or the culture defines their status. However, everyone had something to do with the church and the culture.

An Overview of the Participants

Even though the University Human Ethics Committee guidelines stressed the importance of the issue of confidentiality, this did not surface as a major issue in this study. All the participants expressed their wish to have their names used in the study and gave their formal consent. Therefore, in presenting the findings, I have used the true names and characteristics of the participants. A brief description of each of the participants follows.

Tagivale Tuilaepa Eli

An elderly lady in her late eighties. She is a wife of a chief and very much involved with the church.

Papalii Alesana Stanley

A high chief in his mid-seventies. He held the position of the church committee for a long time before resigning due to ill health. Currently, he is a ulu-matafale.

Faatafao Lofipo Toia

A working mother in her late fifties who also has numerous roles to play in the village and the church.

Tautua Aurelio

The parish minister.

Ulugia Maimai Tua

A full-time paid working *matai* who also holds the responsibilities for being the head of the family and the church programmes and development. He is in his late forties.

Naomi Selemaia

A full-time working mother who fulfils a supporting role for the church and the family but these are not very clearly identified. She is in her thirties.

Senetenari Likisone

A full time working young man whose responsibility lies with the family. However, his place in society is clearly defined by the church as a youth and a choir member with no real attachment as an *aumaga*. He is in his early twenties and is a future leader of the community.

The Interview Process

The topics for the interviews were based on the objectives of the study which aimed:

1. To examine the role of the church in the village of Vaigaga, both historically and in contemporary society.

2. To examine the impact of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) on the changes in social structure in the village.

Consideration was given to the participants' experiences in Vaigaga while growing up and to changes in Vaigaga's social structure which might have taken place over the years. The participants were invited to consider their experiences, the church's development and role in two time periods; historic and contemporary. The main topics included in the interviews therefore, were:

- Personal
- Culture and Social Structure
- Christianity in Contemporary and Historical Vaigaga Society
 - (a) Past Experiences of the church
 - (b) Present reflections of the church
 - (c) Inter-relationship between church and the village

The interviews took place at the end of May 1998. All interviews were held in Samoa. Given the cost and time to complete the study, interviews were conducted over a span of two weeks. I found the experience very tiring, involved hard work, required strict discipline and was time consuming. All seven interviews were completed, transcribed and returned to participants to edit and sign before I left Samoa.

Each participant was involved in one in-depth interview which varied from one to three hours. For all the participants, it was necessary to conduct interviews in the Samoan language as it best interprets the realities of their world-view, identity and belonging. As Tamasese et al., (1997:13) emphasises:

A primary function of language can therefore be said to be a vehicle, which communicates the way in which individuals and collectives of people perceive, interact, and respond to the world in which they exist. More significantly, within language the underlying values, norms, mores - the belief systems of that culture are transmitted.

All interviews were undertaken at a time and place where participants felt comfortable. Three of the interviews were conducted away from the participants' homes for privacy and peace. The remaining four were held in the homes of the participants, in accordance with their wishes. All interviews were tape-recorded as negotiated and approved by each interviewee. Tape recording proved to be an effective tool especially in keeping the conversation flowing without the delays required in note-taking. However, it is a pity transcriptions and written language eliminates 'aaahs', 'ooohs', 'laughter', facial expressions and non-verbal communication which add more meaning to what is relayed in the oral language.

The first interview was the most difficult because I was nervous, adhering closely to the questionnaire and was less relaxed than I was in subsequent interviews. I was also concerned about my interviewing technique, the reliability of the equipment as well as being anxious to gain as much information as possible. The first interviewee was a lecturer which was a little intimidating for me especially in trying to gain the confidence to ask questions that appeared to question the current status quo. The following interviews however proved to be more relaxing as my confidence increased, my excitement over the data I was gathering increased, and I generally became more familiar with the questions, process, equipment, techniques and research in general.

Being an 'insider', the overall difficulty I faced was nervousness about interviewing participants in a more formal manner who were also friends and family. However, this did not prove to be such a problem when my confidence increased as interviews progressed. Furthermore, we acknowledged my role as a researcher which required me to have a different relationship with them for that particular time.

Data Processing and Analysis

I and a research assistant who holds a degree in Samoan Studies and History plus a Certified Pass from New Zealand in typing completed the transcriptions of all tape-recorded interviews. This process proved to be time consuming. It was estimated that an average of five hours was spent transcribing each interview of approximately two to three hours long. However, the transcription process was worthwhile in that it gave me the

opportunity to listen carefully to the participants words, to familiarise myself with the data and to catch up with elements that I might have missed during the interviewing process. The transcriptions in Samoan became the database for analysis and interpretation. All transcriptions were given to participants to check, amend, and correct if appropriate and sign, before returning them to me.

In the process of analysing qualitative data there are often many challenges faced. Firstly, methods are not clearly formulated (Miles, 1983). Secondly, procedures and techniques in which responses are analysed are not standardised (Anderson, 1996:223). However, it does not mean that qualitative data can not be analysed. There are clear guidelines for analysis of qualitative data using 'themes' (Holloway, 1997; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990). Holloway (1997:152) defined themes as:

... a cluster of linked categories conveying similar meanings and forming a unit.

For this study, themes were identified by finding patterns of related categories and meanings of participants' responses through listening to tapes and reading transcripts. Themes were then isolated and participants' responses were grouped under these themes. Some responses appeared to be inter-connected to two or three themes which posed some difficulty in making decisions regarding their positioning.

The use of themes in this qualitative research not only required organising the data in a meaningful and systematic way, it also allowed me '... to comprehend the participants' meanings by moving from the analysis back to the whole text and vice versa in order to develop new understanding' (Holloway, 1997:152).

My main concern in the analysis of the data was to present the findings as accurately as possible, especially meanings and experiences discussed by the participants. In describing and interpreting the participants' experiences and interviews, all quotations are presented as English translations throughout the text.

Ethical Issues

This study required that data be gathered from 'human subjects'. My direct personal involvement as a researcher in the social lives of other people also raises ethical dilemmas. In particular, the concern with the participants' welfare and the consequences of the research on the subjects (Chadwick, et.al., 1984:15). In accordance with the principles of conducting research on human subjects, I submitted an ethics application to the Human Ethics Committee of Massey University before embarking on the research. The application outlined the purpose of the study as well as ethical issues such as: access to participants; confidentiality; informed consent; potential harm to participants; participants' rights; ownership of data and research, and conflicts of interest.

Informed Consent

To begin with each potential participant was contacted personally to discuss and have explained to them the purpose of the study. Coming from a culture in which face to face contact is the cultural preference method (Irwin, 1994) when approaching people, the personal approach therefore worked well in identifying the participants (Selby, 1996) and getting comfortable with them. Given that three quarters of the participants were older people with status in the Samoan culture, I had to familiarise myself with the formal Samoan language before approaching them. As Tamasese et al., (1997:13) state:

... the formal language is the language of ritual, that is, its mode of transmission is highly allusive. It is within this language that knowledge is appropriated and most often imparted. When speaking in the formal language, the presence of protocol and etiquette is most keenly felt.

Although it may seem unnecessary to some that 'formal language' be used when doing research, it reflects on the researcher's ignorance of local cultural practices if formalities are not observed and formal language used. Being Samoan, cultural norms expect young people to address older people, especially those with status, in a formal manner. It is impolite not to and it is a sign of respect to acknowledge their status in the formal language.

The first meetings with the potential participants were to fully and clearly explain the purpose of the study, the aims of the project and how it would be carried out. During this time, I answered all the questions about the study and provided further information when requested. In accordance with the principles of obtaining informed consent, I stressed their right to withdraw at any time and discussed the issue of confidentiality being maintained if they so wished. I then left the information sheets and consent forms with them to read and sign if they agreed to participate. Because I was only in Samoa for a strictly limited time, I asked participants to respond within two days. The participants found this part unnecessary as they were keen to take part straight away. However, they accepted it as part of the process. All consent forms were signed and collected after two days confirming the participants' full support for the research project.

After an initial approach to seven participants, I then set dates for the interviews. I also gave them a timeline of the length of my stay in Samoa so that they would be aware of my deadlines and to provide room for them while negotiating for the interview times.

All information sheets and consent forms were translated by me and checked by the research assistant before being distributed to the participants in the initial phase of negotiating.

Confidentiality

All participants gave their consent to have their names published in the report, so I did not have a problem with confidentiality even though this was offered.

With regards to the procedures for handling the information obtained, the research assistant, and myself transcribed all the audio-tapes that were used. The research assistant had already signed a form in which she agreed to maintain confidentiality throughout the process. Even though this seemed unnecessary because it was someone that I trusted, she still accepted it as part of the study. Only the research assistant, the participants and I had access to the audio-tapes and the transcriptions. All material was kept secure until the interview process had been fully completed. At the completion of the whole project, all

the material was disposed of according to the wishes of the participants. One participant wanted the audio-tape returned to him. The rest wanted the audio-tapes to be erased.

Transcriptions of the Tapes

From the beginning of this research, I had decided that I must have a Samoan to transcribe the tapes. This was a study conducted in the Samoan language and culture and whoever was to handle the material had to respect it as culturally valuable. It was also necessary to have a Samoan closer to home because of the limited time I was to be in Samoa to undertake the study. The transcriber had to be close to me in order to transcribe the tapes and return them to the participants to check, amend and sign before I left Samoa.

I realised I needed a Samoan with proficient word processing skills, with access to a computer, preferably IBM, so that I could easily move the computer discs from their computer to mine. The person also needed to be bi-cultural and bi-lingual in order to understand the language used on the tapes. They also needed experience and familiarity with transcription work.

In locating a suitable transcriber, I organised a young Samoan woman who works in town, and was keen to do the transcription for me. She signed a form agreeing to the terms of confidentiality before the tapes were given to her for transcription. We formed a beneficial partnership and within days, the first interviews were flowing back to me in transcribed material. She typed everything that was on the tapes and gave it to me to edit. When the tapes and transcripts were returned to me, I went through them individually to ensure accuracy, to make corrections and to put in punctuation for easy reading. All this proved to be time consuming. All transcriptions were returned to the participants to check, sign and for further comments if necessary.

Conflict of Interest

The fact that the researcher is part of the Vaigaga community is recognized as being a potential source of conflict. While I was seeking to present a dissertation that would

allow me to test my ideas in a chosen community, my personal involvement with Vaigaga, the community in which this study is based, offered potential for contradiction.

On one side, I was a resident of this community for 26 years. Then I arrived as a researcher from Massey University, a student completing a Masters degree in Social Work who asked them to become a part of the research group. Becoming aware of the 'multiplicity of roles (Selby, 1996:62) I had to play, Bell's (1987:47) warning therefore became my guiding motto:

...if you are an inside researcher, you will have to live with your mistakes, so take care.

From the very beginning of the interviews, I had to be clear of my role as a researcher before any conversation developed. This helped me a lot in avoiding confusion of where I stood and getting participants to answer the questions as clearly as possible. While I could not be detached, my personal relationships with the participants posed substantial risks of bias and distortion of data. I agree with Rivera's (1997:52) comments on this issue when studying Latin immigrant women resettling in New Zealand where she argues:

It is clear to me that 'value free' social research does not exist. I am conscious of my own partiality which favours interests of immigrant women. Taking the side of the people I was researching meant an emotional as well as an intellectual commitment to promoting their interests. I believe this stance is not incompatible with good academic work which is open to evaluation by others.

Being an insider has its own advantages. Firstly, it gave me easy access to the participants. Secondly, I knew how best to approach the participants and the proper cultural norms and values to use. Thirdly, I had in my possession the '...intimate knowledge of the context of the research and the micropolitics of the institution' (Bell, 1995:56) on which the research was based.

While it seemed clear that being an insider had its benefits, the hardest thing for me was trying to maintain an appropriate level of objectivity when taping interviews and asking

questions, which would require critique and analysis of the responses. As a researcher I needed to understand their experiences of the village social structure which I am also a part of. I was often faced with the challenge of wanting to tell them that I am hoping to gain some benefit for them and for our community from this research - the benefit which may come from reflecting on our history, our culture and ways of living. The benefits may also extend to addressing other key issues for our community.

CHAPTER FIVE

Land Ownership

The previous chapters outlined the theoretical and methodological framework of this study. The next three chapters will focus on the analysis of data including some of the participants' experiences and views. Themes were identified from the participants' interviews, which highlighted relationships between the church and Vaigaga's social structure, particularly the impact of changes in land ownership and balance of power.

In the literature, while attention is given to the impact of the church on the Samoan culture as a whole, little or no attention has been paid to the direct influence of the church on the social structure of a community or a village in Samoa. Often, writers romanticise the positive effects of Christianity on Pacific cultures, extolling the beauty of Christianity (Meo, 1997). In contrast, there are only a few writers like Refau (1991) and Rakau (1988) who have expressed critical opinions regarding the importance of culture in its relationship with the church. This chapter will now focus on identifying this issue in the case of Vaigaga.

This chapter explains and describes the participants' experiences and views on issues relating to the status and ownership of Vaigaga. It mainly identifies how the participants see themselves in Vaigaga's setting and who defines their roles. Identifying these issues provides a framework within which to understand Vaigaga's status.

In order to understand the identity of Vaigaga being a community rather than a village, a number of factors need to be explored further. Of primary importance is land ownership in an historical context and how changes in this have influenced the status of the community today. Land in Samoa unites families, and has the potential to divide as well.

Land Ownership

Samoa

Much has been written on land matters in Samoa in relation to customs, legal issues, tenure and land use (Keesing, 1934; Marsack, 1958; Holmes, 1971; Thomas, 1984; Crocombe and Meleisea, 1994). Most of these writings reflect accounts of struggle, land alienation, land acquisition, development, legends and the importance of land to society in everyday lives. Whatever perspective these writings have, one thing that stands out is that land is a very sensitive issue, one which can cause families to separate and brothers to fight. At the Land and Titles Court in Mulinuu, there are numerous cases of land disputes between families which are connected by genealogy and who were once called brothers and sisters by their forefathers. To the Samoans, land is an emotional issue because it involves our history, familial names, honorific, titles, and genealogy and must be treated with considerable caution. Land symbolically, socially and spiritually has ingrained within it Samoan people's identity and origins of belonging. Apart from the socially constructed aspects of Samoan identity such as language and culture, land is the only physical entity that explains the uniqueness of being a Samoan.

To understand the role of land on social structure, it is necessary to define and briefly explain the importance of land to the culture and people of Samoa. Historically, all the land was customary but in contemporary Samoa, land is now divided into three main categories: customary land, freehold land, and public or government land.

Historical

In traditional Samoa, land was customary owned and primarily for subsistence living only. Clearing of forests was mainly for cultivation and settlement. Land was regarded as having high value but no monetary value as such.

Customary Land

Customary land tenure in Samoa is:

...an integral part of the social organisation whose basis is the descent group of the extended family or *aiga* (Schmidt, 1994:169).

Customary land operates under the '*matai* system' which is why land and social structure are so closely linked. 'Pule' is how customary land is divided, used and cultivated by the family. Pule rests with the *matai*. Such pule can virtually be translated to mean the capacity of the person who is being the trustee for the family (Marsack, 1958). Marsack noted that pule means the *matai* can have unlimited power of administration of land but it is important that the *matai* does not exercise that power for their own benefit but rather for the benefit of the family. One of the principles of customary land ensures that upon the death of the *matai*, or relinquishment of *matai*'s title, the 'pule' over the family land descends not to the *matai*'s own children but to the successor of the *matai* title (Marsack, 1958:18). The major divisions of customary land are as follows:

- Residential site: village house lots comprising individual family residences.
- Plantation lots in the vicinity of villages with varying sizes depending on communal needs and qualities of the land.
- Family reserves sections found in landward, forested areas where families produce the main family food needs, usually large taro and coconut plantations.
- Virgin bush lands not yet the subject of allocation to any particular title but belonging to the village. These lands have the potential for agricultural development.
- District land which belong to traditional Samoan district councils.

(Keesing, 1934; Marsack, 1958; Holmes, 1971; Schmidt, 1994)

In traditional Samoa, a customary land based system is the foundation of communal life. The economic system, the political system, the social networks and spiritual beliefs of the Samoan culture all have their roots in the traditional land tenure of Samoan society.

In its economic sense, communal ownership of land for cultivation centers on family or group work units. As already outlined in Chapter one, the traditional social structure

explains each group's specific roles and the fruits of their labour from working the land individually is distributed collectively under the authority of the *matai*.

In the political organisation, the family *matai* and the *Council of Matai* have the authority over the use of village land.' Authority over land literally means authority over people who are occupying these lands. Anyone born into an *aiga* has the right to use, live and build a house on customary land on condition 'that they render service or *tautua* to the *matai*' (Thomas, 1984:139). Family members are obliged to render *tautua* to the *matai* therefore strengthening this aspect of the Samoan culture that holds value to the customary land tenure.

In social networks, customary land also serves to bind all family members together. Where the whole family owns the land, there is a guarantee the stronger family members will not suppress the rights of weaker family members. In addition, the *matai* cannot show signs of favouritism towards family members, especially those with money. The *matai* may not in his/her capacity as the pule of the land, transfer ownership of it as the land belongs in perpetuity to the whole family (Holmes, 1971). Customary land can therefore be a source of uniting family members. Nevertheless, one thing remains unchanged, there can be no alienation of freehold ownership of small pieces of Samoan customary land (Marsack, 1958).

Spiritually, land is also closely linked with our traditional beliefs practised before the arrival of the European and Christianity therefore giving the *matai* authority and control over the spiritual side as well. In traditional Samoa, the *matai* is the person who conducts and lead spiritual ceremonies. Without the *matai*, his sister is the only other person who can perform such duties. Samoans used to worship Gods of the land such as the sea, and river which is why Samoans argued that their Gods were not dead Gods, because they did not worship any idols or statues. Because they treated the land as their God, they therefore hold deep emotional attachment to it.

Contemporary

European contact marked the beginning of new changes in the ownership of land in contemporary Samoa. The introduction of the Western concept of 'capitalism' increased the importance of land in Samoa by introducing the idea and practice of a 'cash economy'. The new exchange economy (Crocombe, 1971) allowed Samoans to:

...work the land for commercial benefit through sales of produce to passing ships, or, as occurred in the later years to be sold' (Cole, 1986:1).

The consequences of these activities have profoundly affected Samoa with Vaigaga society being a good example of a changed community. In contemporary Samoa, European influence has resulted in two systems of land ownership: customary and written. As discussed above, customary ownership based on communal land is vastly different from the written system, which emphasises individuality. The written system¹ of land tenure has two types of ownership: freehold and public or government.

Customary Land

When Western Samoa gained its independence in 1962, the government adopted a constitution, which forbids the alienation of 'all customary land'. At the time, about 80% of Western Samoa's total land area was owned under this system. The government then set up the Land and Titles Court to settle any land dispute of customary ownership. Customary owned land could be leased for 20 years and a renewal for a further 20 years. Leases of this nature are approved under the authority of the *matai* or in case of village land, approved under the authority of the *Council of Matai*.

Currently, 80% of Samoan land is customary owned which is an equivalent of 2273 sq.km. of the total Samoa land area of 2825 sq.km. (FAO-UN, 1982). This highlights the continued importance of customary land in Samoa.

¹ The written system of land tenure refers to those lands that actually have registration with the Department of Land and Environment.

Freehold Land

Freehold tenure of ownership dates back to the 19th century when a number of Europeans purchased land from the Samoan people. These sales were stopped in 1889 when the Final Act of the Berlin Conference on Samoan affairs prohibited any further alienation of land, except land in the Apia area, and it called for a commission to investigate all land sales (Fox & Cumberland, 1962). Those claims of land sales validated by the Commission were given freehold title and registered.

Freehold ownership means land is bought and sold. Anyone residing on freehold land is not subject to any village council authority, this being clearly specified in section 9 subsection (b) of The Village Act 1990 No. 3: 'The jurisdiction of Village Fono shall not extend to include any person who resides on freehold land' (Parliament of Western Samoa, 1990).

In the early days of land purchasing, only 4% of Samoan land was freehold. Today it has increased up to 15%. This is because of the government system of ownership is selling some of its land therefore becoming freehold land. This highlights a trend that is now occurring in Samoa of an increasing number of people wanting to reside on freehold land.

Public or Government Land

German colonists formerly owned government land, then the Crown during New Zealand's administration. It was mainly private estates. Other government land was and still is owned by the Western Samoa Trust Estates Corporation (WSTEC). The increase in freehold land today is the result of some of these WSTEC land that was permitted for sale when the WSTEC Act of 1977 was passed permitting their sale to individual buyers (Cole, 1986). The increase in the sale of government land has resulted in the decrease of government owned land from 16% during colonial period to about 5% today.

Public land which belonged to villages, was taken under legislation by the Department of Lands and Survey since 1976 for public purposes such as building roads. The procedures for acquiring public land are laid out in this Act which requires the government to consult

the Councils of Matai of villages concerned and offer compensation in return for this portion of land used for public purposes (Thomas, 1981).

Vaigaga

Historically

Originally, Vaigaga was part of the whole village of Vaiusu. All its land was customary owned and belonged to the Council of *Matai* of Vaiusu. As stated earlier, this ownership of land automatically qualified Vaiusu to exercise authority over people who occupied Vaigaga. However, since the selling of land to some British citizens, Vaigaga is coming to realise that its status has changed as well, from that of a village to being a community.

The historical growth of the population of Vaigaga has revealed a concentration of families with European origin. The original settlers of Vaigaga who bought land from Vaiusu were British men. They later married Samoan women from Vaiusu and other parts of Samoa. Being mainly from Great Britain, they were closely attached to the Protestant church. Cowley was the first European to buy land in Vaigaga. Subsequent he built the first Protestant church in 1864 for his family on his own piece of land. The setting up of this church was recognised by Malietoa, one of the paramount kings of Samoa at the time who had accepted the arrival of Missionary John Williams and the Protestant faith in Samoa in 1830. In recognition of this, Malietoa bestowed the Cowley family with the title name which belongs to his family, 'Papalii'. This title name is still passed down from generation to generation of the Cowley family in Vaigaga. Rather than be called the Cowley family, they are now referred to as the '*Aiga Sa Papalii*' (Fepuleai, 1995).

Vaigaga slowly became a community of Europeans with family names such as Stanley, Cowley and the Pritchards. There were intermarriages amongst these families. These families then supported the church by becoming church members and gave their loyalty to the church rather than to the *matai* system. Other families who came to settle in Vaigaga joined the church: Sa Toia family, Sa Setefano family and the Ah Lam family.

Contemporary

As a result of the European origin of families in Vaigaga, Vaigaga is effectively a collection of different families some of whom are connected by marriage, all of whom have one thing in common, the church. The customary connection of land is not strongly evident in Vaigaga. Their first loyalty is the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa.

In Vaigaga, there is general confusion by the residents about whether Vaigaga is a village or a community. On one side, the residents see Vaigaga as part of Vaiusu when it is placed within the framework of villages with '*faalupega*'. There are *matai* in Vaigaga who belong to the social structure of Vaiusu. They attend *matai* meetings and cultural events in Vaiusu. Likewise, their status is structured in the Vaiusu social structure and they have a seat in the village hierarchy and in the *faalupega* of Vaiusu. However, this sense of belonging is limited to title names only. The authority of the Vaiusu Village Fono does not extend to include land on which these Vaigaga *matai* reside. As already stated, the government has already passed an Act of Parliament which prohibits the jurisdictions of Village Fono from extending over persons who reside on freehold land. This was why Cowley, the first European to buy land from the Vaiusu paramount chief Seiuli, established the first Protestant church in Vaigaga immediately after settling in. With his freehold land, he could do whatever he wanted on his land. Since this time, Vaigaga has become known as a Protestant church community while Vaiusu remains a Roman Catholic village. To be defined as a village means having a set of *faalupega* and a society that is structured culturally. Without a set of *faalupega*, a community can not be regarded as a village in Samoa. Hence, Vaigaga's status as a community. Since his piece of land is freehold, he can do whatever he wanted to do with this piece of land.

On the other hand however, the growth of the CCCS and its emergence as a ruling body has allowed the residents to make their own rules and regulations. Because of this, some residents now believe that Vaigaga should be recognised as a Samoan village in its own right.

This confusion was made clear in some of the participants' responses when asked of the current status of Vaigaga.

Ulugia: The way I see it, Vaigaga is standing out as a village. It is calling itself a village. I heard that they have tried to draw up faalupega for Vaigaga. But Vaigaga does not have faalupega.

Papalii: Vaigaga is part of the village of Vaiusu. A letter has been given to the office in town which I have already signed stating that to form a village in Vaigaga, you apparently have to have a separate authority. But this is not appropriate. Probably due to the growth of the church in Vaigaga. The strong work of the church has made this community of Vaigaga grow.

Both Ulugia and Papalii's comments support the argument that the growth of the church has somehow prompted the residents to try and change the status of Vaigaga to one of a village in order that they may have their own authority. While the latter can be done under the leadership of the church or of a freehold community, the former cannot be done because of the customary nature of the Samoan culture. No village can be formed without *faalupega* and proper Samoan cultural protocols and honorific. Interestingly, the two responses are of concern with regards to the changing status of Vaigaga. While the growth of the church may be a good thing as it gives Vaigaga more recognition as a separate community, the residents know that for Vaigaga to become a village is culturally wrong. In particular, it undermines the status of those *matai* who belong to the social structure of Vaiusu. Their belonging to the Vaiusu social structure gives them higher authority than the *matai* from other villages residing in Vaigaga in that they are the owners of the community they are living in, in their capacity as *matai* of Vaiusu. While the freehold ownership of 99% of its land provided the opportunity for the church to develop, that authority is constantly being threatened and undermined. One classic example of this is that the current mayor of Vaigaga whose *matai* name is Toiaivao, is not from Vaiusu but belongs to a village in the bigger island of the group, Savaii.

Vaigaga's system of land ownership since European contact has raised some very important issues with regards to the social structure of the community. These issues were identified by the participants.

Issues

The shift from customary ownership to freehold ownership of land in Vaigaga is sadly reducing the effectiveness of the family as the communal unit, and in turn the *aiga* is weakened as an economic unit. Rather than the whole *aiga* working together for the benefit of everyone, the family who resides on individually owned land works for the benefit of themselves alone. They may contribute or render *tautua* to the extended *aiga* in times of major *faalavelave* but not to the extent that is expected of *aiga* who live on customary land in villages. Freehold ownership allows nuclear families to break away from the demands of extended *aiga* and the pressure of the Council of *Matai*'s authority in the customary sense. Furthermore, the unity of the extended *aiga* is weakened when nuclear families reside on freehold land which is some distance from the main customary settlement. The social network of siblings may still exist but they may not meet regularly to strengthen their ties. In my experience, most family members of my *aiga* live in Savaii, but because my parents reside in Vaigaga on freehold land, my connection with my *aiga* in Savaii is weak. I am twenty-seven years old and have only been to visit this extended *aiga* once.

Freehold ownership of land has also given Vaigaga prominent status as a church community resulting in the government recognising it as such. As a result, the government has given Vaigaga formal recognition. Firstly, Vaigaga has become a birthplace for children born outside of the hospital. In government records, a birthplace is another name for the village. Secondly, the government has recognised Vaigaga as a separate place by creating a mayoral position. Selecting a mayoral position is considered a village responsibility within the context of the Samoan culture. However, the dominant force in Vaigaga of the CCCS means the selection of the mayor is done within the church. Even though the participants know that there is a difference between the church and the culture, the current situation in Vaigaga permits little room for them to acknowledge and practice this difference. According to the participants, when asked whether there is any difference between the church and the culture, they responded:

Tagivale: There is a difference. Church has things to do with God and the culture is things to do with the world.

Papalii: The church has no right over certain aspects of the culture.

Ulugia: There is a difference. The church does not interfere with things to do with the village.

The participants' comments indicate their desire that the church not interferes with things that are considered cultural responsibilities such as the making of laws and the selection of a mayor. It is within this framework that Ulugia expressed concern at the involvement of the church in such matters. According to Ulugia, it is very unfair for the church to pass laws and select a mayor on its own without any voice from the non-CCCS residents. When he was asked which matters the church should not interfere with, Ulugia replied:

Selection of the mayor. The position of the mayor represents things to do with the world. The church is for the spiritual side. The support provided by the culture gives honour to the church. Now it's not the case. The way I see it, the church is the village. Any law that needs to be administered on the whole community is done in the church. These are matters belonging to the whole community.

Ulugia's comments reveal the diminishing role of the Vaiusu Council of *Matai* in owning and administering Vaigaga as part of Vaiusu's village. It highlights the change that is now occurring in Vaigaga by becoming independent from the village council of Vaiusu by having its own authority to select its own mayor.

However, the selection of the mayor within Vaigaga itself raises another important issue. Ulugia highlighted this issue as such:

To have a mayor is a new thing. We have explained to the non-CCCS the need for a mayor, however the order of those eligible to become mayor is determined by the head of families within the CCCS.

Ulugia has outlined the dominant force of the CCCS and as such, it places those residents who do not attend the CCCS at a disadvantage. As explained by Ulugia, while they are being told of the need to have a mayor, they do not have a say in who the mayor should be. They are therefore merely to observe but not to have a say. The breakdown of this process may result in these non-CCCS residents not obeying or acknowledging any decisions made or administered by the Vaigaga mayor.

Taking into consideration the issues discussed in this chapter, it is clear that the emergence of these factors associated with the contemporary status of Vaigaga's land ownership reflect a new era in looking at Vaigaga's social structure, a structure which now exists within the parameters of the church but not the village council. This issue was clearly identified by the some of the participants.

Faatafao: The social structure is really within the parameters of the church.

Ulugia: The social structure of Vaigaga is based on the church.

These comments indicate that the organisation of Vaigaga's residents is determined by church structures with people being structured according to the different organisations of the church to which they belong.

This creates another change with the combination of both traditional and modern practices. Some of the values of Samoan culture have been introduced to the church and it is these that are the centre of Vaigaga society. The combination of the old and the new is reflected in the way *matai* are being accepted as deacons or *ulu matafale* in the church. Tagivale clearly identified this issue.

People who started the church have always been the leaders... Vaigaga has always been headed by ulu matafale who are also the matai.

While the new system acknowledges the role of *matai* as leaders, they hold no absolute authority as in the case of traditional social structures. The church has become the main

vehicle of change allowing Vaigaga to adopt, adapt, change or ignore some of the Samoan cultural values to suit the kind of society they are living in.

It can be concluded that the changes in land ownership in Samoa are reflected in the existence of Vaigaga as a church community rather than a village. In contemporary Vaigaga, the 99% freehold ownership of land has given Vaigaga residents the freedom to break away from the Council of *Matai* based in Vaiusu. As a result of this, Vaigaga is now creating its own community dominated by the church making its own rules and regulations and imposing its own social structure on the community. It promotes the idea of individualism economically, socially, politically and spiritually. While in the framework of *faalupega*, Vaigaga still belongs to Vaiusu, this relationship is limited to title names only. Furthermore, the existence of Vaigaga as a separate community is further eroding the composition of Vaiusu.

CHAPTER SIX

Power

The previous chapter discussed the impact of the church on the social structure by identifying the issue of land ownership. This chapter will follow on from land ownership in that the development of the church community on freehold land has also led to the issue of power being disputed and less defined in Vaigaga than in other Samoan villages.

The historical origins of the church are British and influence the type of power relations evident in Vaigaga. The British traditions and understanding of the concept of power contrast with those which already existed in Samoa when the British arrived. As a result, many issues have been arisen which stem from a change in the balance of power the Samoan previously understood within Samoan culture. This will be discussed further in this chapter using the case of Vaigaga as the example.

Western Societies

In Western societies, the question and use of power is confusing. There are not clear lines of power and authority in the same way as in the traditional Samoa. Power remains a mystifying concept as every society looks at power differently: who holds power, how power distributed, how is power measured and how is it used. Deleuzu (Smart, 1985:73) supported this claim:

The question of power remains a total enigma. Who exercises power? And in what sphere? We now know with reasonable certainty...which people are involved...We should investigate the limits imposed in the exercise of power...the relays through which it operates and the extent of its influence on the often insignificant aspects of the hierarchy and the forms of control, surveillance, prohibition, and constraint.

In most Western countries, Head of State, Head of Church, Parliament and the Judiciary are separated. It can be argued that there is a struggle to see who holds power. This

struggle for power is very much evident in Britain, unlike in traditional Samoa where it was clear the Council of *Matai* held parliamentary and judicial power.

Great Britain

The Protestant church was brought to Samoa by missionaries from England. They brought with them their British heritage and their values and beliefs, many of which were in conflict with those of the Samoan people¹. In particular, they brought a history of the Head of the Church of England also being the Head of Government. In Britain, there has been a long struggle between the monarch and the parliament which was headed by the King or Queen. Today, the Queen is still the Head of the Church and the Head of State. The missionaries from England came to Samoa with particular beliefs about the roles and responsibilities of those in power.

They also brought Christian based beliefs about the roles of women and men and held power within Christian homes and in villages. In nineteenth century Britain, men were dominant and powerful. The London Missionary Society representative who settled in Vaigaga held up the bible as providing lessons on how families should live and promoted the pastor as a chiefly authority.

Samoa

Historical

In traditional Samoa, the issue of power was less confusing than in many societies. Lines of power were clearly defined. Everyone in the society knew how to relate to other people based on these power relations. There was no overlapping of power and no overstepping of boundaries as everyone knew their positions and status in society. As discussed in the literature review, the Samoan cultural social structure ensures that everyone has a place in

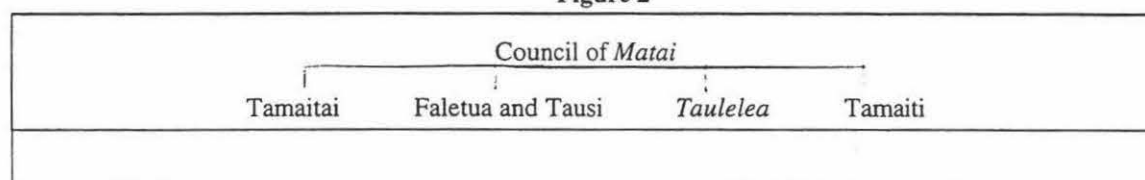
¹ Examples range from attitudes to 'nakedness', to the types of clothing which they believed should be worn, to beliefs about the role of the church and its leaders in the political, social, cultural and spiritual lives of the people.

society and specific norms, obligations, values and etiquette govern that place. It lays down the rules and regulations of power and how it is exercised and distributed.

Who Holds Power?

Power in traditional Samoan society is governed, exercised and distributed by the Council of *Matai*. Everything evolves around the Council of *Matai*. As shown in the diagram below, all the other groups of the Samoan social structure are under the authority and supervision of the Council of *Matai*.

Figure 2



The traditional power and authority in the Samoan culture is based on customs and traditions, which permit those in power to exercise authority by virtue of the traditional status that the office of leader has. In the Samoan hierarchical society, the Council of *Matai* are the leaders and exercise their leadership within the capacity of the 'fono'. Kamu (1996) refers to the model of the Council of *Matai*'s meetings or fono as the source of authority. The fono is equipped with powers equivalent to that of a parliament. They offer direction for the villagers, and maintain unity in an ordered manner. Particular emphasis is placed on the importance of implementing rules and regulations to maintain order and reduce tension among residents. Furthermore, rules apply to everyone and the punishments and sanctions are known in advance if any rule is broken. As Epati (1995:50) explained the context of the Council of *Matai*'s powers:

...the fono is both parliament and legal system wrapped into one institution. Its power is absolute. The basis of its authority is not questioned.

This was also the view of Reverend Thomas Heath while working in Samoa in 1837:

...the native fono is something of the character of Parliament, but exercises the legislative, judicial and executive functions (Le Tagalao, 1992:117).

Those who obey them, families and villagers, do so because of feelings of loyalty, duty and obligation (Haralambos, 1996). Heath's comments showed that the church had a clear perception of the lines of power in Samoa, but insisted on imposing their own idea of power which has affected the balance of power in some communities in Samoa as in the case of Vaigaga. This issue will be further discussed in this chapter.

Distribution of Power

The hierarchical nature of the traditional Samoan social structure makes it relatively easy to distribute power. The distribution of power in the Samoan society depends on a number of factors.

Firstly, it makes certain that every position is accountable to and supervised by a higher office (Marsh et. al., 1996). For instance, the tamaitai group is supervised by the faletua and tausi group to ensure that they know the proper conducts, values and expectations expected of them as daughters of *matai*. In the traditional Samoan society, all the lower stratas of the social structure are subjected to the authority and administration of the Council of *Matai*. From babies to old people, everyone is aware of his/her position in the social structure, within the family and the community. These positions are well guarded with values, boundaries and etiquettes so that there is no overlapping or overstepping of boundaries. This is strongly evident in the upbringing of children. Society makes certain that they grow up knowing and understanding the values and norms of society. For instance, boys are taught they go through *taulelea* first and they remain *taulelea* unless they become *matai* regardless of age. *Taulelea* have to serve *matai* and are the strength of society. They will not sit with *matai* in fono and will address the *matai*, their wives and their daughters with respect and humility. To maintain one's boundary ensures peace. As Taulealeausumai (1997:221) notes:

...if all keep to their place, then there is peace.

For peace to be maintained, relationships and networks of authority in the social structure are guarded by the etiquettes of '*faaaloalo*', '*tautua*' and '*usitai*'.

Secondly, Samoan society is highly specialised in that each position is clearly defined with distinct roles and responsibilities for everyone to perform. Therefore, the distribution of power rests with anyone who has the authority to divide labour. According to Weber (1976), specialisation in the division of labour increases the level of competency in separate areas of society. In traditional Samoa, the Council of *Matai* holds the authority to divide labour and provide avenues for practising these roles. As the Samoan culture dictates, in order to know how to perform these roles, and to be competent in the performance of these roles, individuals need to observe and participate in the day to day basis of doing things. Education therefore takes place not in a classroom, but in '...participation, imitation, observation and involvement' (Rakau, 1988:89) in the culture. In other words, education is by experiencing the daily life of a Samoan and all its rituals. As Rakau (1988:89) stated:

It starts from the parents, and later in the community in participation in arts, songs, rituals, work and so on, one accumulates knowledge and understanding, which assist in human life, and in relation to the world around.

Thirdly, an important aspect of the social structure that determines how power is exercised is based on the degree of promotion and the rewards associated with a higher strata of the social structure, each individual strives to perform to their best. For a *taulealea* to be selected as *matai*, one should perform the process of *tautua* well. A *taulealea*'s promotion to the status of *matai* is dependent on satisfactory fulfilment of the criteria of being a competent *taulealea*. Even *matai* can be placed under pressure by losing the rewards of the *matai* office. As Epati (1995:50) noted, although it is rare, the:

...*matai* titles can be removed by consensus of the *aiga* usually for conduct unbecoming the dignity and honour of the *aiga*, or because the *aiga* is of the opinion that the *matai* has been derelict in his/her duties and obligations towards them.

Finally, even though the Samoan social structure's distribution of power mainly lies with *matai*, in the exercising of such power *matai* must treat everyone equally. The structure does not hold a place for individual interest, and authority must be exercised to benefit the community as a whole. Communal interest overrides individual interests (Epati, 1995). For example, if a member of the family breaks a rule in the village, punishment is not on the individual but on the *aiga* group as a whole. Furthermore, decisions made by the Council of *Matai* must benefit the whole society, and every hierarchy must work together with the other hierarchies to achieve social harmony. These issues associated with the clear definition of power in Samoa not only hold society together, but place obligation on *matai* to perform their roles with honesty and dignity. However, changes have emerged as a result of the development of the church in Samoa which have seen the concept of power reflecting a state of confusion. This is discussed in the case of Vaigaga.

Vaigaga

Historical

Before the arrival of Europeans, traditional Vaigaga's idea of power was well defined and practiced under the Vaiusu Council of *Matai*. However, the freehold ownership of its land and the emergence of the church as the dominant institution in Vaigaga has resulted in the concept of power not being clearly identified and new figures emerging as the source of power.

Contemporary

In contemporary Vaigaga, the question of power and authority has become confused because there has been a move away from the Council of *Matai* of Vaiusu holding power to a situation where a new church hierarchy exercises power the community. As there is no village setting, the church community provides no clear definition of who holds power, in what capacity and to what extent in Vaigaga. This is a result of the church bringing into Vaigaga a Western concept of power which is far less defined and negotiable. As discussed in Chapter 2, the London Missionary Society representative, Dr. Turner, viewed the 'communistic system' as undesirable and unworthy. The early missionaries recorded very negative views of the *matai* system. Vaigaga is therefore an

example of a community where church structures do exist, although these are one of three parallel structures.

Figure 3

First Social Structure - Church

1. *Faifeau*
2. Ulu Matafale
3. Mafutaga a Tina
4. Autalavou = Aufaipese
5. Aoga Aso Sa

Second Social Structure

- Government
- Mayor
- Matai*
- Rest of Vaigaga society

Third Social Structure

Church community = Other residents who do not go to CCCS

These three social structures all exist to serve residents in different capacities. The current structure, driven primarily by the church is all that many people in the community are aware of. Residents of Vaigaga who go to the CCCS often ignored the existence of other residents as if they did not belong to any social structure when they defined their own social structure. In reality anyone who resides on freehold land in Vaigaga has the same rights as anyone who goes to the CCCS.

However, all these social structures face the same problem. An understanding of the traditional Samoan social structure and its expectations of its people and their behaviour is limited. Therefore, Vaigaga residents are often faced with considerable confusion about how to relate to other people in the community. The church being a substitute for a village setting creates major problems in trying to ascertain where the power really lies, in

what capacity, to what extent, and who are the characters involved. The existence of Vaigaga as a community of different people who may be related by marriage or not at all creates confusion in the exercise of power. An understanding of power relations and how authority is exercised in Vaigaga requires an examination of Vaigaga within a church community. A whole series of issues such as the diminishing role of *matai* in decision making, the role of the pastor, the significant contribution of women regardless of cultural status, and the emergence of the young, are apparent as a result of a structure developed within a church community.

Diminishing Role of Matai in Decision Making

Matai Authority

Soa means two or a pair; *lau* means to recite or declare; *pule* means to distribute or portion out or conveys authority. The given meaning of the three words in *soalaupule* should make it easy to understand the inclusive decision-making process pertinent to the *faamatai*. The *faamatai* insists on making decisions on a consultative basis. At least two people are involved in the making of a decision, but the ideal is to include and involve all the relevant people. The Samoan culture firmly believes in the efficiency of the consultation approach in the making of long-term decisions, because it is a decision-making process that makes the appropriately involved individual feel important by being consulted. It is an excellent way of identifying those who shall execute and supervise the implementation of the decision within the community. (Le Tagaloa, 1992:122-123)

Le Tagaloa's statement clearly outlines the profound importance of the *matai*'s role in decision making. As previously discussed, one of the main functions of the *matai* authority in the fono is to make and reach decisions by consensus. The Council of *Matai* will deliberate and *soalaupule* until a consensus decision has been reached. With village meetings, all *matai* are obliged to attend in their capacity as the head of the *aiga*, to ascertain what is being discussed and to represent the family in the decision making forum of the village.

In the church, it has been argued that this Council of *Matai* of the village has been adopted in the church structure. In Tiatia's study (1998), she argued that the church

community is a reflection of village structures such that the structure is a hierarchy in which people holding the power and making decisions are *matai*. Thorogood (1995) has clarified this point in that titles have been added to the church structure to suit the traditional structure. Titles such as the assistant pastor, a group of deacons and a similar group of assistant deacons. This ensured that every rank in the hierarchy of the village had its equivalent in the church. Thorogood's and Tiatia's analyses imply that the church reinforces the role and importance of *matai* as the decision-makers. While this may be true to a certain extent, in reality there is a difference. In a traditional setting, a *matai* is under an obligation to perform and participate in decision making. In a church setting, a *matai* has the freedom to choose whether to participate or not. This freedom of choice has become the cause for the diminishing role of *matai* in decision making in Vaigaga today. In the early days, it was noted that *matai* played a major role in the administration of the community and development of the church. In response to the question asked of the participants:

Who made decisions in Vaigaga in your day?

The following responses were made.

Tagivle: They were matai. Matai were the leaders in the church in those days.

Papalii: They were the chiefs and orators.

Ulugia: Matai

The strong participation of *matai* in leadership in the early days clearly indicates that power lay in the hands of *matai*. This made it relatively easy for residents to relate to each other since the channels of authority were clearly identified. As Faatafao stated:

In our family, there was only one matai and he was a much older matai. We heard what was going on or what was happening through him...When there was a fono of the

church, there were just matai there and this member comes home to explain to his family what was going on at the meeting.

However, over the years, the *matai*'s role in leadership, especially the decision making process has diminished. Papalii, a prominent *matai* in Vaigaga and a regular attender of church meetings stated:

The council of chiefs and orators is not well balanced. Only a few chiefs and orators do come to meetings. The rest do not even come.

Papalii's comments support the argument that the church structure does not oblige *matai* to attend church meetings. The freedom to participate creates this kind of non-participation attitude among *matai* and as a result their role as the source of authority becomes less effective and unrecognised. More importantly, the diminishing role of the *matai* in meetings directly affects the power of the *matai* in the process of *soalaupule* and as a leader. The *soalaupule* process allows for the *matai* to look at all sides of an issue that might affect his/her *aiga* and the implication for the whole society. This process demands and encourages the *matai* to be a good *matai* and to follow the tenets of culture and tradition that applaud the *matai* (Le Tagaloa, 1992).

The limited participation of *matai* has also provided the opportunity for non-*matai* to become heavily involved in meetings with anyone being able to listen regardless of age and cultural status. While this is a sign of equality in that everyone exercises their rights to participate in meetings, it also threatens the effectiveness of the *soalaupule* process. This means some decisions made within the church setting do not carry the backing of a consensus agreement as opposed to those reached by *matai* in a village setting. Papalii clearly identified this issue when he was asked of the current situation in Vaigaga.

Some do gang up in meetings. If the committee decides to do something and the women support it, they will side with the women when a question is put forward. This happens when only three or four matai come to meetings. As a result, one side wins and the other falls.

Papalii's comments about the limited number of *matai* that turn up for meetings supports the ineffectiveness of the *soalaupule* process when making decisions. Biased decisions are more likely to occur if consensus is not reached by going through the process of *soalaupule* thoroughly. In a village setting, the obligation of the *matai* to attend meetings is sanctioned by norms and protocols set out by the village Council of *Matai*. Continuous non-participation without valid reason may be taken as a sign that the *matai* is not fulfilling his/her responsibilities and the *aiga* may take necessary actions to ensure that a *matai* lives up to the expectations.

The diminishing role of *matai* as the source of power and authority in Vaigaga has therefore resulted in the emergence of a whole new set of factors related to power relations.

The Emergence of the Young

In the Samoan culture, old people are the source of knowledge. They are the links between the past and the present. Their wisdom is well respected and their knowledge is sought after for direction and in decision making. Vaigaga was once a society led and directed by the older people. There was peace and no major tension as their knowledge was always referred to as '*mamao le tofa*'. Faatafao noted in her early days in Vaigaga how things were done in the community especially the church. She observed that:

There were older people, for example...there were much older matai...There were no conflicts. What one matai says, everyone agrees.

Faatafao's experiences of authority in her early days in Vaigaga were in the hands of the older *matai*. They were the leaders and the decision-makers in Vaigaga. Their leadership marked a period of peace in the history of Vaigaga. However, today's leadership is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the young educated people. The general assumption with this shift in power direction is based on the notion that young educated *matai* are more energetic and have the fresh intellectual ideas of the modern world. As Ulugia, a young *matai* who is on the council of the church that makes major decisions argues:

The old people now elect the young to hold some of the church's main administration positions. For example, the committee. I have noticed that the old people have refused on the assumption that the young are better because they more energetic and intellectual. This is not a good thing.

However, these supposedly intellectual ideas sometimes undermine the accepted respectable relationship the educated young should give to the elders and the rest of the community. As Ulugia admitted, being a committee member means that the elders and the community place considerable trust on him and that this can make him lose sight of the respect he should give to the elders.

Sometimes, I used the trust placed in me by the elders to feel conceited and to say some disrespectful things. Because of their belief in me and the way I organised things, I lose sight of the proper etiquette. There are times when what I say overrides their opinions. Other times, I use my position as a committee member to exercise absolute authority.

Ulugia believed, the elders should still be at the forefront of major decision making and leadership because of their years of experience and of the knowledge and wisdom they possess of the culture and life. For him, it is still a learning experience trying to accommodate his way of thinking into the expected cultural norms, values and etiquette of Samoan society. Ulugia's belief is shared by Faatafao, a generation older than Ulugia. She strongly believed that old people are never too old to lead and she would still like the elderly taking a strong role in the leadership of Vaigaga.

Another group of young people now emerging as a major source of concern is the 'youth'. Youth is the alternate term used in the Vaigaga social structure to identify those who would belong to the *taulelea* and *aualuma* groups. There is some difficulty in clearly identifying people belonging to this group because of different interpretations throughout Samoa of what constitutes a 'youth'. Samoan culture does not in fact have a definition for youth. It believes that one remains a child until their parents pass away. In Vaigaga, the youth group consists of all those who are members of the church youth group which may include older people such as *matai*, *faletua*, *tausí*. However, the term is generally used in

Vaigaga to refer to the young people of the church who are probably under the age of thirty.

The existence of youth as the most populated group in Vaigaga is a cause of major concern. This arises because of the absence of a village Council of *Matai* to install and administer proper rules and regulations to govern their behaviour. While their position may require them to play certain roles in the church such as providing manpower occasionally, their social status as youth means there are no specific roles, proper etiquette and rewards. Therefore, when authority becomes dissipated and responsibilities are not clearly divided, there is the threat of clashes and tension among the community. As young people growing up in a community which does not clearly define where they stand, youth are more likely to respond unfavourably to the cultural norms expected of them. In addition, their ignorance of the importance in the Samoan culture of the proper lines of respect that they should give to the other people of the community creates further tensions in the society. Senetenari, a youth himself highlighted some of these problems in Vaigaga.

Currently, many youth no longer obey the matai...because they think they are more intelligent. This is also the case because the matai's authority is becoming weak.

Senetenari's comments revealed the effect of not having a social structure based on the Council of *Matai* with all its power and authority, and highlights why youth are becoming a major problem in Vaigaga. If it is not addressed soon, respect and obedience, which define the pride of humanity in the Samoan culture, will be slowly eradicated. Such values define Samoan identity and when they are no longer important in the lines of etiquette, then the whole community will be in chaos and the matai system will be just a meaningless social status. Senetenari believes that if Vaigaga wants to ensure that its culture is maintained, it needs to re-evaluate the roles and responsibilities played by its *matai*, not just as church members on Sunday but as community members everyday.

Matai should play a prominent role in the teaching of how to make the ava, speeches and the culture to the young people. They should also teach the proper etiquettes and lines of respect between matai and young people. They are the people who have understood the culture and they are the ones who should teach the youth. And also, it is their duty.

Senetenari's comments are the plea of a young man wanting to grow up knowing that he has more or less been equipped to take on the role of the *matai* when his turn comes. It has however highlighted the problems faced by the youth of Vaigaga today.

The Role of the Pastor

As the church has worked tirelessly to build a new society in Vaigaga, its leaders have also enjoyed a position of respect and influence which could conceivably be unequalled anywhere else in the world. Kamu (1996) and Tiatia (1998) noted such respect as the highest honour and respect which for centuries had applied to the chief and was now being applied to the *faiifeau*. As discussed in the literature review, these respects range from honorary terms such as *susuga*, and *afioga* to distribution of food that is consumed or given in the Samoan culture to chiefs. The most sacred relationship in the Samoan culture between the brother and the sister called 'feagaiga' now applies to the relationship between the *faiifeau* and his congregation. The incorporation of Christianity into these important aspects of the culture reflects the acceptance that the Samoan people have shown towards Christianity (Kamu, 1996). In its development in Samoa, *faiifeau* became and still are the significant players in the spreading of Christ to the people of Samoa. This is in contrast to traditional Samoa in which the *matai* held the power of the spiritual side of life.

The *faiifeau*'s job description as introduced to Samoan society is best defined by Baxter in Martin's 1963 edition as:

...the pastors, as leaders of the church, all eyes are on them, they are examples of Christ and of the Gospel. Therefore their examples should not contradict their doctrine. He continues to describe the role of the pastor as one which is involved with visiting the sick

to careful oversight of families. He writes that the manner of their oversight of their flock must be with a deep sense of their own insufficiency and of their dependence on Christ. He concludes with the use of humiliation on account of their not seriously, unreservedly and laboriously laying out themselves in their work by (1) negligent studies and (ii) by dull, drowsy preaching.

These expectations by Baxter were absorbed into the work of *faiifeau* in Samoa and much of this is still relevant today. The *faiifeau* in a village is to be available when requested. Taulealeausumai (1997) noted that *faiifeau* will often be called upon to celebrate births, anniversaries, coming of age ceremonies, weddings and to attend to sickness and death. The *faiifeau*'s role in offering prayers and blessings is treated by families with the greatest of respect. They believe that the *faiifeau*'s blessings are blessings from God.

However, given that the *faiifeau* has been conferred with such high honour contradicts his social status in the Samoan culture as the *taulealea*. *Faiifeau* in Samoa are represented by *taulealea*, which means the untitled men. If a *matai* wishes to become a *faiifeau* then he has to relinquish his *matai* title. This is one example of how the traditional social structure has been challenged by the work of the church.

In Britain, the Bishops had sat in the House of Lords and exercised political power. The powers held by many Church representatives have influenced the social structure of Vaigaga since the church was established. In Vaigaga, the status of the *faiifeau* replaces the status of the high chief in the traditional social structure. This means, Vaigaga residents regard the role of the *faiifeau* as higher than the rest of the community. This replacement is due to the non-existence of a Council of *Matai* as the source of authority in Vaigaga. Thus emerges a new kind of authority. Papalii and Senetenari, two generations apart both acknowledge this new kind of authority in Vaigaga in which the *faiifeau*'s status is higher than the *matai*.

Papalii: In the division of Vaigaga, there are matai. However, the pastor comes first...then the Council of Matai. After the Council of Matai comes the women's fellowship.

Senetenari: First is the pastor, second are the chiefs and orators, third women followed by youth and last are the children.

Judging from Papalii and Senetenari's comments, the pastor is the head of the social structure. His position therefore gives him the authority and power to influence any major decisions within the church especially requesting the support of the church members financially. Vaigaga community therefore is placed under the authority and direction of the pastor to render service to the church and its work. The power and authority of the Council of *Matai* in determining the work and labour required of its residents has now shifted to the church under the leadership of the *faiifeau*. One important point to note however is that the church members take absolute authority and power to fire and hire any pastor.

Gender Issues

One of the most important issues at the forefront of church discussions is the role of women and whether they should be entitled to become ministers in the church. As discussed in the literature review, a discussion of women's roles in the church often focuses exclusively on what they may or may not do. This area of discussion often loses sight of an important element regarding women's traditional entitlements. It was from this framework of traditional entitlements that Taulealeausumai (1997) expressed concern at the subordination of women in the church in the areas of authority, leadership and in their not being able to become parish ministers.

In Vaigaga, while women still cannot become parish ministers, their significant position and contribution in the church community has placed them in positions of authority, with women becoming more involved in decision making. In traditional Samoan culture, a woman is only involved in decision making within the fono forum if she is a *matai*. This shift in practices places some tension among the residents of Vaigaga especially those who believed in the cultural way of doing things. In response to the question, do you think that the church has made some parts of the community more powerful than others? The following responses were made.

Tagivale: Yes, the church has made women more popular.

Tagivale's response obviously reflects the idea that was instilled in her at the time when she was born, as she grew up at the time when women of her community took a back seat in meetings especially when making decisions. She sees the strong participation of women in meetings and decision making as being more popular rather than having more power. Faatafao shares Tagivale's experience.

...though not in the sense that its made people more powerful. Its just that it made people more outspoken...With the growth of the church, so many people are involved in the major decision making.

Faatafao is a member of the women's fellowship and she sees their dominant position in Vaigaga is not a matter of being more powerful but rather, being able to speak out on matters which require the opinion of everyone who is a member of the church including women. She believes, no one has absolute authority since so many people are involved in major decision making. People of the younger generation see the dominant position of women being related to power. This power derives from their work in the church helping with its development and raising funds. According to Naomi and Senetenari:

Naomi: The women's fellowship. Now, women have a stronger voice and are doing more than men.

Senetenari: Yes, women...because they are the strong force in development and fund raising.

Naomi and Senetenari's idea of women having more power is connected to having a stronger voice. They see the significant contribution of women to the development and fund raising for the church as the opportunity for women to be more involved and voice their opinion when making decisions in the community.

In contrast to the diminishing role of the *matai*, this woman's role is not only seen as a threat to the importance of the *soalaupule* process of the *matai*'s authority, but also to the existence of communalism. Ulugia strongly stated:

One of the changes today is the saying we now hear that women have their own authority...The women's fellowship was not very popular...Its true they were involved in everything, but as a support player in the implementation of what was decided upon by the council of tama. But today, women are standing up as they are the authority. If they want to do something, they do it without consulting...They thought of building their own house and they did without consulting.

Ulugia believed, the women's current practice of doing things on their own without proper consultation with the council of tama threatens the very core of the Samoan culture - working together.

The implication of no clear lines of power and authority in Vaigaga has impacted heavily on whether the Samoan culture is continuing or changing. Petaia notes in one of his poems one of the most obvious effects of the church influence.

SELF MADE GODS

In a church

Sits a man. an ordinary man.

He neither moves nor turns

Beside him sits a woman

An ordinary woman, statue like.

He is paralysed, trapped

In a sky-blue imported suit,

A noose-like tie hangs

Tight from his throat

Into the fluffy angel wings

On his bible-flat chest.
She is sacred in white satin
Beautiful in her disguise as heaven
Sweet-perfumed with 'oil of olay'.
Her face is lined with pulpit colours,
Rings of gold droop from her ears
Like cow nostrils sweating.
Her feet in marble shoes.

In a church sit a man and a woman,
Ordinary people. They sit alone
Extraordinary believing in nothing
Else but themselves self-made into gods.
(Petaia, 1983:25)

The poem *Self-Made Gods* is a Samoan's response to a palagi hidden culture aptly disguised by the spread of Christianity to the Samoan people. Petaia's account of when Christianity arrived in Samoa focused exclusively on the changing of Samoan clothes from the traditional wear of tapa, to men wearing suit and a tie and women wrapped up in satin with make up and shoes. This poem supports the argument by Refau or Rakau analysed in the literature review which stated that the spreading of Christianity in the Pacific brought with it new ideas and fashions of clothing replacing the important traditional wear. The message conveyed by Petaia is the fact that rather than Christianity continuing with the traditional way of dressing, it changed it. In addition, Christianity went on to influence many other aspects of the Samoan culture.

Work by Ernst (1994b) and Kamu (1996) have established the significant impact that Christianity has exerted on the Samoan culture from the time it arrived. The influences range from the social aspects of life to the political organisation of the Samoan people. One of the most important examples of how the social life has been suppressed by the church is that some Samoan dances are banned as they are regarded as heathen. *Tautua*

the current parish minister in Vaigaga supported this claim when he was asked of the effect the church has on the culture.

The aspect of the culture that has been affected by the church is the suppression by the church of things that are not appropriate in the life of a Christian. There are cultural values that are un-Christian like certain kind of dances that are considered heathen.

But what is considered morally wrong? Perhaps this may be considered in Mason's argument as morally wrong as discussed in the literature review. When European culture arrived in Samoa, ideas of men's clubs, and prostitutes' clubs also arrived. It is surprising to note the extent to which heathen practices can be practised across cultures. The heathen aspect in Samoan dances was the fact that parts of the body were without cover. This kind of attitude is an example of how the missionaries implemented changes through the church which impacted on traditional Samoan culture. Anything that was regarded as not approved by the church was either altered or eradicated.

An important aspect of the social structure is the maintenance of culture. People grow up in society belonging to each level of the structure at various stages of life. They learn and share much of their behaviour with other members of the society to which they belong. Society therefore depends on a cultural based social structure in which they can learn and share their expected behaviour.

As already highlighted, before Christianity, the hierarchical structure of the Samoan culture worked successfully as the flow of power and authority was clearly defined. The arrival of Christianity however, led to changes in the political organisation with churches setting up their own communities rather than village communities. In Vaigaga, the church respects the hierarchical nature of the cultural social structure but lacks the ability to define and implement clear roles and responsibilities for each strata of society. It excels in its efforts to unite different people into a specific community, it lacks the cultural foundation of Samoan obligations, protocols and loyalty that bind people and promote identity.

Confusion

Cultural identity is central to the identification and the maintaining of one's place in the social structure of Samoa. It defines one's sense of belonging to a particular society and carries with it certain responsibilities and expectations. In places called villages in Samoa, identities defined by the culture are clearly visible. In communities like Vaigaga, the church does not clearly distinguish the different identities, roles, responsibilities and expectations and this can lead to some degree of confusion. There is also confusion in trying to decide how far they can go in the performance of their roles and responsibilities as *matai* or deacons. Faatafao is currently experiencing this aspect of confusion in trying to understand what her identity should be. When she was asked of her role in Vaigaga, Faatafao replied:

...well, in Vaigaga,...I am a matai's wife.

However, when she was asked of her status in the Samoan social structure as a *matai's* wife with regards to her responsibilities:

Well, I actually do not know because...being in a village where there is not much in the way of traditional, and cultural aspects of the Samoan way of life, I just take an active role in the women's fellowship by helping out with their fund raising activities and whatever is happening in Vaigaga.

Faatafao's confusion reflects the reality of the situation in Vaigaga. The older generation do understand that there is a big difference between the identity defined by the church and the identity defined by the culture, however, how to relate and live with those identities in Vaigaga is a confusing matter. This has resulted in most cases in Vaigaga of *matai* exercising their authority by laying down rules and regulations for the whole of Vaigaga, being ineffective given that Vaigaga is a community not a village. For example, Faatafao explained the system for imposing fines on the lawbreakers in Vaigaga. The church makes rules and regulations and it imposes fines on lawbreakers in Vaigaga. However, confusion arises when there is an attempt to understand whether the CCCS *matai* can impose rules or fines on the non-CCCS believers. Faatafao explained:

They do, but they do not enforce those people whether they pay up. Not like what they do to those who belong to the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa.

In a village setting, the *matai* carries the authority which means when they impose fines in their capacity in the fono, the lawbreaker must pay up regardless of religion. In a church community like Vaigaga, it is not the case. The Council of Matai does not hold any power to impose and enforce laws because of the freehold ownership of land. Nevertheless, the older generations have an understanding of the difference in their roles whether that of the church or the culture but for the younger generation, the situation is extremely confusing.

Lack of Identity

Young people face a much different reality. They know that they are often required to help out with any development in Vaigaga in their role as the *aumaga* but possess no understanding of what the identity requires of them. Take Senetenari's understanding of the role and responsibility of the *aumaga*.

...I also belong to the aumaga group and the community depends on us in helping out with any work for the development of the church such as the building of the pastor's house.

Senetenari's definition of the identity of the *aumaga* is placed within the context of the church where they should provide labour for the building of houses. So, when he was asked of other responsibilities the *aumaga* should possess like knowing the *faalupega* of your village and making formal speeches, Senetenari replied:

I do not have a very deep understanding...I do not know any faalupega or lauga.

Senetenari's experience as a young man reveals that the identity of *aumaga* only exists when mentioned but has no substance in Vaigaga. Vaigaga in fact have a youth group. Senetenari had no problem in identifying himself as a member of the youth group. When he was asked of his role in Vaigaga, he replied:

I am in the choir and the youth group.

Senetenari has already felt the effects of lacking cultural identity. At the age of twenty-two, he should have been able to recite the *faalupega*, know how to communicate to *matai* using the formal language and have a clear understanding of his identity as an *aumaga*. A concern for the future is how these young men will mature to become good *matai*? What hope is there that they will continue to teach their children and their children's children about the proper codes and practices of the Samoan culture if they themselves do not know how to define their cultural identity?

Change

The current situation as defined and explained by the participants in their experiences of life in Vaigaga has identified a change in cultural practices and norms. The first important change is the replacement of the village Council of *Matai* by the church council. This replacement effectively deletes the classroom of education for Samoan culture. Tagivale summed up the importance of the village Council of *Matai* as:

It brings honour to the village. they discuss and evaluate proper etiquette between children and matai...It is the classroom where the untitled men sit and learn how to make the ava and listen to formal speeches.

The new Church Council also meant a new meeting house with the meeting house changing from the house of the village chief to the house of the pastor. The pastor then appears to be the chief of the community. As Refau (1991:32) argued'

...we now treat the pastor as the chief of the village. The best house in the village is usually built for him and his family.

In retrospect, the impact of the new meeting house in Vaigaga meant a new way of looking at things. The pastor's house is a European two storey building with confined space. Everything is done behind closed doors. In contrast the chief's house, is a round open fale which symbolises a holistic view. Being holistic is central to the life of the

Samoan especially in their communal and united society. The gathering of everyone under the roof of the fale is a sign of the communal living and sharing of Samoan society. By shifting to the house of the *faiifeau* meant we,

...lose this unity and holistic view of the communal sense of living (Vaai, 1996:75).

In turn there is also the risk of losing of cultural knowledge, formal language and unity. This is because the meetings being held in the *faiifeau*'s house are church meetings not village meetings therefore include only those who belong to that specific denomination but do not include the whole community. These church meetings are identified by Faatafao.

The church itself has its own meetings where they discuss regulations and rules for everybody in the village.

From Faatafao's comments, the church council is trying to take up the role of the village council by implementing rules for the whole community even though the meeting house is now the *faiifeau*'s house. However, this will not work simply because Vaigaga is not a village, it is a freehold community and not all residents worship in the congregational Christian Church.

The Loss of Cultural Knowledge and Language

Language is a very important aspect of culture because it defines identity. It gives life to the words, signs and meanings of culture by putting these into context for example, the shout 'stop!' may have an instant physical effect upon an English speaker but will mean nothing to someone unfamiliar with this language.

As discussed in the research methods the importance of the Samoan language is in identifying who we are, what we are, our history and our culture. More significantly, within this language are the underlying values, norms and the belief systems of that culture which are transmitted (Tamasese et.al., 1997) from generation to generation. There are two forms of the Samoan language; the everyday spoken language and the

highly allusive language. The highly allusive form of language is that which is spoken at the most 'formal' level, often called, 'gagana a *matai*' (language spoken by *matai*) (ibid). The ability to speak and understand the deeper meaning of this formal language is the most valuable cultural possession anyone could have.

In Vaigaga, language is the primary means of interaction amongst individuals and the medium to respond to the community in which they exist. Unfortunately, this highly allusive form of language faces extinction in Vaigaga, mainly because there is no learning environment provided by the community for young people to learn this. Loss of language means loss of cultural knowledge. This issue was the main concern expressed by Tautua:

I have noticed with concern that youth in Vaigaga do not have any form of cultural learning...in terms of language and cultural knowledge. It's true it is taught in schools, but not all the children get the chance to go to school.

Tautua's assessment reflects the reality of Vaigaga. One of the participants, Senetenari has already experienced the loss of language and knowledge. He does not know how to speak the formal language and has little to almost no knowledge of the culture and its values and practices. A limited knowledge of speaking the formal language has also inhibited his understanding of the Samoan culture. In view of this problem, Tautua further explained that this loss in language is due to the fact that in Vaigaga, the culture is not properly practiced. If people especially *matai* do not wish to participate in cultural events or undertake their obligations, no punishment is imposed as would in a village setting. Now, people could not care if non-participation arouses feelings of resentment. However, Tautua stressed the importance of these cultural events in that it provides a learning environment of cultural knowledge and the formal language.

These are some of the issues that have surfaced in Vaigaga as a result of the changing understanding of the concept of power. It can be argued that in Vaigaga, no one or no group has power to administer the community. Only new figures have emerged with more dominance but not power.

Judging from the participants' responses, defining power relations and authority in Vaigaga depends on who is more domineering and in what capacity. They are assessed along the lines of whose voice is stronger, who have done more for the community and who are participating more in meetings. The coming of the church with a less defined concept of power has reflected in Vaigaga's current structure. There are no clear lines of authority as the emergence of the young and the strengthening of the pastor's role have made significant impacts on the administration of Vaigaga. The role of the *matai* is slowly diminishing as the source of authority as a result of no real enforcement provided by the church structure to force *matai* to perform their responsibilities as head of *aiga*. In effect, women whether *matai* or not make the most of this opportunity by being heavily involved in administration matters. Finally, the young people are growing up not having a clear picture of what relationship they should respect. Their understanding of the kind of relations they should respect is based on a church structure which is very limited. It does not reinforce and implement the importance of status such as *matai*, faletua, tausi and *aualuma*. Generally, the young person has no idea of what a faletua is and thus will relate to women in general in the same way as they relate to their own mothers. Because of this, being a tamaitai does not really hold much power in Vaigaga.

Power relations in Vaigaga do not easily provide for promotion and rewards. There is no promotion for a young person who renders competent service to the church as the case between a taulealea and a *matai*. It was clearly shown in the case of women that there is less or no room at all for accountability and consultation within the community.

The failure of the current church system in Vaigaga to clearly identify groups and their powers primarily places the Samoan culture under threat in Vaigaga. The existence of three structures with no real powers and authority provides no room for learning many cultural values, norms, practices and obligations. Vaigaga residents are therefore confused about their roles. A lack of identity is increasingly evident with the young people. A lack of identity and role confusion has led to major changes in cultural practices and norms especially with the authority of the church and the way meetings are now conducted. These changes would indeed appear to have perpetuated the loss of language and cultural knowledge.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Changing Times

One of the main objectives of this study was to examine the role of the Congregational Christian Church in contemporary and historical Vaigaga. The previous chapters have discussed issues associated with the social structure as a result of the church's establishment and growth. This chapter will discuss the church's role and its influence on the residents of Vaigaga especially those who attend this church.

The church has played a major role in the defining of a functional identity for Vaigaga. Its existence not only gives Vaigaga an identity of being a church community but it manages to unite a range of different people living in Vaigaga under its leadership in the absence of a village council. Historically, the church has profoundly influenced, determined and shaped the way Vaigaga residents live and think. Its emphasis has been the stepping stone for some of the positive developments in Vaigaga, however the disadvantages of its influence have also been felt primarily with regards to aspects of our cultural life. These aspects are regarded as essential to our identity as Samoans, and it is therefore a critical issue that needs to be addressed.

This chapter will examine the effect of the church by comparing its historical focus and present emphasis.

Past Experiences of the Church

Historically, the church in Vaigaga had its focus on people. In other words, the church was about 'people' (Kyaw-Hoe, 1996). Its focus was the development of a strong relationship between God and the residents of Vaigaga in the way in which they lived. This relationship enforced by the church became the framework within which the development of the 'human person' was fostered in Vaigaga. Consequently, Vaigaga residents saw the church as a positive vehicle to develop Vaigaga's new identity as a community of individuals.

Samoans are committed to a communal way of life. It is a lifestyle based on the extended family patterns and ordered on obligations of *tautua*, *faaaloalo* and *usitai*. With this base, wherever they go, and wherever they settle, they are always drawn together as a community. Because of this, the church was considered to be the social organisation within which they could practice a communal way of life. The church's role therefore focused on the developing of this human side of the community. Furthermore, the absence of any village setting in Vaigaga has forced the people to turn to the church to fulfil the communal aspects of the Samoan culture usually associated with the development of families and the upbringing of children by providing an environment of learning for them. The church's answer was found in the building of the local school. Some of the older participants clearly identified the issue of developing the human person while growing up in Vaigaga. The human person was the,

...principle of subject and object of its social organisation (Kyaw-Hoe, 1996:103).

Faatafao identified this issue when recollecting her past experiences of the church's role.

Well, the church was the place where the matai come as members of that particular community. Where they are regarded as one because of the different matai from different villages all over Upolu and Savaii. I suppose it was the place where they could all come as one, that they would not be outsiders in the sense that they were regarded as members of that particular community, accepted members of society and that they play a vital role in the running of the church. There was no segregation in that you are from Savaii and that you go back to Savaii. The church was regarded as a place where they could all meet and be accepted members of a particular community. That's how I see it. That is why church in Vaigaga is important.

Faatafao further explained that as a community, the church provided the opportunity for people to take part in whatever was happening in the church by being a member of the different associations that are within the church. This is quite similar to the Samoan social structure. One is expected to participate in the society by becoming a member of the different hierarchies of the culture.

Ulugia like Faatafao saw the emphasis of the church in the past as really focused on the development of the human person. When asked where the emphasis of the church was, Ulugia replied:

It was on development as seen in the building of the primary school. The development of the church and the youth.

Ulugia and Faatafao regarded the historical role of the church as really focusing on the development of the human person and providing resources which are essential for that development, like the primary school.

Present Reflection of the Church

The significant contribution of the church in the development of the human person historically is being undermined by its change of emphasis today. The transition is so obvious where the role of the church is seen to be shifting from the development of the human person to the promotion of the church's status.

In Vaigaga today, the church seems to be focusing its attention on the demands placed on the families for financial support. This has been a popular debate whenever money is mentioned in the church. It is a sensitive issue and the church can get quite defensive sometimes when it is attached to negative connotations especially with the mainstream churches such as the CCCS and the Methodist. In Ernst (1994:169) study, he argued that one of the main challenges facing the church in Samoa especially CCCS is that,

...the income, lifestyle and position of CCCS ministers are questioned by a growing number of people and the contribution to the church are considered a growing burden.

Taulealeausumai (1997:233) also expressed this same concern with regards to families in New Zealand. She argued, the church today is also partly to blame for the draining of financial resources of families and villages. Both stated that the consequences of such

financial demands would result in people leaving the mainstream church and going to charismatic movements.

For some people the demands especially the monetary demands have become too great a burden. They have not abandoned their Christianity. Some have shifted to the Pentecostal movements. Others have become Mormons.

(Duncan, 1990:140)

However, Afutiti a graduate of the CCCS Theological College in Samoa disagreed. He claims it is not the church forcing people to give but giving and donating money to the church derives from the cultural nature of the Samoans and to give the best of what they have.

To some extent, giving and self-supported is a Samoan's duty which is derived from the Samoan nature and identity. This duty is not complicated by any lack of economy; for they bear more on the expression, 'where there's a will, there's a way'...If giving through contributions to the church is assumed to be a burden by those looking from outside, is not an issue to those inside CCCS who have the church as their kindred. (Afutiti, 1996:23)

It is not surprising that a graduate of the very church that is under criticism for making heavy financial demands on their congregations becomes defensive on such matters because,

...part of the very contributions they would be discouraging would effect their (sometimes comparatively high) standard of living (Ernst, 1994a:11).

However, it is this very essence of giving so much than one can afford that Efi (Ernst, 1994a:11) raises concerns about. He stated that:

...this conspicuous display of generosity was a misguided application of the *Fa'aSamoa* (The Samoan way of life).

Afutiti claimed, the criticisms against the heavy financial demands of the CCCS are issues which can only be seen from the outside. Presented here are the inside perspectives of the participants in Vaigaga on this issue and how they see the changing role and emphasis of the church. The issues raised by the participants in this study are the same as those raised by Ernst (1994b), Taulealeausumai (1997) and Efi (Ernst,1994a). When asked whether there have been any changes in the role of the church in Vaigaga, most of the participants replied:

Papalii: Yes, there are changes. The enormous demands on certain things especially moneywise particularly in relation to other congregations. There is competition among the churches to see who comes first. This is the reason why many people are suffering and are becoming too dependent on families overseas for assistance so that they can afford.

Papalii pointed out that the church is to blame for the draining of financial resources in families. This supports Taulealeausumai's (1997) argument on this same issue especially in Samoan families in New Zealand. In Vaigaga, sometimes the financial demands on families are beyond their means and they are therefore forced to ask families overseas for assistance. However, Taulealeausumai (1997) argued, most families in New Zealand live on the poverty line and they themselves are trying to make ends meet. The changing times of the church's role is also noted by the other participants.

Ulugia: There are a lot of changes. Emphasis is now placed on things to do with the world. For example, its building of houses and things to do with money.

Senetenari: Now, the emphasis is on the renovations of the church, pastor's house, and financial contributions. They are competing with other congregations to see who has the highest sum of money given to the church.

Naomi: Many changes financially. There are too many financial contributions for an increasing demand of financial support.

The participants have clearly outlined the shift in the church's emphasis which is now focusing on the development of the church's status in financial terms. Its status is no longer based on the spiritual side of developing the human person, rather its status is measured on the money it can earn. The consequences of this emphasis presented by Ernst (1994b) and Taulealeausumai (1997) have also proved to be right as they are happening in Vaigaga. In the participant's own words, Papalii and Senetenari clearly explained:

Papalii: I feel sad because it has changed the way people think in the way they should worship God. Some people have gone to other churches. Others do not come to church anymore.

Senetanri: Other people have left because there is too much demand on financial contributions.

To overcome this problem, some of the participants believed the church should play an active role in trying to unite people and to establish some measures to avoid it from happening. Faatafao believes the church should play an active role in bringing those people back into the church.

I expect that the church should play an active role in the upbringing of children, the youth because so many have turned away from the church. I expect the church to do something for those people who have gone away to other denominations, I would like to see whoever, taking a strong part in uniting those Christians who have left the fold and to help them in any way so that they can return if its possible.

Currently, the church is doing nothing to make sure these former members feel free to return to worship in the Congregational Christian Church without hesitation.

With the 'human person' becoming less and less important as an object and subject of the church's main emphasis in Vaigaga, the result is people leaving the church. Some still

attend church but somehow become passive in their involvement in church activities. Faatafao clearly acknowledged this issue:

I feel a lot of the church members being very passive somewhat and very disinterested in been involved in the church and its different associations or groups. A lot of people now, they know they belong to the Christian church at Vaigaga on just a Sunday but otherwise they don't want to be involved in a lot of things that are happening.

Faatafao highlights the negative impact of the church on the communal nature of the Vaigaga residents. As a church community, some of the residents have no real commitment to live and participate as a community. This lack of communal nature in working together symbolises a breakdown in this aspect of the Samoan culture. The very essence of the Samoan culture characterised by a communal living, which incorporates sharing, and protection of the weaker members is somehow breaking down in Vaigaga. These members leave because of difficulties in meeting the financial demands of the church, reflects the breaking down of this very aspect of the culture.

The changing role and changing emphasis has also been clearly identified by the participants in the development of house building. The reality is that, there are too many houses within the compound of the church and there is no need for most of these houses. Efi (Ernst, 1994a:11) former Prime Minister of Western Samoa and now leader of the opposition party, challenges this issue:

Is there a Christian ethic that applies to building more churches than required? Is there a moral standard which applies where it is proposed to build a new church when the old one is adequate? Is there a morality that effects building a grand and expensive edifice where a modest and inexpensive one will do? Are there not circumstances where construction projects exceed what is reasonable? If so, should the churches declare a position in clear and unequivocal language?

Efi pointed out that it is very unnecessary to build more houses than required or building new ones when the current ones are adequate. Not only it is a waste of resources, but also

it puts unnecessary demands on the residents for financial contributions. This may be one of effects of unnecessary demands has resulted in weaker members leaving the church.

This chapter has discussed the changing times of the church's historical focus and present emphasis. These changing times have identified a shift in the church's main role and function. Based on the participants' experiences, it found that there is a shift in the church's emphasis from focusing on the development of the human person to focusing on the building of its image. The consequences of this changing emphasis are measured in terms of losing members, and imposing the burden on families to increase their financial support.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion: Developing a Functional Identity

This thesis has identified and discussed the impact of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa on the social structure of Vaigaga. This discussion not only identified the dilemmas faced by residents after more than a century of the church impacting on the social structure but it has contributed knowledge to the understanding of the ongoing debate regarding the relationship between the church and the culture. In order to provide a clear analysis of the extent of the church's impact on the community, seven participants were interviewed and their views presented within a thematic framework. The same themes have emerged from previous studies identified within the literature review, some undertaken by Westerners, some of which are accounts by various Tagata Pasifika, and some of which are from a Samoan perspective. These different perspectives will be summarised in this chapter.

This chapter reflects on the themes and the issues associated with them. Recommendations will be made on actions which might be taken to ensure that while living in a community that is dominated by the church, the people living there, especially the young, should also have the right to learn, practice and celebrate the Samoan culture which is their own birth right.

What makes Vaigaga Different?

In answering this question, the participants and the literature review identified three main themes that define the status and character of Vaigaga: land ownership, power, and the role of the church. These main themes are summarised in this chapter.

Land Ownership

This study has found that when 99% of Vaigaga's land became freely owned, Vaigaga's status as part of the village of Vaiusu changed. Once residents gained the freedom to own land without the authority and control of the Vaiusu Council of Matai over it, Vaigaga's

status then changed from that of a village to a community. This community was later developed into a CCCS community where life evolved around the church and its structures. The church became the focal point of life in Vaigaga with residents' only knowledge of how they are structured being defined within the parameters and divisions of the church. The church body makes rules and regulations regarding the everyday development of Vaigaga, the evening curfew, the running of the primary school and the selection of mayors. While the existence of non-CCCS residents is acknowledged, they are rarely consulted on matters that affect everyone in Vaigaga regardless of religion. This represents a move away from a Samoan base to a church base.

The existence of Vaigaga as a church community of its own with no real attachment to a Council of Matai's authority and administration has resulted in the emergence of issues that are seen to have detrimental effects on the importance of the Samoan culture and its social structure. As highlighted in this study, the changes in land ownership in Samoa are emphasised in Vaigaga's being a church community rather than a village. This diminished status gives Vaigaga less importance in terms of culturally defined villages in Samoa. Furthermore, the existence of Vaigaga as a separate community further erodes the composition of Vaiusu. There is also clear evidence in this study that the status of Vaigaga as a church community gives the church the opportunity to dominate the development and administration of Vaigaga by setting rules and regulations and imposing its own social structure on the community. As a result, it excludes those who are non-CCCS from participating in any major decision-making and promotes individualism. This idea of individualism is seen in Vaigaga in the reduction of the most important social unit of the Samoan culture, the *aiga*, as the communal unit and also as an economic unit. An important aspect of the social structure that has been undermined by the growth of the church community in Vaigaga is the issue of power.

Power

The church's understanding of the concept of power is not only less clearly defined than in traditional Samoan villages but is also less negotiable. This study highlighted that many of the families resident in Vaigaga have ancestors who emigrated from Britain and they brought with them a culture which in many ways conflicts with Samoan culture.

Their attitudes to land ownership is one example. Individual ownership of land is valued in the British culture. Communal ownership was the norm in Samoa. If culture values 'thought patterns' and 'ways of life', then these were in conflict not only in terms of land ownership but in who holds power through land ownership and within the community. For descendants of the British immigrants power was derived from freehold ownership of land and church leaders were given power in decision-making by the church's followers.

In Samoan culture, individual ownership of land was not an issue and it was clear that power was with the Matai, the Council of Matai, and exercised through the Council and the complex inter-relationships within *aiga*.

Therefore, not only does the influence of the descendants of British immigrants surface in Vaigaga, but the CCCS's influence is strong and it is clear that the Church also has its cultural origins in Britain. By centering decision-making and power within the CCCS's structure, Vaigaga distinguishes itself from Samoan villages.

Western perspectives discussed within this study agree that culture is an integral part of a society. Tagata Pasifika writers concur. Its importance lies in the fact that culture is about people and what defines their social worlds. The definition of culture according to the World Council of Churches gives importance to the preservation of language, thought patterns, ways of life, attitudes, symbols and presuppositions which are celebrated in art, music, drama and literature. There is a general perception that the impact of the church is eroding the importance of Samoan culture in Samoa. There are indications in this thesis that this is happening. Tautua's experiences provided evidence that the church is suppressing some aspects of the Samoan culture. Specific examples given are the church's suppression of the art of tattoo and dances that are considered unacceptable by the church. The World Council of Church's definition also refers to thought patterns and ways of life which are clearly different in Vaigaga from the villages. Other examples identified and discussed are the increasing confusion over roles of men and women, the young and the old.

The issue of language competence especially the formal type which enhances a deep understanding of the culture is also addressed in this thesis. The argument that the church's structures provide no positive environment for learning this very essential aspect of the culture is clearly supported by Senetenari and is of concern to participants in this study.

Deleuzu's (Smart, 1985) concern that power is a total enigma in Western societies is also relevant in Vaigaga's situation. The participants' experiences show that a clear definition and understanding of who holds power and to what context causes confusion in Vaigaga. This confusion is shown by having not one social structure but three social structures that are vaguely defined and practiced. The emergence of church figures like the *faiifeau* has resulted in the transferring of respect traditionally reserved for chiefs. This is not only a further erosion of the chief's powers in Vaiusu but the *faiifeau's* position as the *feagaiga* of the congregation reduces the most sacred relationship between the brother and the sister '*feagaiga*' in the Samoan culture. The confusion over definitions of power in Vaigaga has resulted in a number of issues which should all be addressed by the community.

First, the church in Vaigaga has allowed young people to undertake leadership roles which in Samoan culture would be reserved for the older, wiser more respected people. This is an issue as it undermines traditional patterns of behaviour and ways of life as well as attitudes to young and old, and that it undermines Samoan cultural practices and beliefs. In Samoan culture, the older people are respected as sources of knowledge. If their roles are undertaken by young people, their status is undermined and questioned. This situation needs to be reviewed. The youth in Vaigaga are at risk of losing touch with the cultural practices of a Samoan village because they are being brought up in a community which does not follow Samoan cultural practices. Because this is occurring, these young people are disadvantaged when visiting other villages as they risk not recognising the clear lines of power and authority evident in the traditional villages, and they may behave in ways which offend because they have not had the opportunity to be truly Samoan in Samoa.

There is clear evidence that because there is no well defined social structure with clear lines of power and authority, the youth of today pay little respect to the proper Samoan lines of etiquette. There is also no real commitment by the community to provide an environment for learning the Samoan cultural values to ensure that the youth know and understand the basic art of the Samoan culture, in particular, their cultural roles and responsibilities. Because of this, there is a greater possibility for the young people of Vaigaga today to become deviants and be denied the opportunity to learn about the formal language which is according to some Samoan writers, the most 'highly allusive style of language' and when someone is possessed with such knowledge, s/he is the envy of the whole Samoan society. There is evidence from Senetenari which shows that loss of language and cultural knowledge is already experienced by young people like himself. This will be a cause for regret in the future and needs to be addressed by the community.

The absence of a social structure with definite responsibilities puts less pressure on *matai* to perform their duties to teach the young the art of the Samoan culture. Furthermore, it undermines the importance of the *soalaupule* process essential to the *matai* system when having meetings. This thesis reveals that participation by *matai* in meetings in Vaigaga is reducing as they decide not to attend, even when important matters are discussed. This is evidence of a continuing erosion of the power and status of *matai* in Vaigaga.

The church encourages individual rights and responsibilities in participation within the church and community. This individuality is in conflict with the family and communal responsibilities exercised by Samoan families and villages. This is highlighted within the women's fellowship which has independent status while the Samoan family hierarchy, status and inter-relationships are ignored. While the fellowship encourages the right to speak and participate in decision making regardless of status, it promotes the idea of majority rules, a further example of a Western method of decision-making impacting on Samoan practices. It is also evident in this study that the idea of having the right to choose leads to the undermining of the importance of the role of the *matai* and therefore seriously affects the importance and effectiveness of the *soalaupule* process that is central to the forum of decision making. Having the right to choose does not mean we have to reject our communal responsibilities in doing things by sharing. Having the right to speak

does not include the rejection of those things dear to the process of *soalaupule* such as achieving consensus decisions. In the exercising of these rights, we lose sight of the importance of our roles as *matai*, as *faletua* and *tausi*, as *tamaitai*, as *taulelea* and as *tamaiti*. The experiences of the participants in this study reveal that these issues are already a reality in Vaigaga.

The dominant position of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in defining the social structure and influencing where power lies have impeded Vaigaga's development of a more functional identity for Vaigaga as a whole Samoan village rather than as a church controlled community. Even with its dominant power position, the weakness of the church's social structure lies in its failure to promote a learning environment in which the Samoan culture remains central. Vaigaga residents identity and confidence as Samoans would be enhanced by their knowing and celebrating their own culture without the risk of offending the church and its hierarchy.

The changing role of the church

This study has found that part of the problem in maintaining and valuing the Samoan culture and social structure in Vaigaga is the changing role of the church. It is suggested that if Vaigaga wishes to become a more functional community in terms of its identity, the church needs to re-evaluate its role and responsibilities in Samoa. It should address the issue of the development of the whole person becoming a more functional participant in all aspects of life as Samoan people and as church members. The church must also address the disadvantage it creates for its members in undermining the Matai structure by duplicating a church structure within the community.

To focus on the development of the whole person, the church must promote and support the *matai* system of governance in Vaigaga. For Samoans to fully function as Samoans they must grow and mature physically, spiritually and culturally. This can only be within the *matai* system. The World Council of Churches acknowledges culture as important in its work and the preservation of culture as vital. Rather than suppressing Samoan culture, perhaps the church needs to indigenise its teachings to suit the current cultural environment rather than the church changing the current cultural environment to suit its

teachings. This will enable Vaigaga people to celebrate their own cultural heritage and teach their children and their children's children in a supportive Samoan cultural environment while also worshipping in their preferred way. It is the church's responsibility to become Samoan rather than Vaigaga's responsibility to adapt to an introduced cultural system. If the church made these changes, it would eliminate the conflict and confusion currently experienced in Vaigaga.

Recommendations and Proposed Actions

Vaigaga differs from the rest of Samoa in that its sense of identity is as a community not as a village. This identity is dominated and greatly influenced by the CCCS and is partly a result of freehold land ownership. The church spends less of its time encouraging the preservation of local cultural traditions and values and spends most of its time building its image. It is therefore fair to say that the development of the church in Vaigaga has detrimentally affected the basic cultural values and norms central to the Samoan culture. This argument is supported by Tagivale in discussing the changing role of women who do not have matai status, participating and decision making in ways which are in conflict with the Samoan culture. The negative impact of the church's structure on the roles and responsibilities of the *matai* status in Vaigaga challenges us to value the treasures of our cultural social structure that already defines our identity as Samoans. The *matai* system is central to our identity as Samoans and it is that system that is still celebrated in the Samoan culture regardless of outside influences.

This study indicates that although Vaigaga's community exists in a world which has been severely shaken at the roots during palagi's cultural invasion, we should make a commitment to re-establish systems that support the importance of our Council of Matai. My generation is already experiencing the negative impact of the church's social structure. It lacks the understanding of a cultural social structure and all its norms. While we can not escape the situation we have found ourselves in, Vaigaga community needs to re-establish a system where we can live the life expected of us as Samoans so children of today and tomorrow are not faced with the threat of cultural extinction. Being a church controlled community, the church should consider using its power and dominance not to control, but as a vehicle to support the maintenance of Samoan culture.

We must therefore promote and use the cultural tools that help us to progress and adapt the church to living in a Samoan dominated society. We must promote the importance of our communal nature in that we should maintain values such as sharing and working together among the different groups to help provide support, care and protection. As individuals, we must re-establish and adopt the process of *soalaupule* to help us make well-informed decisions that affect our progress and future development in Vaigaga. By making consensus decisions, Vaigaga residents can join in supporting one another and agree on future directions which will reduce tension. If Vaigaga wants to have harmonious power relations, it needs to establish a system that will serve us well by uniting everyone within the context of the community not the church. Therefore, rather than having church meetings discussing rules, regulations and appointing a mayor, Vaigaga should have community meetings and these meetings should not be held at the house of the pastor but at the house of the mayor. There should also be *matai* meetings for all *matai* who are residing in Vaigaga and these meetings should also be held at the house of the mayor because the mayor is also selected from *matai*.

Vaigaga does not need to go back to its status before European contact but in order to retain the strengths that were a part of that social structure we need to develop a system that suits our social world today. Our community needs to establish a system equivalent to the Council of Matai which will be the main classroom of learning. This will enable us to successfully participate and progress through learning more about our language and our culture.

In completing this study, I have come to believe that there is an urgent need for more Samoan people to undertake research about, with and for Samoan people. Being a people of oral traditions, the validity and quality of any research depends largely on obtaining information from Samoan people through oral transmission which places importance on the understanding and the ability to speak the local language. There are many Samoan sayings and concepts that have deeper meanings and lose their meaning and nuances when translated into other languages.

Furthermore, this research into the relationship between the church and Vaigaga has identified that there is much research still to be undertaken within Samoa by Samoan researchers and for Samoan villages. To date, there is very little Samoan research completed and published. Western perspectives dominate the available literature. Samoan people are therefore encouraged to be in control of their own lives and social worlds. We must '...assume control over the interpretation of our own struggles' (Smith, 1991:34) by challenging inappropriate researchers. No one has better knowledge of us than ourselves. We must therefore be encouraged to define our own research, identify our own problems and establish processes to help solve these problems.

More work is still needed to address this issue which is greatly affecting our lives as Samoan. This is just the beginning. I hope this study will become the subject of discussion and provide challenges for further studies on this issue in order for us to be more understanding about the importance of our culture and its value. However, caution is needed for any Samoan researcher undertaking a study of Samoan issues. Be aware of multiple roles one faces which may create conflicts of interest. These can be resolved.

Academically and culturally, I have also been a learner throughout this whole project. I have cherished the importance of and the rare but very precious moments I shared with the participants. Their stories and experiences provide the greatest challenge I am now faced with as someone equipped with knowledge to undertake the task of helping fulfil the concerns they have raised in this study. I have learned in particular, the skills of gathering information and knowledge for the benefit of my community. I hope that this thesis will benefit the community by providing the background to the current issues being debated. In particular, it is hoped the younger generations will come to understand the value of our own culture and promote a greater respect and adherence to our Samoan culture. It is also hoped that it will provide the stimulus to begin the discussions on Vaigaga's future.

GLOSSARY

- aganuu* - culture.
aiga - extended family.
alii - chief.
aoga aso sa - Sunday school.
auaaluma - any unmarried girl in the village who has finished school.
aumaga - another name for the untitled men in the village.
autalavou - youth group.
ava - traditional drink called kava.
faalupega - each village has a set of *faalupega* which acts as a constitution. It is the official list of names that expresses ranks of a village's chiefs and talking chiefs, with the appropriate esocetric and symbolic references that relate to the social and political structure of the village (Meleisea, 1987; Afoa, 1997).
Fa'aSamoa - Samoan way of life.
faiifeau - pastor / parish minister.
faletua - formal term to address a wife of a chief.
feagaiga - covenant. It is the word that describes the most sacred relationship between brother and sister. 'The term includes all the responsibilities enumerated as well as the embodiment of the tacit agreement between the male and female heirs of the *matai* titles. The male line shall be eligible to hold *matai* while the female line shall be eligible to be the *feagaiga*' (Le Tagaloa, 1992:134).
faaalalo - respect / polite
faalavelave - anything which interferes with normal life and calls for special cultural activities e.g. funerals, weddings, bestowal of *matai*. It is part of our cultural obligation to perform and fulfil these activities.
faafeagaiga - the formal to address a pastor.
faipule - orators.

- fono - meeting of the Council of *Matai*.
- lauga - formal speech making of the Samoan language.
- Mafutaga a Tina - women's fellowship.
- matai* - title holder. That person automatically assumes responsibility of the highest body of authority in the village, the council of chiefs and orators. '*Matai* is a complete and separate entity that speaks in a specific vocabulary that behaves and thinks in a distinctive manner and is educated and committed to the achievement and maintenance of peace. The *matai* is the owner of the *aiga* land as well as the verbal traditions and heritage pertaining. When an heir is bestowed with the *matai* title, he/she is also the representative and electore of the *aiga* on the village council or fono, and is the head of the *aiga* and priest' (Le Tagaloa, 1996:33).
- nuu - village.
- palagi - white man.
- pule - authority / power.
- susuga - formal terms to address chiefs - highness, excellency.
- soalaupule* - inclusive decision making process pertinent to the *matai* system on a consultative basis.
- tamaitai - daughters of *matai*.
- tamaiti - they are the young children, babies to those who are still in schools.
- taupou - title of village maiden.
- taulelea* - another name for the untitled men.
- taulealea - one untitled man.
- tausii - formal term to address a wife of an orator.
- tautua - to serve.
- tulafale - orator.
- ulu-matafale - a term given to the head of every family in the congregation.
- usitai - obey.

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APPENDIX 1

INFORMATION SHEET

E mamae le tava'e I lona fulu: A study of the impact of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa on Vaigaga's social structure.

The Researcher

My name is Tuli Fepuleai Samuelu. I am a Samoan student studying towards the degree of Master in Social Work at Massey University in New Zealand.

My contact phone number whilst I am in Apia is 21327 (home) and my contact address in New Zealand:

12 Keiller Place
Atawhai Village
Palmerston North 5301
New Zealand

My supervisors:

Ms. Rachael Selby
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Massey University
Private Bag 11222
Palmerston North 5301
New Zealand

Ms. Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata
School of Social Policy and Social Work
Massey University
Private Bag 11222
Palmerston North 5301
New Zealand

The Study

This study seeks to identify the influences of the Congregational Christian Church on the social structure of Vaigaga. Emphasis will be given to the impact on the cultural and social structure of the society. It will also highlight the changes that might have occurred in attitudes, values and behaviour in various sectors of Vaigaga (e.g. Council of Chiefs, youth group). Particular attention will be given to your experiences in maintaining the traditional Samoan culture and way of life.

Your Participation

If you decide to take part in this study, I will meet with you for one private interview. The interview will be conducted in Samoan. The total interview time will not be more than three hours. The interview will take place at your convenience and availability. The interviews will be tape-recorded, and will be held at a time and place that we agree is suitable.

After the interview, I will send you a transcript in Samoan (written version) so that you can check, amend if necessary and sign it indicating your approval for me to use the material.

Your Right

If you decide to take part in the study, you will have the right to:

- refuse to answer any particular questions, to withdraw from the study at any time.
- ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation.
- provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher.
- ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.
- be given access to the summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.
- determine at the conclusion of the study whether you would like the interview tape to be returned to you, destroyed or stored in an approved location.

Tuli Fepuleai Samuelu

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: *E mamae le tava'e I lona fulu: A study of the impact of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa on Vaigaga's social structure.*

I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered, and I understand that I may ask any questions at any time.

I also understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and to decline to answer any particular question in the study.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it is completely confidential.

I agree to the interview being audio-taped. I also understand that I have the right to ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I understand that at the conclusion of the study, I have the right to determine whether the interview tape shall be returned to me, destroyed or stored in an approved place.

I wish to participate in this study under the conditions set out on the information sheet.

Signature _____

Name _____

Date _____

HUMAN ETHICS APPLICATION

Name of Applicant : Tuli Fepuleai Samuelu
Department : School of Social Studies and Social Work
Current Employment : Full-time Student
Project Status : Masterate
Name of Supervisors : Ms. Rachael Selby
Ms. Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata
Title of Project : *E mamae le tava'e I lona fulu: A study of the impact of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa on Vaigaga's social structure.*

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

(a) Justification of the Study

Christianity has been established in Vaigaga for one hundred and thirty years. There is little recorded information on how it has affected the social structure of Vaigaga. It is essential to have an understanding of its impact on the lives of the villagers. This project will attempt to provide some information and understanding using Vaigaga as a case study.

(b) Objectives

- 1) To examine the role of the church in the village of Vaigaga, both historically and in contemporary society.
- 2) To examine the impact of the Congregational Christian Church on the change in social structure in the village.

(c) Procedure for Recruiting Research Participants and Obtaining Informed Consent

Since the study will be done in a village community that I am familiar with, participants will be recruited through personal contacts. The seven participants will include a range of ages, from teenager to elder, both women and men. In the first stage, each possible participant will be given copies of the information sheet and consent form. I will explain the purpose of the study and will then answer any questions about the study and provide further information if requested. After receiving the information sheet and consent form, each participant will be asked whether he/she will participate.

(d) Procedures in which Participants will undergo

If a subject decides to take part, I will arrange with him/her for interview times according to the availability and convenience of the participant. Each participant will be involved in one in-depth interview in their native language, Samoan. Each interview will not be more than three hours long. All interviews will be tape recorded and transcriptions will be given to the participants to check, amend, correct and sign.

(e) Procedures for Handling Information and Material Produced in the course of the Study

The material produced from this study is a requirement for the fulfillment of my Masters in Social Work Thesis. The audio tapes that will be used for the interviews will be transcribed by the researcher and research assistant and only the transcriber, researcher and the participants will have access to the audio tapes and the transcriptions. All material will be kept secured by the researcher until the project has been fully completed. After this point, all the materials will

be disposed of according to the wishes of the participants. The options include: erasure of tape and shredding of transcript, return the tape and transcript to the participant, or archiving of the tape and transcript with an organization of the participants choice. A copy of the thesis will be available in the Public Library.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

(a) Access to Participants

Participants will be chosen as previously discussed. Since all participants are located in one village and within walking distance, all participants will be accessed through personal contacts.

(b) Informed Consent

Before the commencement of the study, I will seek the consent of all the subjects. This means, I will provide each prospective participant with the information sheet (see Appendix 1) for them to read. I will then meet with each prospective participant to provide a comprehensive explanation about the purpose of the study, what is required of them, the possible hazards involved and to answer any other question they have regarding the study (the researcher is a fluent Samoan speaker). If the intended participant has agreed to take part in the study he/she will sign the consent form (see Appendix 2).

(c) Confidentiality

The researcher is strongly committed to the process of confidentiality which will be maintained throughout the study. Any confidential information will be handled in such a way which will protect the confidentiality of the subject and ensure the safe custody of the data. A participant will only agree to give information based on the understanding that what is given is completely confidential, and that his/her identity will not be reported in any reports that

will be prepared from the study unless he/she gives his/her written permission to have his/her identity revealed. The procedures for handling the information obtained and any materials produced have been indicated above.

(d) Potential Harm to the Participants

No harm is anticipated.

(e) Participants Right to Decline

I will be sensitive to ensuring that participants exercise their rights to decline to answer any question and to withdraw from the study at any time.

(f) Other Ethical Concerns Relevant to the Research

Given that the study will be done in the Samoan language, the translations of the information sheet and the consent form will be done by the researcher but will be checked by an independent translator before being given to the participants.

LEGAL ISSUES

(a) Copyright

Copyright of any published results of the study or any material produced by the researcher shall be the property of the researcher. No part of the report will be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means (e.g. photocopying) by any individual, group, organization or institution for any other purpose without my prior knowledge. Unauthorized use of the material will be seen as infringement of the copyright laws and may result in prosecution.

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(b) Ownership of the Materials Produced

Participants will be recognized as owners of their individual raw data (i.e. the audio tape and transcript of their interviews) and have the right to dispose of the data using any method of his/her choice as has already been outlined above. Since the study is for the requirement of my Masters in Social Work thesis, the final document which will be processed to include the interpretations of the researcher alone. However, the participants will have the right to access of information given to me during the study. Therefore, wherever possible, draft copies of the material will be made available to them upon their request.

(c) Any Other Legal Issues

I am not aware of any other legal issues.

SUBMISSION TO OTHER ETHICAL COMMITTEES

This project will not be submitted to any other ethical committees.

ANY MATTERS YOU WISH TO DISCUSS WITH THE H.E.C.

There are no matters I wish to discuss with the Ethics Committee.