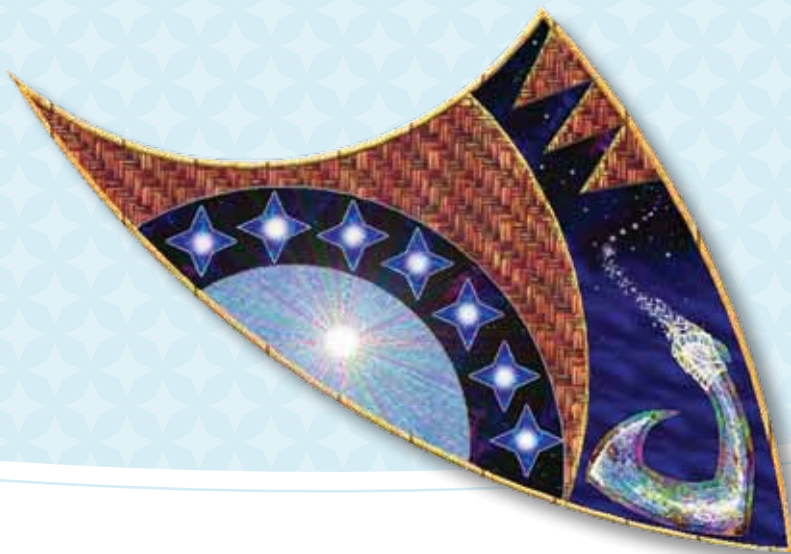




# O le tōfā mamao

A Sāmoan Conceptual  
Framework for addressing  
family violence



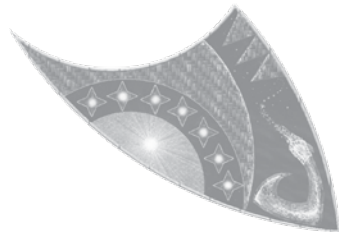
## Guide on the use of Sāmoan Conceptual Framework

This document was developed by the Sāmoan Working Group to assist with the development of a training programme for Sāmoan practitioners and service providers working with victims, perpetrators, and families from our communities who have been affected by family violence.

The information in this document can be used for research purposes\*, educational activities and programmes which promote the wellbeing of our families and communities. The Working Group request that in using this material, that the integrity of the concepts and the work is maintained. These must not be interpreted in such a way as to cause any form of harm, or violate relationships between people. Nor should the meanings of these concepts, values, and principles be compromised or subsumed under the definitions of meanings that belong to other cultures and beliefs.

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\*[http://by167w.bay167.mail.live.com/mail/RteFrame\\_16.2.4514.0219.html?dl=dl#\\_ftnref1](http://by167w.bay167.mail.live.com/mail/RteFrame_16.2.4514.0219.html?dl=dl#_ftnref1) It is recommended that any research generated from this document is guided by Pacific research guidelines such as, Guidelines on Pacific Health Research (2005). Health Research Council of New Zealand.



### La Tapu (Sacred Sail)

The basic shape is that of a Pacific canoe sail. This represents the vaka/canoe which is important in traditional Pacific navigation and exploring new horizons.

The fishhook represents sustainability as well as traditional knowledge. The fishhook colour shows the colours of the paua shell, which represents our migration to New Zealand and adapting to a new way of life while maintaining our traditions. The fishhook is linked to a spiritual cord which disappears up to the heavens. This represents our link as Pacific Islanders with our creator and the importance of our traditional and contemporary belief system. The background of the fish hook represents the sea which merges into a star filled night sky. These natural elements were the navigator's pathways to new horizons.

The triangular patterns above the fishhook is a common design motif found in all Pacific cultures. I used this pattern to represent a common thread found between the Pacific Islands.

The woven pattern represents the Kaiga (family), as a close knit unit. Each member in the Kaiga has a role and purpose in the same way each strand supports one another.

The seven stars represent the seven Pacific Island nations/groups of; Cook Islands, Niue, Sāmoa, Fiji, Tuvalu, Tonga and Tokelau. Together, they represent a collective star formation which provides support and guidance to the vulnerable. To the left of the arched 7 stars is a lagoon with a radiating light emanating outwards. The lagoon represents a safe and protected environment. The radiating light represents a new life nurtured within this safe environment while surrounded and supported by family, cultural knowledge, belief, and alofa (love).

Tiaki Fati Kirifi – Tokelau.

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It is recommended that this document is read in conjunction with **'Falevitu: A literature review on culture and family violence in seven Pacific communities in New Zealand'** and **'Nga vaka o kāiga tapu: A Pacific Conceptual Framework to address family violence in New Zealand.'**

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## Glossary

<i>Aiā tatau</i>	Rights to which an individual is entitled by inheritance or privilege
<i>‘Āiga</i>	Family. Member of a family. Extended family
<i>Fa’aSāmoa</i>	To do things according to Sāmoan beliefs and practices
<i>Fa’asinomaga</i>	Reference points that validate an individuals identity and places of belonging; includes family titles, land, villages
<i>Faiā</i>	Connections that make known kinships by blood or by affinity
<i>Fa’aaloalo</i>	Behaviour and language that honour <i>vā feāloaloa’i</i> and <i>vā tapuia</i> relationships. Glossed as respect
<i>Fa’avae</i>	Founding principles of e.g. a nation, villages, families
<i>Feagaiga</i>	Covenant. The most important is the covenant between the brother and his sister
<i>Gafa</i>	Genealogy
<i>Gagana fa’aaloalo</i>	Formal language of respect. <i>Gagana o aso uma</i> : informal, everyday language. <i>Gagana Sāmoa</i> : Sāmoan language
<i>Fanua</i>	Land. Family lands
<i>Nu’u</i>	Physical village settlement. Also refers to families with shared history and genealogy living in the village
<i>Matai</i>	Titled family members who are heads of extended families, and are responsible for the wellbeing of all family members
<i>Paolo</i>	In-laws and their families
<i>Tamāli’i’aga</i>	Behaviour and conduct of someone brought up and grounded in fa’aSāmoa. Dignified and principled behaviour, language, and thought.
<i>Tōfā mamao</i>	Long term vision based on wisdom and knowledge. Associated with <i>Tōfā loloto</i> : knowledge and wisdom that has critical depth
<i>Vā feāloaloa’i</i>	Social relationships
<i>Vā tapuia</i>	Covenantal relationships between people that is sacred

# Executive summary

## The task

The task of the Sāmoan Working Group (the Working Group) was to develop a Sāmoan Conceptual Framework (the Framework) for Sāmoan practitioners and mainstream organisations working with Sāmoan victims, perpetrators, and *'āiga* affected by family violence.

The Framework is one approach explored by the Working Group as a pathway to informing prevention and intervention initiatives by utilising concepts of *fa'aSāmoa*. The Framework requires ongoing revision and evaluation to ensure that it is dynamic and relevant to the diverse lived experiences of Sāmoan individuals and families.

## Key findings

1. The Framework reflects the Working Group's question: what is the response of *fa'aSāmoa* to family violence? There was agreement that the core principles and practices of *fa'aSāmoa* do not condone any form of violence in Sāmoan families.
2. **Tapu** and **sā** (forbidden and sacred beings) are violated by family violence. It is a disruption of the balance and harmony of relationships of wellbeing between family members.
3. **'Āiga** is the site where *vā tapuia* is preserved and protected. Violations of *vā tapuia* towards family members create sites of terror, suffering and dysfunction.
4. **Fa'aSāmoa** is the overarching philosophical framework by which prevention and intervention approaches in family violence are addressed.

The principles that inform practice are:

- **Tōfā mamao**: in this document, is the critical wisdom and vision of *'āiga* and communities
- **Vā tapuia**: in this document, is the sacred spaces of covenantal relationships between members of *'āiga*
- **Fa'asinomaga**: reference points include *'āiga, nu'u, fanua, matai* titles from which individuals claim their belonging and identity
- **Faiā**: genealogical connections, and kinship ties by affinity
- **Fa'aaloalo**: behaviour and language that honours *vā tapuia* relationships
- **Āiā tatau a le tagata Sāmoa**: the rights of all Sāmoan people and especially women, children, and elderly who are to be respected according to *fa'aSāmoa*<sup>1</sup>
- **O le tapua'iga fa'aSāmoa**: prayer and conscious contemplation for the success of an undertaking. *E matamata nonofo, e to'afilemu, e lē pisapisaō: Tapua'iga* is conducted while seated, in silence, and vigilant to outcomes.<sup>2</sup> The saying, *ua patipati ta'oto le Fe'epō* refers to the old man *Fe'epō* and his *tapua'iga* for his son

1 Dr Lonise Tanielu, 2012.

2 Refer also to Tofaeono, 2000; Aiono-Le Tagaloa, 2003; Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, 1997.

*Leatiogie's success in the game of taua'igalapa. On hearing a great noise (pisapisaō), Fe'epō realises that his son has won, and claps his hands with joy – his tapua'iga has been successful (Tanielu, 2012).*

## Introduction

The 'Champions of Change fono' identified that any serious approach to addressing violence in Pacific families would necessitate a critical examination of the fundamental issues around culture, its values, practices, traditional contexts, and its ability to encompass the dynamics of contemporary Western society.<sup>3</sup> This provided a mandate for the development of a framework whose philosophical ground is embedded in the indigenous values and principles of *fa'aSāmoa*.

The Framework reflects the Working Group's discussions on the question: what is the response of *fa'aSāmoa* to family violence? There was agreement that the core principles and practices of *fa'aSāmoa* do not condone any form of violence in Sāmoan families.

The Framework is not a definitive or an authoritative document on *fa'aSāmoa*, nor is it intended to replace existing service provider and practitioner approaches. The desire of the Working Group is that the Framework assists Sāmoan service providers and practitioners, and mainstream organisations, with grounding their experiences and knowledge in elements of *fa'aSāmoa* that are liberative, empowering and humane, in ways that are relevant to the diverse experiences of Sāmoan people. Ongoing revision of practice approaches ensures appropriate and effective responses to the lived experiences of Sāmoan people.

For the purposes of this project, the Framework addresses issues of family violence, however, it can also be utilised across a broad spectrum of sectoral and inter-sectoral service provider programmes for Sāmoan individuals and families.

## O le tōfā mamao: a vision of wellbeing, and strong and vibrant families

*E āfua mai mauga manuia o nu'u. A lelei le pule, ua ola le nu'u*  
The mountains are the sources of blessings and wellbeing.  
If the leadership is good, the people will live.<sup>4</sup>

An important principle underpinning the dynamics of social and sacred encounters and interaction within *fa'aSāmoa* is the desire to maintain and protect peaceful relationships in '*āiga*, and between Sāmoan people. In the context of the Working Group discussions, *tōfā mamao* refers to the wisdom of '*āiga* and their social and religious communities as a critical pathway to fostering and nurturing wellbeing, and strong and vibrant families:

<sup>3</sup> Champions of Change-Pacific Advisory Group update of Summary of Findings and Key Themes.

<sup>4</sup> The writer is responsible for all translations.

*O le tōfā e fuafua mo le manuia o tagata uma ae le fa'apitoa i se to'atasi. O le tōfā e fa'avae i le alofa mo tagata lautele ina ia maua le sa'olotoga ... ina ia 'aua le mafatia a ia soifua fiafia. (Tofaeono Tanuvasa, 2009)*

The purpose of *tōfā* is to ensure wellbeing is determined for all people and not for any one individual. *Tōfā* is love and compassion, and works to make possible freedom, and autonomy – so that all people are no longer burdened or overcome by suffering but live happy and fulfilling lives.

The word *tōfā* is wisdom achieved through the wise and judicious use of knowledge transmitted through family lore, and learnings from lifetimes of individual and collective experiences. *Tōfā* concerns thought that is reflective and contemplative, prudent, cautious, astute, and of good judgement. It involves individuals, families, groups of people, and whole communities. *Mamao* refers to long and extended distances but in this context, distance is the interwoven depth and breadth of vision and insights into the past, present, and future. *Tōfā mamao* also implies the presence of *tōfā loloto* meaning vision and wisdom that have depth.<sup>5</sup>

## Moe mānatunatu

*Moe mānatunatu* refers to 'conscious alertness or awareness,'<sup>6</sup> a 'dream dialogue with ancestors and family gods. They provide clarity to 'decisions relating to family, community, and nation.' The belief is that '*moe mānatunatu* together with *anapogi*'<sup>7</sup> invites self-reflection and reassessment of the past and the present' to inform the future.<sup>8</sup> This aspect of Sāmoan belief is drawn on as an important constituent of *tōfā mamao*.

# O le tōfā mamao: a Sāmoan Conceptual Framework

## Elements of the Framework

**The vision** of the *Tōfā Mamao* Conceptual Framework is wellbeing, strong and vibrant families. It asserts that all Sāmoan people have a right to happiness, protection and the opportunity to fulfil their potential in all aspects of their wellbeing.

1. **Fa'aSāmoa** – concepts to be used in **prevention, intervention** and **restoration** approaches to practice include:

***Tōfā mamao***: collective vision that inform approaches to achieve wellbeing, strong and vibrant families, and individuals

***Vā tapuia***: understanding that self and others, the environment and divinities occupy sacred spaces in relationships that honour each other's existence

<sup>5</sup> Dr Lonise Tanielu, *ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> Abstinence, meditation, and prayer.

<sup>8</sup> Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi, (Tui Atua) 2006a.



**Gagana Sāmoa:** has two linguistic registers: *gagana fa'aaloalo* (language of respect), and *gagana o aso uma* (colloquial, ordinary language). Both registers give expression to the non-secular and secular qualities in *vā tapuia* relationships, and which inform respectful behaviour – *fa'aaloalo*

**Faiā:** establishes *vā tapuia* relationships within *gafa*, and is a place of strength from which to stand to fulfil duties and responsibilities within *'āiga*

**Fa'asinomaga:** places and people who provide contexts for an individual's belonging and identity, and orients the individual to fulfilling their potential within *'āiga* and community

**Fa'aaloalo:** respectful fulfilment of responsibilities to the *'āiga* and community based on knowledge of *faiā* and *fa'asinomaga*

2. Contemporary realities need to be responded to in a manner that is relevant and meaningful to the diverse lived experiences of *'āiga*
3. Transformation occurs when all of the above are practiced as interdependent elements.

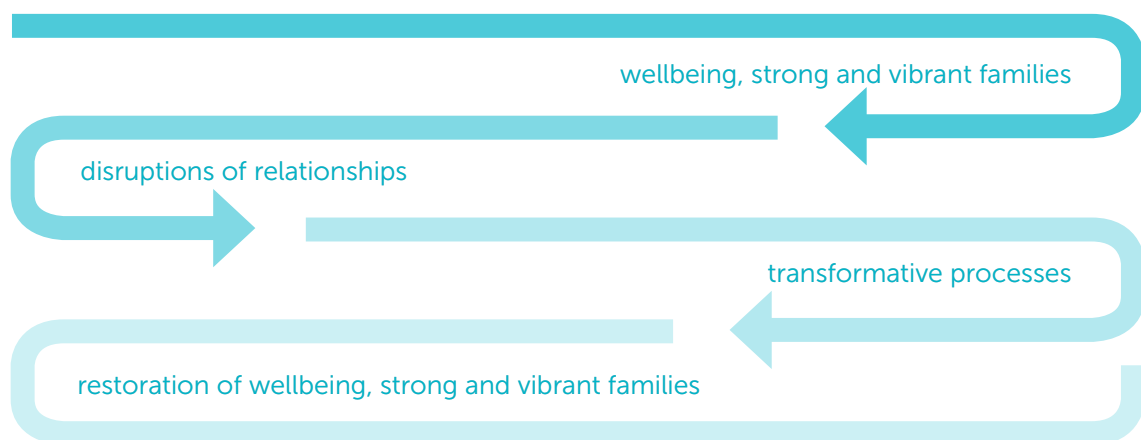
## Approach to violence

Three critical processes for addressing violence and responding to perpetrators of violence are to:

- i. Dispel the collective and individual illusions: that violence and its violations are normal, acceptable and is validated within *fa'aSāmoa*; and the 'colonial attitudes and ideas that Sāmoan people are by nature predisposed to violence'.<sup>9</sup>
- ii. Remove opportunities for violence and violations to be practised.
- iii. Teach transformative practices based on constituents and concepts of *fa'aSāmoa*.<sup>10</sup>

## Continuum of wellbeing

Figure 1.



<sup>9</sup> Dr Lonise Tanielu, *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from *Transforming Whānau Violence – A Conceptual Framework* (2004).

- i. The continuum begins from a position of wellbeing, and strong and vibrant families.
- ii. Violence and violations create disruptions of relationships and of wellbeing within *'āiga*.
- iii. Processes for healing and reconciliation facilitates and supports the restoration of wellbeing to *'āiga*.

Movement of the different phases throughout the continuum occurs simultaneously depending on external and internal factors that inhibit or enable restoration of wellbeing.

Wellbeing, strong and vibrant families is achieved through *tōfā mamao, vā tapuia, gagana Sāmoa, faiā, fa'asinomaga, and fa'aaloalo*.

## Family violence and violations of *vā tapuia*

There is nothing in the beliefs and philosophical principles of *fa'aSāmoa* that condones verbal, physical or emotional acts of violence against members of one's immediate and extended *'āiga*, or 'that promotes excessive discipline through word or deed against children.'<sup>11</sup> Violence causes psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical disruption, disorder, and disharmony to the multiple dimensions of wellbeing within *'āiga*. Every member of the *'āiga* exists in relationships of *vā tapuia*.<sup>12</sup> Acts of violence are the dangerous violations of *vā tapuia*. The term, *ua soli le vā tapuia* details the desecration of sacred relationships, the trampling of sacred space. Violence and the consequential violations of *vā tapuia* remove perpetrators, victims, and their *'āiga* from the continuum of wellbeing.

Figure 2 shows how in the context of *fa'aSāmoa*, acts of violence against a spouse, children, parents and elderly people are violations of *vā tapuia* that impact on the whole *'āiga*. The violence of a husband against his wife sets in motion a chain of relational violations.<sup>13</sup> Violations of *vā tapuia* occur between husband and wife, and between parents and their children. *Feagaiga* relationships between the husband and his sister, the wife and her brother are affected as are *vā tapuia* between the husband and his parents, and his wife's parents. The husband's actions disrespect his wife's genealogy, his own genealogy and the genealogy of their descendents through their children. Similarly, acts of violence by children against parents and grandparents, and adults against children are equally serious violations of *vā tapuia*. The process for bringing about reconciliation or redress in *fa'aSāmoa* is *fa'aleleiga*.<sup>14</sup>

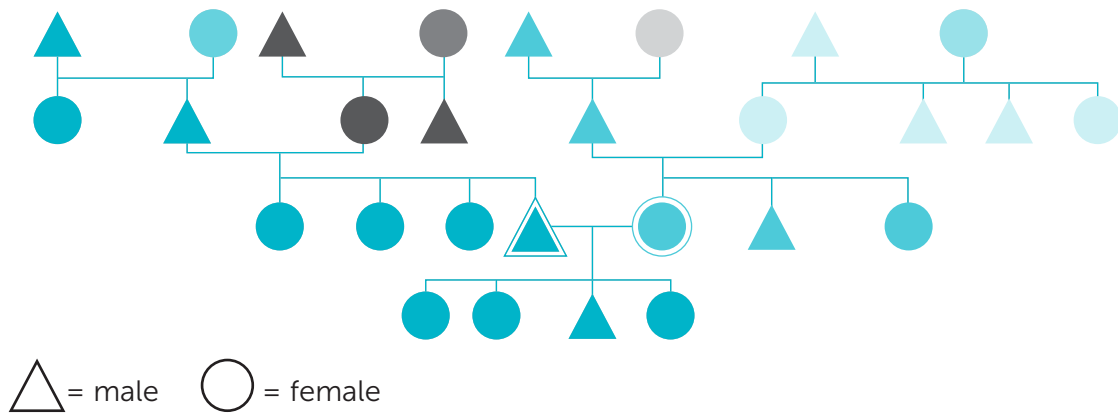
11 Tui Atua, 2000.

12 Covenantal relationships deemed to be sacred.

13 This example does not take into account family members who have *matai* titles or hold positions of responsibility in the community, which add to the complexity of reconciliation processes.

14 Restoration of relationships.

Figure 2.



A consequence is that the memory of violence and violation is carried intergenerationally.<sup>15</sup> For practitioners, these memories provide insights into causes of perpetuation of violence, and can inform approaches to prevention and intervention.

## Concepts that maintain wellbeing

### Relational *vā*: spaces of wellbeing

*Va* is the most significant concept to understanding the complexity of Sāmoan social interactions between people, church, and the environment. It underpins all epistemologies of participation, obligation, and reciprocity that guide our interactions and continue even as Sāmoans move abroad. (Aumua Mata'itusi Simanu cited in Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009)

Sāmoan people co-exist in *vā* relationships. The Sāmoan conceptual worldview and its tangible expressions is perceived and experienced as interdependent and relational. It is a 'whole belief system which evolves around the concept of *vā*.'<sup>16</sup> In common usage *vā* refers to physical spaces between people, between objects, and between people and objects. In the context of human interaction and relationships, '*vā* is the space that relates',<sup>17</sup> and which is 'conceptualised and lived out holistically',<sup>18</sup> and is the context by which meanings are given to things.<sup>19</sup> These relationships are informed by principles that define and govern appropriate conduct and language between people, and 'are the sites of all ethical actions.'<sup>20</sup>

Relational *vā* is conceived within '*āiga* and' – within the spiritual, social, economic, and political contexts.<sup>21</sup> It touches on all aspects of Sāmoan people's wellbeing whether they live in Sāmoa or overseas. Attending to *fa'alavelave*, for example<sup>22</sup> is a commitment to actively *osi 'āiga*. Participation requires a critical understanding of *vā feāloaloa'i* or social relationships, and *faiā* which are connections by blood and marriage:

15 Personal communication with Kiwi Tamasese, 1990s.

16 Aiono-Le Tagaloa, *ibid*.

17 Wendt in Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009.

18 Lilomaiva-Doktor, *ibid*.

19 Wendt in Lilomaiva-Doktor, *ibid*.

20 Mila-Schaaf, 2009.

21 Lilomaiva-Doktor, *ibid*.

22 Examples of *fa'alavelave* are funerals, weddings, church openings, significant birthdays.

Performance of social responsibilities and obligations prescribed in va rest on the knowledge of social and genealogical connections that 'aiga members possess. (*ibid*)

Relational *vā* is based on *faiā* which are *vā tapuia* – the sacred spaces by which multiple responsibilities of members of 'āiga are defined.

## Vā tapuia

*Vā tapuia* relationships are *tapu* and *sā*: forbidden and sacred to ordinary language and behaviour. *Tapu* and *sā* are factors that protect and maintain wellbeing and the dignity<sup>23</sup> of family members. Within 'āiga, *vā tapuia* relationships exist between 'parents and children, the living and the dead, human beings and their environment – sea, sky, flora and fauna, between creator and created' (*ibid*); brothers and sisters, older and younger siblings, *matai* and family members, 'āiga and God(s), the elderly and the young.

### Brother-sister covenant

Where harmony exists between the brother and the sister, there is peace in the family.<sup>24</sup>

The most important of *vā tapuia* relationships is the covenant between the brother and his sister: *o le feagaiga i le vā a le tuagane ma lona tuafafine,*

*E leai se feagaiga e sili atu lona taua i lo'o le feagaiga a le teine ma lona tuagane.*<sup>25</sup>

There is no covenant that is more binding and sacred than the one that exists between the sister and her brother.<sup>26</sup>

The root word *feagai* in *feagaiga* 'means to be opposite each other within the same space but not in opposition,'<sup>27</sup> describing relationships that are complementary, in balance and in harmony.

The covenant between brother and sister is a reciprocal obligation to each other's wellbeing, however, the burden of responsibility to ensure that the needs of his sister are met is shouldered by the brother and his family. In the context of 'āiga, brothers and sisters also include close cousins and relatives. The *feagaiga* covenant lasts the life time of the brother and sister. The observance of appropriate behaviour and language between brother and sister extends to relationships between non-related males and females.<sup>28</sup>

23 Tamasese et al, 1997.

24 Tui Atua, 2005.

25 Tuimaleali'ifano in Huffer and So'o, 2000.

26 Prior to missionary contact, this covenant was referred to as *vā pa'ia*. (Lafai-Sauoiga, 2000; Aumua Mata'itusi Simanu, 2002).

The word *pa'ia* has connotations of sacredness, sacrosanct, and holy.

27 In Maiava and Percival, 2011.

28 Tui Atua, 2007a.

## Gagana Sāmoa

*A leai se gagana ua pō le nu'u*  
Without language the people are in darkness

*O le gagana e feso'ota'i ai tagata uma, e fai ma 'avefe'au e fa'ailoa ai manatu ma lagona, pe mafatia pe fa'aalofa. O le gagana e fa'atino ai le aganu'u, a leiloa le gagana ua leai se aganu'u. A leai se gagana ona pō lea o le nu'u 'auā ua leai se iloa, leai se malamalama e fa'ailoa ai manatu ma lagona.<sup>29</sup>*

Sāmoan language connects people, and is a vehicle for conveying thoughts and feelings, whether there is suffering or a given to love. Language gives form to *aganu'u*; without language, there is no *aganu'u*. Without language, the people are in darkness because awareness and understanding of thoughts and feelings cannot be made known or revealed.

*O le gagana Sāmoa e faavae ai, e fusi ai, e ta'ui ai foi ma teumau ana aganu'u.* (Sunia, 2000)  
Sāmoan language is the foundation of *aganu'u*, enfolding, gathering, protecting and preserving its customs and practices.

*Gagana Sāmoa* does not describe the world as polarised or opposing factions, but as a 'complete whole'.<sup>30</sup> *Gagana* articulates how we should co-exist with members of our *'āiga*, and our relationships with others; our lived places and ancestral environments; our divinities, and God(s).

*Gagana* informs appropriate behaviour, and how we should conduct ourselves in a range of complex human encounters. It also informs our role in the Sāmoan world as relational individuals who belong in very significant and specific ways to genealogical continuums and places of identity, which is *fa'asinomaga*.

The decline of an indigenous language carries with it loss of history, conversations, and covenants intended as legacies for future generations. The displacement and loss of relational identities lead to the creation of different ways of belonging and being,

*Indigenous languages are the lifeblood of indigenous cultures. It is what communicates and gives meaning, form and nuance to the social and cultural relationships between individuals, families and other social groupings. When a language dies, histories die with it and identities change. Here the most nuanced connection between the past and the present is therefore lost to the future.* (Tui Atua, 2008)

## Faiā

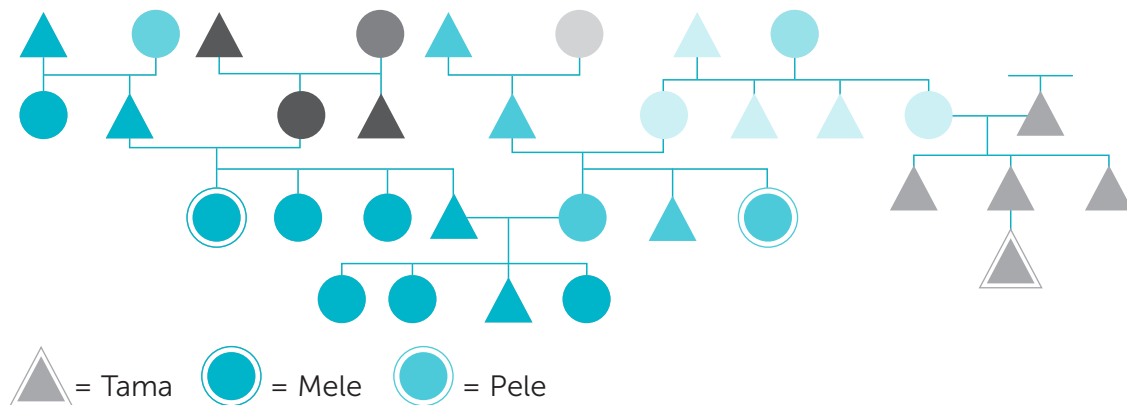
*Faiā* are devices that connect places,<sup>31</sup> or is an individual(s) who makes apparent the relationships between kin. Tama (Figure 3) seeks an understanding of the *faiā* between himself and Mele. The key to explaining this is an informed knowledge of their family *gafa* (genealogy). Pele's older sister is married to Mele's brother (*faiā*) connecting the two families. Depending on events such as a *fa'alavelave*, Tama, Pele, and Mele are variously located as *paolo* and *gafa* to each other, with associated roles and responsibilities.

29 In Tofaeono Tanuvasa, *ibid*. The word pō can mean dark, night, or is a polite term for physical blindness.

30 Aiono, *ibid*.

31 Such as a bridge connecting villages separated by a river.

Figure 3.



*Paolo* and *gafa* are two interconnected components of *faiā*.

### Paolo<sup>32</sup>

*So'u paolo ma so'u fa'amālumaluga*  
My shade and shelter, and my protection.

### Gafa

Genealogies contain knowledge that is sacred to families, and which is actively protected.<sup>33</sup> *Gafa* is the framework and map by which members of an extended family are able to locate themselves over generations. From the viewpoint of *'āiga*, *gafa* informs and legitimises entitlements based on *fa'asinomaga*. *Gafa* also orders governance structures within *'āiga* including the accumulation and allocation of familial resources.

An important component of *gafa* is the narratives that explain and detail the subjective histories of the whole *'āiga* and its multiple branches. Narratives can include accounts of historical services rendered that may have led to the gifting or transference of lands and titles. They may also include accounts of violence and violations, and the repercussions of these on inter-generational relationships, embedded in the beliefs and behaviour of family members.

## Fa'asinomaga

*O le tagata ma lona fa'asinomaga*  
The person and their reference points of belonging.

*Fa'asinomaga* is knowledge that explicates who one is, and how one belongs in the Sāmoan world. *Fa'asinomaga* comprises two words: *fa'asino* meaning to direct, to point out, or to indicate. *Maga* refers to multiple points or places. The key reference points of an individual's *fa'asinomaga* are *'āiga*, *fanua*, *nu'u*, *gafa*, and *suafa matai*.<sup>34</sup> *O le tagata ma lona fa'asinomaga* makes explicit that 'every individual is entitled to a designation in the family, the village, and the nation.'<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Refer to p10 for an example of *paolo*.

<sup>33</sup> A current phenomenon is the inclusion of family genealogies mainly by young people on social networking sites as a way of extending social and familial connections. Blogging sites are popular places for discussing and debating genealogies and histories. An unsavoury aspect of the blog site is that for some, anonymity encourages inconsiderate language as part of the flaunt and contestations.

<sup>34</sup> Family, land, village, genealogy, and *matai* titles.

<sup>35</sup> Tui Atua, 2007b.

## Fa'aaloalo<sup>36</sup>

*E soifua le atunu'u atoa i le fa'aaloalo (Sunia, 2000)*  
Fa'aaloalo is a way of life for Sāmoan people.

*The concept of faaaloalo drives fa'aSāmoa. In everything one does, [one] show[s] respect. E le gata i le Va fealoa'i ma le isi tagata ao le va fealoa'i ma lona siosiomaga, fanua ma le tapuafanua o le eleele ma le sami.<sup>37</sup>*

Fa'aaloalo in 'āiga is face-to-face engagement where conduct, ritual, and language honours relationships through processes of participation and reciprocation. Individuals become one in the collective face of the 'aiga, nu'u, and ancestors' (Tui Atua, 2002). Breaches of *vā tapuia* causes a 'loss of face,'

*Fa'aaloalo literally is face meeting face ... Once there is a loss of face, there cannot be a meeting of faces and therefore the basis of which fa'aaloalo is premised disappears ... This stresses the mind ... Therefore loss of face cannot be passed over lightly. Loss of face is trauma which inflicts agony persistently and continuously.' (ibid)*

## Practice imperatives<sup>38</sup>

*E tu'u matāmaga mea uma*  
Everyone and everything have their rightful place

*E sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae* recognises that while practices of *fa'aSāmoa* will change and evolve over generations, the foundational intent and meanings of the values and principles remain constant. Misinterpretation and distortions of foundational meanings are likely to lead to practices that conflict with concepts intended to protect wellbeing.

The Working Group believes that education is part of the approach to preventing, and eliminating family violence. In seeking alternatives to violence, the task must belong to practitioners and the whole community. A long-term approach for the Sāmoan practitioner is, *ia toe sa'ili le fa'aleleiga o le 'āiga*: that is, finding ways of restoring wellbeing to 'āiga needs to be conscientiously re-examined and reconsidered within the context of *fa'aSāmoa*.

**An effective practitioner has good knowledge and an understanding of:**

- A.** their personal limitations, strengths, and opportunities
- B.** constituents of *fa'aSāmoa*; and in particular *faiā* and *vā tapuia*
  - *tamālī'i'āga*: having integrity, and pride in, and respect for one's being, and how one is with others; having attributes of someone who is well brought up
  - how to communicate effectively with Sāmoan people raised in Sāmoa, and people born in New Zealand

<sup>36</sup> Commonly glossed as respect.

<sup>37</sup> Dr Lonise Tanielu, *ibid*.

<sup>38</sup> Adapted from *Transforming Whānau Violence – A Conceptual Framework*, 2004.

- the impact of colonisation on fa'aSāmoa and in particular on the brother-sister covenant
  - working with people whose behaviour includes *gugutu*, *'ai afu*, *ola fa'alagolago*.<sup>39</sup>
- C.** working with one's own family in an insider-outsider role. The practitioner is able to move fluidly between the roles as circumstances demand
- i. Insider-insider: needs strong support and supervision
  - ii. Outsider-Insider: needs to engage well with insiders
- journeying with people; recognising and acknowledging their insights into their illusions. The values associated with this commitment are *alofa*, *fa'amaoni*, and *fa'autauta*.<sup>40</sup>
- D.** the New Zealand environment in terms of family violence, and in particular
- its institutions and systems – different arrangements and dynamics within Sāmoan families – the dynamics and structure of nu'u – the dynamics and structure of Sāmoan churches
  - facilitating family groups and working on a one to one basis
  - tracking families
  - delivering intervention that is forthright, direct, and confronting of behaviour and attitudes
  - ability to rekindle knowledge and to introduce new knowledge.

**An effective practitioner has competency and accreditation in:**

- gagana Sāmoa
- critical analysis of violence and violation

This class of skills and Sāmoan strengths-based concepts is not exhaustive. They provide opportunities for practitioners, victim(s), perpetrators(s) and *'āiga* to work together in a manner that is appropriate and meaningful to their situation.

## Fa'asāmoa and its constituents

### Fa'asāmoa

*Fa'aSāmoa* is often described as the 'Sāmoan way of doing things,' and is commonly glossed as culture. The Working Group viewed Western meanings of culture, and Sāmoan understandings of *fa'aSāmoa* as being two distinct bodies of philosophical origin and thought. To make the distinction explicit, the values embedded within the customs and traditions of *fa'aSāmoa* can be sourced to the symbolic narratives of Sāmoa's creation stories. These accounts are the genealogical and evolutionary explanations of how the islands of Sāmoa and Sāmoan people came into existence.

<sup>39</sup> Behaviour that is predominantly manipulative by being boastful; opportunistic; dependent and reliant, co-dependent.

<sup>40</sup> Compassion and love for people, trustworthy and loyal, prudent and practical.



The *fa'aSāmoa* is a complex arrangement of interdependent socio-political institutions and systems: *agaifanua*, *aganu'u Sāmoa*, and *fa'amatai*.<sup>41</sup> Underpinning these systems are customs and traditions that are central to preserving and strengthening relationships 'of blood-ties and marital reciprocity.'<sup>42</sup> Not all the elements of *fa'aSāmoa* can be accommodated in the New Zealand milieu. Sāmoan people living in New Zealand actively practise those aspects of *fa'aSāmoa* that give prominence to practices of *osi 'āiga*.<sup>43</sup> Constituents of *fa'aSāmoa* are '*āiga*, *aganu'u*, and *fa'amatai*.

## O 'āiga: families

*O le fa'avae o Sāmoa e fa'avae i Aiga*<sup>44</sup>

The foundation of Sāmoa(n) (society) is based on '*āiga*

The English word family means '*āiga*, however the Sāmoan understanding and experience of 'family' is quite distinct from that of Western cultures. '*Āiga* can be understood in multiple contexts:

- a social unit in a village where matai direct their religious, economic and political activities
- a self-sustaining economic group where members including the head cooperatively contribute the products of their labour for the common good of the whole family
- in an extensive sense, '*aiga* incorporates communal ties with the Gods, ancestors, and the divine heritages, the sea, land and sky
- in its inclusive sense, *aiga* could be conceived as a descent group or kinship in all its dimensions<sup>45</sup>

*O 'aiga o le 'anofale o afio'aga*<sup>46</sup>

*O le uiga o le upu 'anofale o totoga o fale. O tū ma aganu'u uma e fa'avae mai i 'āiga, o upu fo'i o nu'u e māfua mai lava i totonu o 'āiga. O le 'āiga o le fatu lea o tū ma aganu'u e aofia ai ma fa'avae o afio'aga. O le 'āiga e afua ai a'oa'oga mo tagata uma, e fa'afaiilele ai fo'i le aganu'u ma le gagana 'auā o mea ia e tupu ae ma le tagata i totonu o lona 'āiga.*

The meaning of the word '*anofale* is, (that which constitutes) the innermost or the core of family residences. Protocols, customs and traditions are founded upon '*āiga*. Language and expressions of *nu'u* also originated from within '*āiga*. '*Āiga* are the heart of, and are central to the protocols, customs and traditions, and the constitutions of *nu'u*. The teaching and nurturing of customs and traditions, and language begins in the '*āiga*. These are the things that the person grows up with in their '*aiga*.

'*Āiga* cannot be separated from the 'wholeness of Sāmoan life, bringing together the divine and the ordinary as one body' (Tofaeono, *ibid*),

41 **agaifanua**: customs and traditions unique to each *nu'u*. **aganu'u Sāmoa**: customs and traditions common to all Sāmoan people. **fa'amatai**: Sāmoan system of governance by *matai*.

42 Iati, 2000; Aiono, 1992; 1996.

43 Maintenance of connections and reciprocal support based on **feagaiga** or covenantal links within extended families.

44 Lafai Sauoaiga, 2000.

45 Tofaeono, *ibid*.

46 In Tofaeono Tanuvasa, 2009.

... *A na leai le 'āiga e leai ni vā feāloa'i ma ava le isi i le tasi ...*<sup>47</sup> If 'āiga did not exist, there would be no vā feāloa'i or ava towards each other.

Terms such as *pui'āiga*, *āiga potopoto*, *'au'āiga*, *'aufale*, and *'ogāumu*<sup>48</sup> describe the different arrangements by which kin come together. 'Āiga means a family member, or is a collective term for members of a particular lineage sharing a common ancestor. 'Āiga can comprise a sole parent and their children, a single family household of parents and children, intergenerational family households including grandparents and elderly relatives, and multiple family households. 'Āiga can live together as a household community, or in different parts of the same country, or countries apart. What preserves and strengthens identity and unity of individuals within 'āiga across geographical spaces is a knowledge of *faiā* and *gafa*.<sup>49</sup>

## Matai

*Matai* are the titular heads of 'āiga. The duty of *matai* is to attend to the social, political, physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of their families. They also have custodian responsibilities of family land. In return, family members provide services rendered to *matai* as heads of families.

## Symbols of 'āiga

*Aiga – is the basic arena where the Sāmoan religio-cultural lifeway is cultivated and continues to be nurtured. It is an institution and a concept which informs the life of the community in all dimensions.* (Tofaeono, 2000)

There is no one single symbolic representation or definition of 'āiga. The three symbols that are closely associated with the concept of 'āiga are *fale*, *va'a*, and *tino*.<sup>50</sup> The building of *fale* and *va'a* was 'legitimised by the belief in spirits and sanctioned by religious ceremonies and rituals'.<sup>51</sup>

The *fale* signifies 'order, character and confines of the world of 'āiga' calling attention to

... *the status and rank, history and meaning of a certain unit, ranging from the deity/ies that inherit the locality, the name and the story of the place, the family title related to it, family members, together with the account of living components (like stones, trees, rivers, mountains, etc.) that define the boundaries of the settlements. In Sāmoan traditions, the decision to build a fale depended primarily on the approval of the hosts of Gods.* (Tofaeono, *ibid*)

'Āiga is also conceived of and likened to *tino*, the body. Similar to *fale*, *tino* has 'diverse and complex parts, each performing their respective functions and purpose for the welfare of the whole 'āiga.' The identification of 'āiga with *fale* and *tino* informs a strong sense of Sāmoan identity.<sup>52</sup>

47 In Tofaeono Tanuvasa, *ibid*. *Āva*-respectful and honouring conduct towards each other.

48 Va'ai, 1999. The Present day meaning of 'ogāumu is oven. In pre-contact Sāmoa, 'ogāumu was the hearth in the cooking area. Va'ai notes that 'Ogāumu is a nuclear family.

49 Connections can be claimed through male or female ancestors so that Sāmoan people may belong to many 'āiga. A woman (or man) marrying into another family confers on all their blood descendents membership into their own families (Tofaeono, *ibid*).

50 *Ibid*. House or building; canoe or long boat; the (human) body.

51 *Ibid*. Tagaloa gathered a family, this being the circle of chiefs, to a *fono* to plan and design a type of building to house a canoe. Before commencing the work, they drank *ava*.

52 *Ibid*. Building materials and sections of the *fale* share common names with parts of the body.

## Embodiment and disembodiment of the 'āiga

Sāmoan people can be understood to be the tangible and intangible representations of their 'āiga. The expression '*āiga is my tino, tino is my 'āiga*' illustrates the interconnectedness of the individual to the 'all parts of the heritage' to which they belong.<sup>53</sup>

Within the context of *fa'aSāmoa*, the idea that a Sāmoan person has no 'āiga is not readily comprehensible to many Sāmoan people, because inherent in the notion of being Sāmoan is the profound connection to 'āiga and *fanua*, which are important underpinnings of Sāmoan identity and belonging,

*[to have no 'āiga] ... is comprehended not only to mean homelessness, landlessness and rootlessness, – it also means annihilation of living relations, poverty in material security, deprivation in rational thinking, and, more importantly, a collapse of the ethical orientation. It involves the erosion of religio-cultural consciousness, the forgottenness of the divine, and a sign of the divine's very absence in bodily-relations. Hence, disembodiment of the aiga means the breakdown of the whole cyclical life-supporting system. (Tofaeono, 2000)*

## Aganu'u Sāmoa

*O 'āiga o le fatu o le aganu'u*<sup>54</sup>  
*'Āiga are the heart of aganu'u*

*Aganu'u Sāmoa* is customs and traditions which are common to all Sāmoan people.

*O tū ma aga fa'aSāmoa e fa'avae mai i 'āiga. E ola tagata e tusa ai ma a'oa'oga a matua i 'āiga auā o i na e fa'afaiilele ai tagata uma. 'Aua ne'i fa'agalo le 'āiga auā o le fatu lea na tu'u fa'asolo mai i tua'ā ua maliliu. A na leai le 'āiga e leai ni vā feāloa'i ma ava le isi i le tasi. A leai se gagana, ua pō le nu'u.*

The protocols and customs of *fa'aSāmoa* originate from within 'āiga. People were raised according to the teachings of parents in 'āiga because that is the place where everyone is nurtured. Do not ignore or dismiss 'āiga from your thoughts because the seed (of knowledge) was handed down from parents and ancestors who have passed on. If it wasn't for 'āiga, there would be no *vā feāloa'i* or *ava*<sup>55</sup> towards the other. If there is no language, the *nu'u* will be in darkness.

53 A similar expression, *o le toto e tasi, tino e tasi* means, one blood, one body and refers to being of the one family.

54 In Tofaeono Tanuvasa, *ibid.* [trans] *'Āiga* are the heart and core of *aganu'u* [Sāmoa].

55 *Vā feāloa'i*: social relationships; *ava*: respect, honour.

## O le fa'amatai

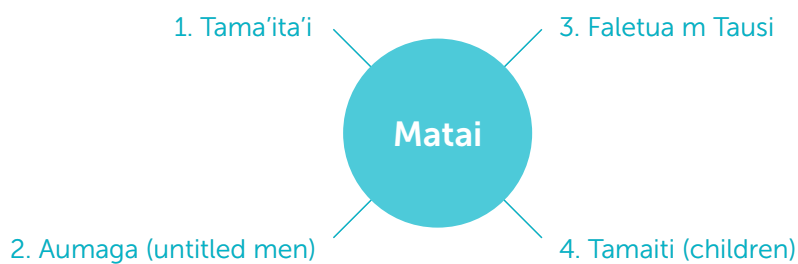
The role of *matai* is the achievement and maintenance of peace.<sup>56</sup>

The *fa'amatai* is the social structure around which Sāmoan society revolves.

The 'framework through which the *fa'amatai* can take action' is the *fa'aSāmoa*.<sup>57</sup>

Figure 4 shows that at the core of the *fa'amatai* are male and female *matai* who are a separate entity from other groups in the village and family. *Matai* have a vocabulary, a way of thinking and behaviour that is distinctive to their status. The group of *matai* are referred to as *le nu'u o matai*. The *matai* title owns the family land as well as oral traditions and heritage.

**Figure 4. Operation of fa'amatai in a basic village**



(socio-metric wheel: Aiono, 1986)

1. The *Tama'ita'i* group comprise daughters of *matai* who hold privileged positions within extended families and the village. Within *fa'amatai*, they are the teachers, healers, priestess, makers of wealth – *fai'oa*, and the peacemaker – *pae-male-auli*. The *Tama'ita'i* group are referred to as *le nu'u o Tama'ita'i*. The *Tama'ita'i* represent the *Feagaiga*.<sup>58</sup>
2. The honorific of the *aumaga* is, *malosi o le nu'u*: the strength of the *nu'u*. They are the untitled men who are: planters, fishermen, catcher of birds, builders, makers of weapons and tools, preparer and server of food, singers, dancers, poets, entertainers, and sportsmen.
3. *Faletua ma taus*<sup>59</sup> are the wives of *matai*, and are the 'foreign' or outsider element in the social organisation of the *nu'u* and extended family. In their capacity as wives and mothers, they are the advisors. As 'in-laws,' they do not have the authority of *Tama'ita'i* of the *nu'u*. On returning to their own *'āiga* and *nu'u*, *faletua* and *taus* resume their status and authority as *Tama'ita'i*. (Aiono, 1996)
4. Sāmoan children including children born outside of wedlock or pledged relationships are generally loved and accepted in the *'āiga*. The socialisation of children into *fa'aSāmoa* is made possible by emphasising the importance of *gagana Sāmoa* in all aspects of their lives (*ibid*).

<sup>56</sup> Aiono, 1996.

<sup>57</sup> Iati in Huffer and So'o (eds), 2000.

<sup>58</sup> *Feagaiga* is a contractual agreement of any kind. It is also a particular contractual relationship between two parties in two contexts, those of religion and kinship (Schoeffel, 1995).

<sup>59</sup> *Faletua* are wives of *alii*; *taus* are wives of *tulāfale*. In recent times, wives of ministers of religion are referred to as *faletua*.

Members of the Working Group highlighted the importance of recognising that variations to village structures existed as part of *agaifanua*.<sup>60</sup> One such distinction was that some village governance structures comprised only the *matai*, *auluma* / *tama'ita'i* and *aumaga* groups.<sup>61</sup> Issues of identity and belonging are clear if one is able to locate oneself in these groupings.

*Faletua* and *tausi* were referred to as *paolo*,

*O paolo o tagata ia ua faiā ona o feusua'iga. E mafua ona ta'u o le paolo 'auā e malu ai 'āiga i le masi'i mai ma toga, tupe, ma taumafa i se fa'alavelave ua tū.*<sup>62</sup>

*Paolo* are people who are related through conjugal unions. They are called *paolo*<sup>63</sup> because they provide the means of respite for 'āiga of their spouses.

When *fa'alavelave* arise, *paolo* will travel with *toga*, money and food, *e fa'amāmā ai 'āvega*.<sup>64</sup>

These days *faletua* and *tausi* in some *nu'u* are actively involved in roles once considered to be the domain of the *auluma*.

## Colonisation and globalisation

Globalisation first entered the Pacific region as colonisation.

*The very first western-planned development programme was introduced into Sāmoa by the British missionaries in 1830. The package represents the whole of Western civilization with all its real and presumed superiority ... But what the Sāmoans recognized and wanted to achieve were the skills of literacy and numeracy. (Aiono, 1996)*

Three significant influences on *fa'aSāmoa* were missionaries, colonial administrators, and entrepreneurs who entered Sāmoa following the relatively shortlived presence of 18<sup>th</sup> century explorers, whalers and sealers.

### The missionary sister

Missionaries from The London Missionary Society arrived in Sāmoa in 1830 'to spread the knowledge of Christ among heathens and other unenlightened nations'<sup>65</sup> They met with a group of *matai* and Malietoa Vainu'upō who in wanting to 'protect the unity of the ideal social organization of Sāmoan society' assigned the missionaries in the *Tama'ita'i* group, and designated them as *fa'afeagaiga* – to be like the sister.<sup>66</sup> They were also bestowed the ceremonial address, *fa'afeagaiga taulagi*, to be the 'quasi-sisters of each village,'<sup>67</sup> 'even though they didn't come from the same womb' (Aiono, *ibid*). A further endorsement was the designation of the honorific *Susuga*,<sup>68</sup> a form of address to the Malietoa title. This 'inculturation of the missionaries meant that they were accorded the care and respect in much the same way as of the sister as *feagaiga*,<sup>69</sup> and also provided a place where the missionary programme could be implemented from within *fa'aSāmoa*.<sup>70</sup>

60 Refer footnote 4.

61 Refer also Colonisation and Globalisation: The missionary sister.

62 In Tofaeono Tanuvasa, *ibid*.

63 *Paolo* means shade or to provide shelter. *Paolo* are the 'in-laws.'

64 To ease and lighten material, physical, and financial, emotional burdens associated with *fa'alavelave*.

65 Watson, 1917.

66 Aiono, *ibid*.

67 Tcherkézoff in Huffer and So'o, 2000.

68 Aiono, *ibid*.

69 Tofaeono, *ibid*.

70 Aiono, *ibid*.

Schoeffel (1995) notes that the missionaries disapproved of the influence of the *auluma*<sup>71</sup> and sought to replace this institution with women's auxiliaries. In the 1920s, women's health committees were promoted under New Zealand's colonial administration. It was intended that the wives of pastors lead these committees, however this was viewed by the *feagaiga* as 'crossing the line between sacred and secular matters.' The new *komiti tūmamā* were led by the wives of *matai* resulting in the 'diminished status and influence of *nu'u a tama'ita'i*.' The *komiti* was subordinate to the *fono*, and their duties were domestic focused, rather than ceremonial roles that were the privilege of the *auluma o tama'ita'i*. Very few villages today have retained a strong *auluma* group with associated traditional roles and prestige.<sup>72</sup> These village have explicitly distinguished themselves from the *komiti* to maintain the autonomy of the *auluma* group. Significantly, they 'actively exclude in-marrying women from the formal and public roles of their community' (*ibid*).

## The soldier administrators

Sāmoa's colonial history under the administrations of Germany (1899–1914) and New Zealand (1914–1962) is singularly remembered as the struggle of Sāmoan people to retain their political independence, and to preserve *fa'aSāmoa* and *fa'amatai*.<sup>73</sup>

In 1908/09, the *Mau a Pule* movement led by Lauaki Namulau'ulu Mamoe protested against the German tax policies on local market produce and interference with the structures of their traditional authority and leadership. The German Governor suppressed the Sāmoan revolt and exiled the leaders and their families to Saipan.<sup>74</sup> In 1926, the *Mau* movement under the slogan *Sāmoa mo Sāmoa* (Sāmoa for Sāmoan people) was formed to advance Sāmoa's political cause to the New Zealand government. The *Mau* was a response to the New Zealand administration's mismanagement of the Pneumonic epidemic in 1918,<sup>75</sup> which led to the deaths of up to 25 percent of the population. Under a new administrator, there was modification of the Sāmoan administration intended to undermine the lines of traditional leadership. The *Mau* movement continued to petition and seek political independence from New Zealand until 1962 when Sāmoa gained independence. Achieving political independence also provided a founding principle in the nation's constitution, *Fa'avae i le Atua Sāmoa*: Sāmoa is founded on God.

## Levelling the hierarchy

In the first 100 years of foreign presence, a 'levelling process of the hierarchy of titles' resulted in 'the emergence of a new stratification to replace the old leadership system.'<sup>76</sup> Prior to 1930, there existed the class of *ali'i*, *tulāfale*, and *matai*. Documents from the 1800s state that *matai* was the term used to describe craft specialists and heads of households. Towards the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the distinction between *ali'i* and *tulāfale* had weakened and that of *matai* expanded (*ibid*). One likely cause for this can be attributed to the appropriation of Sāmoan religious language by the missionaries and the gradual relinquishing by Sāmoan people of their religious expressions to Christianity. Terms such as *paia* (holy and sacrosanct)

71 Refer Footnote 64.

72 Schoeffel notes Leulumoega, Le Falefa, and Safotu as examples.

73 *Fa'amatai*: traditional system of governance.

74 Field, 2006.

75 The first influenza wave in Sāmoa was in 1830 and was associated with 'foreigners and the new religion'. In many cases it was fatal to elderly people who had previously been weakened by pulmonary diseases. Severe and fatal influenza epidemics struck again in 1837 and 1846. Many children died as a result of whooping cough and cholera. In 1851, very few Sāmoan people escaped mumps. This was followed by a dysentery epidemic in 1907 and in 1911, 657 died of measles and dysentery.

76 Meleisea cited by Tcherkézoff in Huffer and So'o, 2000.



and *mana* were ceded to the Christian God.<sup>77</sup> These and other changes led to 'chiefly power moving towards secular political authority and the distinction between *ali'i* and *tulāfale* became more ceremonial than actual.'<sup>78</sup>

## Conflicting value systems

At the end of colonial rule Pacific people inherited two social status systems. One was based on village customs and oral traditions, and the other was a Western liberal-democratic values system based on Western legal rationality. Since European contact, Pacific people have been adapting Western middle-class values influenced by market-driven economies and international media. The resulting tensions are of 'Western middle-class aspirations [that] are incongruent with the ubiquitous social systems of customs and traditions.'<sup>79</sup>

## 'Āiga: sites of preservation and change

The 'āiga is the site where language, and the values and beliefs of *fa'aSāmoa* are taught and preserved. Changes over the past 35 or more years in New Zealand's socio-economic environment,<sup>80</sup> have contributed to 'communities suffering from social fragmentation, cultural erosion, and increasing loss of identity,'<sup>81</sup> and have had a significant effect on reshaping the family structure. In Sāmoa, similar patterns of fragmentation and privation were observed,

*... increasing pockets of poverty and income inequality in Apia are visible in the spread of sub-standard housing and homeless persons, some of whom may be in need of mental health care. Increasing suburban dystopia is evident ... [with] growing frequency of reports about youth crime and domestic violence ... [which is] generally attributed to restlessness, fragmentation of kinship and decline in membership of Sāmoa's mainline or traditional church denominations. (Thornton et al, 2010)*

A likely impact of globalisation on family structures and dynamics included increases in de facto relationships, shifts towards sole parenting, increases in households comprising more than one family or numbers of unrelated people,<sup>82</sup> overcrowded housing conditions, and a high prevalence of chronic conditions.<sup>83</sup> Changes also to 'roles in families were significantly affected.' 'Traditional attitudes towards the care of the elderly,' as well as the young, would come 'under pressure as an effect of demographic and employment demands.' Mixed marriages also brought changes as new values and beliefs were introduced into the family (*ibid*).

Changes on the family structure are likely to affect ways in which family members relate to each other. Relational arrangements were in the past mainly understood in terms of status through birthright or title. In New Zealand, status is weighted towards the value of money, social standing, and education. Shifts in roles amongst family members do not necessarily disadvantage family wellbeing, if there is an implicit understanding that the underlying nature of the changed relationships continues to exist within the context of *fa'aSāmoa*. Problems arise where changes in individual and collective roles result in a loss of 'respect,' and a confusion around relational boundaries<sup>84</sup> which protect

77 Aiono-Le Tagaloa, 2003.

78 Meleisea, *ibid*.

79 Tuimaleali'ifano, 1998.

80 Spoonley, 2001; Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003.

81 Taufe'ulungaki, 2005.

82 Statistics NZ, 1996.

83 Statistics NZ, 2004.

84 *vā feāloaloa'i, vā tapuia, and tuā'oi.*

and preserve the rights of individual family members to exercise their obligations and responsibilities in the *'āiga*. Rather than being sites that nurture strong and vibrant families, *'āiga* can become places of terror, suffering, and dysfunction.

## Conclusion

Family violence is a most profound violation of the Sāmoan being – of victims, perpetrators and their *'āiga*. *E fofō e le alamea le alamea* holds that healing and restoration lies within *fa'aSāmoa* and its people.

*O le Tōfā Mamao* is constructed with concepts that promote wellbeing, and strong and vibrant families. It recognises that violence also needs to be understood in terms of colonisation and contemporary influences. It is a beginning and will require further revision, discussion, and research.

The discussions in this document are the re-awakening of text and the spoken word to the centrality of *tōfā mamao*, *gagana Sāmoa*, *faiā*, *vā tapuia*, *fa'aaloalo*, and *fa'asinomaga* in the lives of Sāmoan people, not only as practice and ritual, but as a lived and visible spirituality.

Soifua

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