

## Chapter 2

### CONTEXT OF STUDY

This chapter sets out to describe the context of the research. It attempts to trace the way power was situated historically, geographically, and politically in the story of the Samoan people, first as ocean migrants second as settlers of a new archipelago. The link between the past and present needs a closer look into to better understand how the past shaped the current situation of power. The first part is a brief presentation of Samoa's ethnographic history. It is a comprehensive overview of its story from a historical stance, with more leaning to the post-European contact period from the missionaries to the post-colonial era. Taking a discursive approach to its retelling may be a limitation to this study though there are works of note which serve as references and making up for the gaps. The second part provides an overview of the political context, first the traditional political layout in the village and its systems of government. An update of the place of study is provided for background information. The reader will note my attempt to put things into perspective by commenting on the current state of the status quo or updating on the development of a certain institution or issue for example.

#### 2.1 Samoa's geographical and geopolitical composition

Samoa lies in the South Pacific Ocean midway between Hawaii and New Zealand in the Southern Hemisphere. Its geographical composition consists of two large islands and eight smaller islands five of which are uninhabited.<sup>7</sup> In size it is 2842 square kms in total, Upolu is the most populous and more developed; the seat of government and the capital Apia, and Faleolo, its only international airport. Savaii is the largest and has a more rugged terrain with the highest point, Mt Silisili at 1857m; and with Upolu account for at least 96 percent of Samoa's land area and 99 percent of the population. Geologically the two large islands are shield volcanic types created by hot spots that existed 23 million years ago, the same are responsible for the creation of the Samoan archipelago (Harris et al., 2020).<sup>8</sup> Located on the Pacific tectonic plate near the boundary of the Australian Plate, and within the 'Ring of Fire' active zone, lending herself

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<sup>7</sup> Britannica website.

<sup>8</sup> See also Britannica website online; Wikipedia.

therefore to the forces of its seismic activities (ibid.). In 2009 a submarine earthquake in the southern Pacific Ocean adjacent to the Kermadec-Tonga subduction zone triggered a tsunami causing significant damage and loss of lives, particularly on the southern coastlines of the two large islands (ibid.). While much freer from any active volcanic activity it is nonetheless susceptible to the Pacific cyclone season that affects the islands occasionally. Two powerful cyclones hit the islands, one in 1990 and another in 1991, causing huge devastation to crop and the vegetation, the national infrastructure as well, not to mention the impact on the economy and loss of lives (Samoa Observer, February 9, 1990).

Much of the coastal plains is flat and fertile that surround most of the larger islands with own vegetation of coconut plantations and native flora; this is where people cultivate their normal crops. More than 95 percent of the people live in village settlements along the coastline. The exception is some of the smaller islands that are coral in formation, like Manono and NuuSAFE'e for example (Harris et al., 2020).

## 2.2 A brief history of migration and pre-colonial contact legacy

The Samoan culture (*fa'aSamoa*) is a product of mass migration over certain periods of human history; the vast Pacific Ocean has been the main arena of such movements by Polynesian forebears, much noted under the label, Lapita travellers (Salesa, 2004; Terrel, 1986). Research concurred that early movements from modern Taiwan to mainland southeast Asia occurred at around 4000 BC, having settled in the Bismark Archipelago, Vanuatu, and moving eastward spontaneously in groups of families later on (ibid.). Each group brought with them own social and cultural capital and natural resources, all of which bear on the physical landscape of new homelands found along the way (Salesa, 2004; Meleisea, 1987a). Samoa was settled around 3,500 BC (Lipson et al., 2014; Terrel, 1986). Maritime interconnections with close neighbours became commonplace mainly for commercial and political reasons. Intermarriages among members of the Pacific noble families led to the first multicultural settlements in the islands; most notably the Tongans who settled in Samoa in numbers around 700 AD<sup>9</sup> (Meleisea, 1987a). The Fijians made their mark too on the landscape; a number of villages on both Savaii and Upolu Islands traced their origins to Fijian forebears who had founded these settlements (Tuimalealiifano, 2020; Gunson, 1990).

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<sup>9</sup> Peseta Gatoloai Sio's own estimation spanned 400 years from 600-to 1000AD (Meleisa et al, 1987a).

Culture has shaped the physical landscape, socially and politically; sometimes by means of the distinct leadership of a few individuals. Samoan folklore attested to Pili, founder of the Pili Dynasty, and his heirs, who divided Upolu into political divisions (Kramer, 1994), is widely conceded to as the political founder of Samoa (Meleisea, 1987a). These old divisions still stand to this day, perpetuated by tradition. Further divisions have resulted in today's status quo of 11 districts in all, 5 in Upolu, 6 in Savaii.



**Map 2. A sketch of Samoa's political divisions:** (Source – Kramer – 1994)

1 – Tuamasaga; 2 – Aana; 3 – Aiga i le Tai; 4 – Atua; 5 – Vaa o Fonoti; 6 – Faasaleleaga; 7 – Gaga'emauga; 8 – Gagaifomauga; 9 – Vaisigano; 10 – Satupa'itea; 11 – Palauli.

Respect for such tradition was sustained with the new electoral divisions of Samoa into modern voting constituencies. The old names are still upheld (refer map page 29). Each political district has own capital deferred to in the custom. The island of Upolu is also called Tumua in Samoa's honorifics, meaning the leading spokesperson on behalf of the two royal families and heirs. Savaii is also called Pule, meaning authority vested on its principal orators. Both islands lay claims to royal lineage on the two royal families. As such, from the story of Pili to his heirs and others that followed, all the islands are tied as one: historically and genealogically (Meleisea, 1987a, So'o, 2008).

The local folklore attested to certain periods in its story where evidence of political usurpation occurred (Henry, 1979). Most notably the influence of Tongan imperialism. Treated as guests, they ended up asserting power over their hosts. Their expulsion was gradual but final though their legacy lived on in other forms of influence and manifestations. Wars between villages, districts, alliances were commonplace, which motives

were mainly political (Turner, 1884). The assertion of power by the victors over the losers etched into political structures and institutions their claims to rulership. Such permanence of place in the hierarchy became the legacy of past wars and their rewards. For example, the ascendancy of Malietoa to become a prominent chief among the equals was due to the momentous defeat of Tuitonga Talaaife'i'i. The Nafanua Wars changed the political landscape of the larger islands, so as the wars of succession of Salamasina heirs, the wars of Tamafaiga prior to the missionaries' arrival, and the civil wars that ensued from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and onward, continued to transform Samoa's political landscape and power relations (Meleisea, 1987a; Henry, 1979).

### **2.3 The missionaries and new power**

It was a cohort of dedicated individuals that founded the London Missionary Society (LMS), whose zeal for a global Christian evangelization was described by a source as “transcending own religious affiliation, that also coincided with the ‘winds of societal change’ in Europe (Barker, 1996). Europe was the model of social, economic, intellectual and religious organisations of the time and also the predominant powerhouse politically in driving the colonial agenda (Lovett, 1899; Porter, 2004; Barker, 1996). Evangelizing the unsaved inhabitants of the world was the call of Europe and the Christian churches were at the forefront in this enterprise. The South Pacific islands were selected in its early ventures, beginning in 1796; thirty missionaries and their families left England on The Duff in August for Tahiti; moving on from there to Tongatapu and the Marquesas Islands (Lovett, 1899; Porter, 2004). These early encounters proved to be crucial for the cause as it provided the essential learning experience in engaging the missionees successfully (ibid.). First and foremost: communication. Without any knowledge or prior experience in people's cultures and languages the mission was beset by problems from the start; reports of missionaries abandoning the mission could well be explained from this perspective of cultural and linguistic naivety (ibid.).

The missionaries who followed after would have a much better expectation of what's to come and a lot of them were prepared for the challenge. Such foresight then was credited in regards to the manner they had approached the problem. Firstly, with a strong sense of pragmatism (Barker, 1987). Indeed the main objective of the LMS was conceptual and subjective - salvation of the soul - but it was by means of its missionaries practicality which had far more impact on the missionees response, than their spiritual zeal; and

nothing could be more practical than conversing with the missionaries in their own dialects (ibid.). For the latter, the choice to be assimilated linguistically was part of such appeal. Having learnt from prior experience, it was apparent that the subjects' language was the key to reaching out successfully (Lovett, 1899).

A great example of this knack for pragmatism was found in the life and legacy of one of its famous advocates, John Williams. Rev. Williams began his service in Tahiti and at once took upon himself the task of observing, acquiring, and quickly mastering the native dialects (Williams, 1984). From Tahiti to Rarotonga, he repeated this linguistic quest successfully and he was instrumental in the first recorded translation of biblical texts in Rarotongan dialects (ibid.). Such a rewarding orientation in Pacific languages proved handy in his next move to evangelize the Samoan archipelago. A successful mission to the Samoa Islands ensued, led by John Williams and Charles Barff in 1830, was attributed to a good strategy, in the use of a Samoan couple; the man of whom was a relation of Malietoa. Malietoa seized the opportunity for own political agenda; the mission in turn counted its blessings on the pedigree and influence of a sponsor to begin with (Lovett, 1899).

The arrival of the Wesleyan missionaries in 1835, and the Marist Brothers for the Catholics a decade later, marked a change in the relationship dynamics. The LMS monopoly was challenged for the first time however, and it soon became obvious the fact that these missions, however similar their goals and religious interests were, could not work together harmoniously (Lovett, 1899; Garrett, 1982; Sila, 2012). Due to the impasse, the Wesleyans soon left as they came then made their re-entry some decades later. The literature of the period attested to a breakdown in the relationship among the three missions both locally and abroad. The church politics in continental Europe has become an onus of the Samoan adherents too, causing divisions and even political unrest locally (Liuaana, 2002; Sila, 2012). In sum, the experience left an indelible mark on church relations for years, which still resonates today in terms of hidden power relations<sup>10</sup> (Liuaana, ibid; Alailima-Eteuati, 2007; Tuiai, 2012; Crawford, 1977).

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<sup>10</sup> Evidence of passive non-cooperation, competing agenda, grievances expressed in private or public discourse.

The missionaries were revered for their skills first and foremost. The Samoans high regard for new knowledge and technology easily made them part of the family.<sup>11</sup> The missionaries were instrumental in laying the foundation of a new era. With the power of a new literacy, Samoa was on its way to connecting with the world. Politically, the missionary enterprise introduced a new dimension in power understanding for the Samoans, with the missions' strong tendency for Western education and systems of government, making the new knowledge they brought with them a much more powerful tool that transformed the status quo dynamically (Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987a; Foucault, 1991).

In the final analysis, the missionaries' legacy can be viewed in terms of a successful programme of indoctrination on a grand scale. First the ushering in of a new religion while discarding an old one. British Christianity came with own fittings that included new systems of organisation, values, beliefs, and mannerism. Sharing the colonial mindset of the period, the missionaries' commitment to the missionees was premised on the Christian message of saving lost souls and doing good; cloaked in European customs and attitudes. These changes were accepted by the Samoan leadership with not so much difficulty (Fauolo, 2005). Pragmatic as they were naturally, the Samoans could only see in the missionary effort a pathway to moving forward as a people (Williams, 1984; Lovett, 1899).

From the missionaries' experience, it was obvious the impact of colonialism on Samoa will be unstoppable (Hempenstall, 1978). While Samoa's colonial history seemed to start off with its involvement in international commerce - the entry of a German company JC Godeffroy and Sons, and the establishment of large-scale plantations to supply a high European demand - it was the missionaries that paved the way on its behalf.

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<sup>11</sup> The white missionaries were affectionately called 'tamā' (father); though their official title was Misi.

## 2.4 Colonial legacy and foreign power

To point out a singular motive behind the inception of colonial rule in Samoa is problematic. The argument whether the colonialists were invited, or they just forced their way in may be justifiable either way given the evidence (Meleisea, 1987a). In Samoa's case for example, it was a matter of both. Notwithstanding which side is better supported, colonial rule was based on the principles of power hegemony which ideology put everything European in the central axis of power. First and foremost was European knowledge and its technology. This superiority was described along the lines of Social Darwinism, hence from the first point of contact, it was never meant to be an equal power relation from the colonialists' viewpoint (ibid.). Such viewpoint turned out to dictate the relationship from beginning to end. Exercising power coercively has been a familiar preoccupation of the warring Samoans as well, who viewed European technologies of power as proof of superior knowledge (ibid.).

Foucault surmised that power and knowledge are synonymous; in this case, coercive power to rule even without the consent of the subjects. The Samoans took advantage of the encounter while at the same time they would not allow themselves to be subjected totally; indeed, they went on to appropriate the introduced knowledge, utilizing it for their own benefit (Meleisea, 1987, 1987a).

The three powers – Germany, Britain, the United States made their presence felt on the pretext of protecting their citizens interests though the main motive was the pursuit of their own political goals (Hempenstall, 1978). The convergence of both foreign and local interests simultaneously at this particular space and time period couldn't have been fateful for all parties. History attested that Samoa, at one of its most unstable periods in history took advantage of the 'big powers' rivalry, hence drawing them into own domestic politics and quarrels for rulership of Samoa (ibid.). The three big powers, for pride and imperial motives, became entangled in the controversy (Hempenstall, 1978). The three main church missions too were implicated, and with the death of Malietoa Vainuupo in 1841, a leadership vacuum resulted in another prolonged civil war (Meleisea, 1987a). Without any other recourse, the Samoan archipelago was split in two, the Western Islands under Germany, the Eastern under the United States.

### 2.4.1 German rule (1900-1914)

Under Germany, Samoa was transformed into a large farm of agricultural products which were in high demand in Europe at the time. It turned Samoa into a small economic power overnight. Dr Solf while encouraging the practices of the culture and *faaSamoa* also sought to establish a centralized government with the Kaiser as head. As political overseer on behalf of an imperial power, his duty was to maintain political stability. Described as a man of tact and diplomacy, he knew that foreign interests can never be protected without the support of the locals (Hempenstall, 1978). Time could have been better for his plans; Samoa has been embroiled in a series of civil wars, but Dr Solf still managed to incorporate new structures and policies so that both warring sides were appeased. By his agricultural policy, the standard of living was lifted, thus diverting the attention of the people away from partisan politics for a while (Hempenstall, 1978; Liuaana, 2002).

But Samoan politics was fickle as the changing moods of its power relations at the time. A faction of resistance emerged called, *o le Mau a Pule*, led by Lauaki Namulauulu. Lauaki could see from afar Solf's attempt to impose a foreign system at the cost of the traditional *fa'amatai* jurisdiction (ibid.). The instalment of new roles was politically motivated; the abolition of titles, government's direct interference in cultural matters was in direct contradiction to *fa'aSamoa*. This snubbing of the *fa'amatai* was an insult to the Samoan pride. Lauaki has a point. Dr Solf has a point too (ibid.). Nine years of political stability spoke for itself. Samoa has never relished peace for a longer while. Dr Solf, the church and other local leaders who were indifferent to Lauaki's cause, knew that if Lauaki had his way, another war would have ensued (ibid.). The consequences for Samoa would have been far more devastating apparently. Solf responded by having him exiled to Saipan with his main supporters. The governor was accused of high-handed tactics by his foes. Unceremoniously he was summoned back to Germany for other duties (Hempenstall, 1978). His successor, Dr Schultz, was also sympathetic to the Samoans (Davidson, 1967).

The name Lauaki is synonymous with Samoa's own resistance to foreign rule, particularly where such rule attempted to assert own authority over the *fa'amatai* and *fa'aSamoa* (way of living). Hempenstall argued that the German legacy was Solf's legacy. German rule under his tutelage was that of cultural preservation. The Germans indeed



left a legacy; first, the infrastructure; secondly, the literary contribution of its scholars to Samoa's ethnographic research and record of its oral history, are primary sources that attested to the German legacy (ibid.).

#### **2.4.2 New Zealand administration (1914-1953)**

The New Zealand military took advantage of Samoa's vulnerability when the whole world's attention was focused on the war in Europe (O'Brien, 2017). Germany was in the thick of the trouble, its stakes in the continent were far more significant. New Zealand also has been fortunate with timing as Samoa, for a longer while, has never been stable politically under German rule. Robert Logan and his government took over with a few adjustments on the structures and systems laid out by the Germans. It was business as usual (Meleisea, 1987, 1987a). The Samoans too were very much left to their own affairs. Until Logan made some serious blunders in decision-making, the most noted was to do with the permission into port of the *SS Talune*, a small cargo ship from New Zealand, which passengers were infected with the virus of a pandemic influenza. Almost a quarter of Samoa's population was decimated, and which turned Samoa against Logan's Administration. He was replaced by Colonel Robert Tate. Tate's successor George Richardson was another military man whose condescending attitude fared no better on an already volatile relationship (O'Brien, 2017). He was soon to meet resistance in the Mau movement, a peaceful protest of non-cooperation. When the Samoan leaders asked for more say in the affairs of government, Richardson's adverse response was a reflection on the New Zealand government's own discriminatory foreign policy (ibid.).

His successor, Colonel Stephen Allen, another military man, could not ease the breakdown in relations and which culminated in the killing of some prominent Mau leaders in 1929. The Mau continued to apply pressure against New Zealand rule, through active promotion of its grievances locally and abroad. They had an able international campaigner and agitator in Taisi O. F. Nelson (O'Brien, 2017; Field, 1991). A change of fortunes too in New Zealand politics found favour with Samoa's call for self-government, with a Labour government supporting Samoa's aspiration. An Act was passed in 1947, paving the way for Samoa towards self-government. After coming out as part of the victorious alliance of the second world war, New Zealand, under a new government has decided to honour its pledge. From then onwards, it began to work alongside the

Samoan leadership to attaining the goal of self-government. Such goal was soon to be translated into the call for full independence, attained on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1962.

In principle, New Zealand's own legacy was marked by a style of leadership that was confrontational. Compared with Germany, it can be argued that the difference was made in the capacity of two key individuals; Dr Solf's intellectual and political acumen, and Dr Shultz's tact and empathy with *fa'aSamoa*; both far outweighed their New Zealand counterparts (Hempenstall, 1978; O'Brien, 2017). New Zealand though made it up with the foresight of General Herbert Hart, and the popularity of his successor Alfred Turnbull, however. As a way of making up for the past wrongs - it seems that way - both sides signed a treaty of friendship, the only such treaty between New Zealand and a Pacific neighbour (Davidson, 1972).

In sum, the most telling of Samoa's colonial legacy was to do with the coercive attempts by foreign powers to assert one political system over another or the futile effort to reconcile the two. First, Germany's attempt to impose own form of centralized authority led to a deliberate manipulation of a system of government (Meleisea, 1987; Hempenstall, 1978). Under New Zealand rule, hidden power relations were unravelled in other social dimensions of which racial discrimination was part of its foreign policy. Power was interpreted as such, thus mixed-blood locals and sympathetic *palagi* rooting for the cause (*mau*) were considered enemies of the state. Lauaki symbolised Samoa's resistance to foreign domination, so as Taisi, Tamasese and all members of the Mau Movement protest – including the women's own (O'Brien, 2017). In the end, the people's will outlasted all foreign attempts.

## 2.5 Local governments

There are two authorities at the local level, first the village authority, vested in the collective jurisdiction of the matai in council (*fono a matai*). Secondly, the church authority. The latter's jurisdiction is ecclesiastical and limited only to its members, clustered under various denominations/ labels. Traditionally both authorities complement each other. The church works alongside the village authority in maintaining law and order, in its capacity as Samoa's traditional moral caregiver.

### 2.5.1 Village authority

The basic unit of traditional government is the village. Almost all Samoan villages share the basic characteristics in terms of social organisation and management; the matai council makes decisions on behalf of the village residents, subordinate councils have own particular functions to play as well (Meleisea, 1987a). Under the HRPP the village *fono* was constituted under the Village Fono Act 1990, which made it a rational quasi-legal entity, which decisions are respected by law but can be overruled.<sup>12</sup> Village authorities are largely independent; however, they make own rules and enforce them. Matai councils can impose foodstuff or monetary fines and even declare the banishment of a person from the village. Yet any such decision can be challenged in Samoa's courts of law afterwards. Samoa's peaceful environment is attributed to the role of traditional village authorities as a curbing force against crime or any unruly behaviour. Organised crime as understood in Western societies is not yet a problem in Samoa and will have difficulty of taking hold due to village authority taking onus of such responsibility with not much burden to the state (See Chapter 8 for further details).

### 2.5.2 Church government

One of the main hallmarks of Samoan villages and the country is the visibility and ubiquity of the church. The village, as the grassroots base of mission was meant to be self-sustained, each parish financing own development and support own pastor through freewill offering of food, money, and a place to live (Tui'ai, 2012; Tanielu, 2004). Individual parishes are constituted in clusters of sub-districts/districts jurisdictions under the watch of an overseer.<sup>13</sup> At the national level, it is the general assembly which jurisdiction is paramount. The village pastor has become the central figure of religious authority, with a lot of influence on people, even village affairs (*ibid.*). The three main denominations, EFKS (Congregational), Metotisi (Methodist), Katoliko Roma (Roman Catholic), constitute at least 65 percent of the total population. A gradual decline in the membership of the three, over the past 20 years, is indicative of the social and religious factors at play in people's affiliation choices (Tui'ai, 2012; Saada, 2008). While it may change dynamics of relations at village level, this sign of changing loyalty does little to the people's enthusiasm to be part of the church establishment, regardless of the motive or choice, rather than opting out altogether.

<sup>12</sup> Since 1990 the Act still evolves in terms of amendments; as in 2015, which lends the village fono more power to curb the rising level of domestic violence and substance abuse.

<sup>13</sup> EFKS calls theirs pulega/matagaluega; Metotisi is sinoti; Katoliko is pule'aga.

Institutionalized Christianity through its many denominations is thriving and continues to influence Samoan communities hugely and in many ways. For example, the churches have been proactive in the redeploying of traditional village functions; many taking over the diminishing leadership role of *fono a matai*, in terms of organising the people, by means of prescribed activities, including fundraising projects for church buildings and mission houses (Tanielu, 2004; Tuiai, 2012; Samuelu, 1999). Incorporation as such has tied the church into the traditional space normally reserved for matai or secular authority, making the church more influential. Traditional institutions of *faataulele'a* and *aualuma*<sup>14</sup> - old reserves under the village authority jurisdiction, have been incorporated into the church under its own structures such as the Youth Group, Choir Group, The Women's Fellowship, for example. While the two old institutions are upheld mostly in rural villages, most young villagers now belong to the new management. Church membership implies active involvement and participation for most of the population; churches are now the leading sponsors of village youth group activities; some are very active in cultural arts and performance, and even sports management.<sup>15</sup>

Migration overseas has extended and reinforced church government as a global family enterprise in new lands and regions. Former residents of villages are chief sponsors of their homeland churches from afar, in financing village developments, apart from their own families. They also contribute to their national church upkeep through financial offerings held annually. Annual church conferences held in Samoa bring in hundreds of thousands of foreign currencies which contribution to Samoa's economy can only be described as exceptional (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2011; Ernst, 2006).

## 2.6 National development: General Overview

Samoa is now classified as an economically developing country by the United Nations, graduating from its former LDC status in 2014. In 2017, its gross domestic product in purchasing power parity was estimated at \$1.13 billion US dollars, ranking 204<sup>th</sup> among the world (UNDP, 2018). Dependent mainly on agriculture and fishing at the local level, the national economy relies heavily on development aid and private remittances from families overseas. Tourism also has expanded, and accounts for about

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<sup>14</sup> Faataulele'a refers to the untitled men's group; the system under which the group operates; also called aumaga (men's guild). Aualuma is the untitled women's equivalent.

<sup>15</sup> Anecdotal evidence plus direct correspondences with pastors and wives who act as coaches, managers, mentors on behalf of their village sports/performance groups.

25 percent of the GDP. Like many small economies, most of the population are subsistence farmers. About 51,000 are employed, mostly in the service industry. Its exports are mainly agricultural products. Viewed at this point in time, the Covid-19 has highlighted the reality of the fragile nature of its economic relations.

Upolu's pre-eminence continues to this day, first as the seat of government and the bureaucracy. It is more developed than Savaii, the largest island. Apia the capital and villages in its vicinity are more exposed to Western influences and families have adopted a *palagi* oriented lifestyle or a blend of both worlds (So'o & Laking, 2008; Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1987a). Upolu, due to its political and economic advantages, dominates in almost every aspect of the country's demographics. It has the largest share of the population; about three-quarters of the total 195,843, the majority concentrate on the north-western side; the most concentrated of which is the capital, Apia and its surrounding periphery. The pull of urban Apia continues due to its monopoly on better services such as education, health, and employment. Apparently, this puts pressure on resources which impact on state services, state, church, charitable agencies, families have become a growing public concern (Thornton, et al., 2010; Jones & Lea, 2007).

From a national standpoint, the preeminent position of Upolu in terms of public development and centre of economic activity, clearly highlights the unequal statuses of the two large islands in this respect (UNDP, 2008). There was a time when plans were made to lift Savaii's economic status through upgrading Salelologa. Such plans were stalled for reasons involving land rights and purchasing issues between the village authority and the government. The HRPP's pledge to equal the playing field between the two large islands is yet to be realized.<sup>16</sup> On the whole, most of the families across the country have been well catered for in terms of living quarters, transport, and such provisions, through remittances from families overseas. Electricity, water and good roading are made available to most of the population especially on the two large islands.

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<sup>16</sup> The HRPP slogan, What is good for Apia is also good for Savaii, bespeaks the importance of the latter in the party's founding vision.

## 2.7 Current state of relations

A publication was launched on Samoa's reaching a milestone in its history. *Samoa's Journey 1962-2012* marked its progress in the first 50 years of Independence. It is a historical recount of the period by local writers in their specialized fields. The writers were matter of fact and functional in their analysis, highlighting many of the pressing issues in Samoa's current power relations. So'o (2012), commenting on the state's political development, is concerned with the risks of power due to the dilemma of a weak opposition in parliament. In Law and Custom, the writers were preoccupied with the dilemma of having two systems, embodied materially in two courts; the contradictions that continued to mar the system because of the different interpretations by the two courts. Eight years forward, the analogy of the odd couple seemed to have sustained; the government thought that the solution will be found with the splitting of Judiciary into two separate systems/ jurisdictions. The opposition decried that government has meddled with the cornerstone of liberal democracy. The passing of the Village Fono Act in 1990 was emblematic of a larger problem (Malifa, 2015).<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, all eyes are on government's next move with the 'three legislations' that once passed, will change Samoa's judiciary system, and in turn power relations profoundly. In Social Development, women continue to make huge strides politically. Otherwise, the benefits of the relationships to power at the global level have contributed to promoting their cause undoubtedly.

Finally, the state-church relationship. The fact that the Independent state of Samoa and the largest denomination of the Christian church, the EFKS, are at perhaps the lowest point of their relationship may not be an overstatement. This loss of affection began with a dispute between the state and church on the former's proposal to tax several church ministers; reported by the press along the lines of a defining moment in Samoa's story. A law was passed in 2017 for its enactment.

The church, in the form of its dissenting branch, EFKS, the biggest denomination in the land, protested. The state offered leniency per due time but to no avail, then through its

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<sup>17</sup> Malifa (2015) argued that the problem of upholding democratic rights at the expense of traditional faaSamoa rights can only be remedied by a full recognition of latter in the Act. Still such move cannot adequately answer the conflicting implications of the two systems as practices on each own rights, as Meleisea alluded to recently re the matter of proposed changes to the Judiciary system. Reported in Samoa Observer Issue 05/05/2020.

executive powers vested in government, decided to act. The state took its share forcefully from various bank accounts of the protesters (Samoa Observer, Issue October 13, 2018). On the 11th of December 2018, the first group of nine church ministers were summoned before a judge in Apia (ibid.). The charges related to the failure on the ministers' part to pay their taxes. An editorial headline of the Samoa Observer bemoaned the sight (ibid.). The message was clear, that the state has gone too far. Thus, the question, how far is too far? And even further, why has it gone this far? The first question highlights the delicate nature of the relationship. The second question implies the essence and validity of the problem. (See Chapter 8 for further details).

## 2.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided a summative overview of the context of study from an ethnohistorical viewpoint. Based upon a supposition of an unbreakable link connecting the past and the present, it is power that moulded relations across generations through human activity or in this case migration, settlements, political usurpation and the appropriation of the land and the environment itself to shape politics and ideological assumptions. In the process Samoa has developed an enduring legacy in terms of organisation models and institutions, and a wealth of social capital in support. Such legacy withstood foreign intrusion and continued as part of the modern power relations arrangement. Politically, each manifestation of power played a role in etching the political landscape historically, that continued to evolve to this day. The historic encounter with the Western civilization introduced new power in terms of knowledge, beliefs, and superior power technologies.

Colonialism in part was a promise to better the lives of the subjects under the slogan of 'Gold, God and Glory,' though it also became a test of the Samoan resolve to resist foreign control encroaching on their politics and way of life (Hempenstall, 1978). It also planted institutions of power that have proven to divide the people rather than unify. The same institutions which have the potential to utilize power for the common good but for political reasons could not deliver entirely. Such dilemma of power serves to underline the context of this study basically.