

Chapter 5

THE INDIGENOUS CONCEPTS IN SAMOA'S POWER NARRATIVE

This chapter examines the multi-faceted aspects of the culture (*faaSamoa*) through which power or its agents thrive daily. These agents are either tangible or conceptual or both. From a historical viewpoint their depictions are critical to an in-depth analysis of the nature and development of the power concept to where it positions itself today in Samoa's power narrative. Together they underpin Samoa's indigenous reference on power relations (Tui Atua, 2018; Meleisea, 1987a). These are the core concepts in this manner, not at all definitive. Summed up here in recapitulatory formats, they represent the basic consensus of opinions, though the reader will be free to complement in the light of other perspectives/analyses. In other terms, a better understanding of these concepts is the key to unlocking Samoa's power narrative, hence their high relevance to the thesis argument.

I wish to begin this chapter by reiterating the contribution of Critical Theory (CT) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) traditions in the analysis of social institutions, specifically from the perspective of power hegemony. As Gramsci posited, the idea of hegemony of power is the opposite of domination where coercive force is involved; rather, hegemony is power through subtle forms of management, the influence of ideas by which modern authority maintains control. So, in this chapter the reader will be encouraged to discover how the old wine lent flavour to the new taste, to use a biblical analogy that is most relevant for this situation. I refer to the aesthetics of the Samoan language and custom in their allusive and rhetorical appeals for example (Tui Atua, 2018). As Gramsci argued, a new worldview is a reproduction of the old, a modern repackaging in favour of a power elite or system.

5.1 Aiga (family)

Like many other Samoan concepts, aiga is highly nuanced, depending though on context to clarify meaning. Aiga is the elementary family; it is the extended family as well. It means lineage, kin, home, someone's spouse, being related. Tui Atua, who once

held the office of the head of state, in his official speeches often refers to Samoa as a family. He is in fact referring to the anthropological makeup of Samoa; its social and political history where a people are connected by close ties due to kinship loyalty, language and culture and other such common affinities. Samoa is also part of the bigger family of Polynesia or the Pacific people living in Oceania in that sense. Noted earlier, genealogical ties to its Pacific neighbours for economic and political interests was due in part to early mobility, which continues today with a new understanding of families as transcultural and transnational (Va'a, 2001; Anae, 2020).

Politically traditional Samoa is composed of big families (Meleisea, 1987; Soo, 2008). These are clusters of villages made up of ordinary family units, which political basis revolved around an original founder or title of high ranking. There are nine such families (So'o, 2008) and throughout Samoan history they held the balance of power on their own terms or through alliances until the status quo was severely disrupted when foreign forces from outside intervened (So'o, *ibid*; Meleisea, 1987a). These traditional power blocs while highly influential in their days no longer determine the fate of modern Samoa directly, but still do so ideologically and symbolically. Their representatives still play important roles in the modern Samoan state.

Given the fact that genealogy is core to matai oratory and *fa'aSamoa* repertoire, the reinforcement of this sense of belonging to the whole, on behalf of family, village, district or a representative is palpable (Kramer, 1994; Turner, 1884). A strong sense of belonging to one of these big families, or the two paramount titles by which all of Samoa are connected genealogically, is intrinsic in every Samoan born and bred in the homeland. This is a person's cultural identity through their village genealogy.

To avoid duplication, Aiga was discussed in Chapter 2 under Village Authority. What can only be stressed here is, that its socio-cultural meaning precedes its Western understanding in most cases. On the other hand, the line between the two has blurred since Samoa reclaimed its independence. With the emerging popular practice of title splitting, most married males, while matai in their own clans; are also heads of their own immediate families; some living in private properties and tend to own affairs and businesses. As So'o and others alluded to in the book, *Changes in the Matai System*, power relations in the modern Samoan *aiga* have changed rapidly.

5.2 Fāiā (kinship relations)

Milner in his dictionary defined the word fāiā in terms of kinship relations or else relation by affinity. Literally it means a log used as a bridge over a stream that links two sides. It is an important concept when it comes to understanding the significance of cultural relationships in the *faaSamoa*. How a person relates to his/her cultural environment very much defines his/her role as an individual of multiple relations or as a member of a collective of own multiple relations. Through kin a person is an identity of relations (Anae, 2010). How someone is related to another as kin is binding to the *faaSamoa* in terms of claims or obligations at every level. Even if such claims or obligations may only be psychological or affective at least. These designated relations have been the hallmarks of the *faaSamoa*, embedded into the psyche and have become definitive aspects of its organisational ethos and good living (Tui Atua, 2018).

Kinship relations for Samoa is taken seriously, described by Participant 6 as a sensory umbilical cord by which traditional born and bred Samoans see themselves connecting to others or the world as an identity. Kinship relations strikes at the very heart of traditional Samoan politics (Meleisea, 1987a). In the past special claims were made in times of war and hostility when alliances were needed. Rallying to the aid of a kin in times of need is a moral obligation. Whether lending support to his or her political campaign or contributing to a family funeral, the levels of commitment and expectation are the same. It is an honour to both parties. Honour is enhanced even more when you formally acknowledge your genealogical connections through proper protocols of traditional identification. Such cultural protocols reinforce bonding and identification of self in relations, no matter what level of social interaction that involves (Anae, 2010).

A brother-sister relationship is integral to this understanding of power relations. The relation has political significance in terms of obligations that are binding for both in what is called a covenant (*feagaiga*). The covenant puts the sister pride of place; a brother defers to his sister and applied in the name of good governance it bears significantly on human relationships at many levels of organisation and social hierarchy (Meleisea, et al., 2015). Many village genealogies can be traced back to these basic kin bonding, some villages whose progenitor is the sister are saluted as *feagaiga* or *tamafafine*, others who originated from the brother are lauded as *tamatane* (male lineage). Both descendants of the two are treated as equals though in reality the relation is unequal as the *faamatai* is

partial to the brother or male lineage in terms of family titles and land appropriation (Motusaga, 2016).

Other synonyms of *fāiā* are *so'otaga* (linkage), *pi'itaga* (cleavage), and *auala* (right of access). They are associated with *fa'asinomaga* (cultural designation) as individuals or members of a group. For example, part of a person's *fa'asinomaga* obligates him/her morally to help out when kin is in need; if it's a funeral, his right of access to a funeral *tapu* is through his/her genealogical link, and claim to kinship connections. A traditional Samoan identity must always be described in the context of relations to lands, titles and people (Tui Atua, 2018).

5.3 Va (relational space)

The *va* concept is one of the much discussed in Samoan-based research where human relations are involved, therefore it needs not much introduction. Literally *va* refers to the space between two people or groups of people, is not just space but a relational zone of negotiations in human affinity; sanctioned by the culture. Its upkeep is essential for harmonious relationships and perpetuation of strong peaceful communities (Anae, 2010, 1987). As noted earlier, *va* and *tapu* are closely related; due to the common understanding that *va* is sacred; hence *va tapuia* is used to describe the essential quality of this space (Tui Atua, 2018; Anae, *ibid.*).

Local researchers talked about the relational self that is understood in terms of obligations (Tui Atua, 2010; Lui, 2003; Anae, 1998). As such *teu le va* (Anae, 2010), tending to the space, is a direct appeal to its application as a custom. Tui Atua believes that 'va' tending is the essence of the *faaSamoa* (Tui Atua, 2010). Tending to the relations is a way of living; a mindset; a cultural awareness of a people, a moral obligation (Tui Atua, 2018;). Ideologically it is sanctioned by *tapu* and *mana* and ritualised through *aga fa'aaloalo*, a customary system of deference with a set of norms and a code of practice. Based on the principle of reciprocity, it is an individual as well as a collective effort; and the Samoan children are instructed very early on the protocols of *fa'aaloalo* (Tuia, 2013; Tanielu, 2004). As a family unit all members are morally obligated to its upkeep, first among own members; secondly, with respect to others in the group and the world outside. As a code of practice, (*faiva o fa'aaloalo* ~ practice of deference) it serves the interests of 'va tending' within a community and outside of it (*ibid.*). It reinforces other

values such as family loyalty, the sharing of resources and collective responsibility (Anae, 2020).

But it has come under intense scrutiny for reasons all too obvious. Tending to relations has become an expensive exercise socially, financially, and mentally particularly when lending to its human excesses. While there are families who can cope with its pressure, who dare raise the bar in flaunting wealth for reasons such as family honour, other not so well-off families are compromised (Tuiai, 2012; Thornton, et al, 2010). These families will resort to borrowing to avoid losing face. The consequences for some can be damaging (Families Commission Study 2011, New Zealand).³⁸ Family members who live overseas bear the burden for most of their *aiga* in Samoa, whether it is a funeral, a wedding, a village building project or church *taulaga*. These customs and practices have been blamed for Samoa's social problems and even poverty among families in both Samoa and overseas (ibid.; Samoa Observer, Issue June 4, 2019). Because of the affective and unconventional nature of *va* tending, it encourages certain malpractices, which in the context of modern state law and principles of fairness, highly contradictory (Larmour, 2012).

One social aspect of *va* tending is referred to as *tausi mamalu*, meaning maintaining the dignity of a title or office. Because of the sacredness of the space between leaders and servers, it is uncustomary for titular chiefs to be frequenting with the common folk on a regular basis. Such extension of *tapu* in practice was strictly observed by the *faiifeau* in the village. His symbolic absence in the village cultural activities (e.g., wedding, title bestowal and funeral feasts where material goods were distributed) was a statement on the high moral ground that was identified with such roles. Normally it was the orators and the *salelesi* whose presence were warranted by custom on such occasions. Today the change could not be so obvious. The presence of the matai cohort in funerals of untitled members of the village, to perform rituals that are reserved only for titular chiefs has become commonplace (Personal communication with source).

³⁸ Families Commission Study 2011. Media reports on the problem both in New Zealand and Samoa are commonplace. Personal communication with a source who lost a property in gambling due to cultural pressure.

By using Foucault's lens of critical analysis, starting with his premise that power exists only in relations, we can review all the above in a new light. At the end we may be able to concede to the simple fact that the *va* concept is core to Samoa's power relations (Tui Atua, 2018). Indeed, all its cultural practices and institutional structures embody sets of power relations that are embedded in the system (Clegg, 1989). It can be argued that this space is where political power is concentrated, recreated, negotiated, and redistributed daily. As evident in the above discussion, the power of a system lies in the unconscious acceptance of values, traditions, cultures and structures of an institution or society (Bourdieu, 1986; Hardy, 2001). As Hardy put it, 'it emphasises the discursive aspects of power – how actors are locked into positions by way of the linguistic practices available to them to make sense of a situation' (ibid., 2001, p. 10958).

Important power struggles are not those about the allocation of material resources or decision-making capabilities, but those that form around the ability to 'frame discursive and nondiscursive practices within a system of meaning that is commensurate with that individual's or group's own interests' (Deetz and Mumby 1990, p. 32). Further, knowledge and meaning impinge on the identity of *all* individuals as they participate in the production of organizational life (Hardy, 2001, p. 10959).

Hardy described this form of power as an 'inherent aspect of organisational life, reproduced by day-to-day communicative practices.'

Organizational reality is characterized less by the domination of one group over another, but by complex discursive practices that 'define what it means to be an organizational member and allow for the privileging of managerial interests over others (Deetz and Mumby 1990, pp. 32, 39) (Hardy, 2001, p. 10959).

Following Foucault's line of argument, the *va* as maintained by *mana*, *tapu* and *tua'oi*, has provided the ideological underpinnings for the Samoan society to frame discursive and nondiscursive practices that make sense for them (ibid.). Power is viewed then in terms of a collective identity, a network of power relations in which everyone plays a part. Given the assumption that power is diffuse, the relationship between *pule* and *tautua* then is symbiotic, a socio-political obligation, affirmed by the morals and values of kinship, upheld and sanctioned by the system's own truths. Such power is hard to escape from (Hardy, ibid.). And because legitimation of power relations is hinged on a very powerful ideology (known to a group as a way of living), there is little room for critical reflection. Which answers the question of why *va* tending is always maintained,

first, it is considered a moral obligation because family is involved; secondly, because the outcome is mainly productive as it draws a community together (Hardy, *ibid.*). So just by the very nature of its relationship arrangement, there is much room too for abuse. There are those who continue to support the traditional way for its strong cultural appeal and materialistic advantages; others who look at *va* tending for its contemporary ethics only, in terms of simple, affordable, sustainable relationships, may go for the latter or another form of compromise. In the final analysis, the latter is hardly an option. Many villages leadership still strongly favour the traditional way for reasons as stated already.

As an intellectual abstraction and a meeting point of minds, *teu le va*, is a continuum in which Samoans will continue to relate to their culture; those with more freedom can choose the type of relation, others may not be due to real constraints such as living within a cultural space literally, where conformism is the norm. Such a continuum can be applied as an assessment of the degree of commitment, or the ideal way they would like to see it expressed in practice. Should we do it the traditional way or the *palagi* way and still call it *fa'aSamoa*? (Suaalii-Sauni, 2007: Tiatia, 1989). Suffice to say, that *va* tending had begun with good intent, as one participant surmised, particularly at a time when the means to doing so were very modest by today's estimation; now that many have access to money, so as the penchant for flaunting, which consequences are devaluing a good principle³⁹ and impoverished a good number of the populace – both local and families overseas.

5.4 Fa'ataualofa

The principle of *faataualofa* is at the heart of Samoa's *va* tending social practice. While *teu le va* is about creating cultural awareness, *faataualofa* is the moral ethos. Premised on the value of love, or the ethic of reciprocating a kind act, it is the pulse of the culture in word and action. To trade kindness for kindness is a universal moral guide to good living which Samoa has internalized and institutionalized through its matai system and *faaSamoa*. Contributing to a neighbour's *faalavelave* therefore has become a rational response for the fact that they came to my own previously. Noted earlier, when done with moderation, it is an empowering principle. Its abuse today in the name of the

³⁹ The principle of *faataualofa*.

culture and even human generosity itself, is regretful.⁴⁰ This is due to a number of reasons. First, the giver complained because he thought that he was not reciprocated adequately on the basis of what he gave. Secondly, the giver may be pressured to loan money so he can reciprocate the receiver equally or even more, who has come to his/her aid previously. Thirdly, the giver may lose face due to not reciprocating the receiver well enough. In most cases, flaunting wealth by either party is always to do with family prestige and reputation. The concern is that given its technical familiarity it has lost its moral appeal. It puts the vulnerable to all sorts of pressure, particularly in a culture where symbolic capital (prestige, reputation, family honour) are considered more valuable. *Fa'ataualofa* is considered a social capital, and along with Samoa's wealth of cultural capital they reinforce the symbolic control of power on families. Thus, upholding family honour usually comes at a cost.

5.5 Tua'oi

The word *tua'oi* is equated with English boundary basically. As a concept *tua'oi* is a discursive construct linguistically and culturally (Tui Atua, 2018; a prepositional phrase, *tua-atu-o-i* (beyond this point) that implies both the specific and the allusive. The allusive incorporates the significance of relations (*va*) in *fa'aSamoa*. Relationships are governed by *tapu* of boundaries. Relational space thus implies the respect and deference accorded to each in maintaining a reciprocal relationship of spaces and boundaries. Like the concept of *va* (space), *tua'oi* (boundary) is more than just a line in the ground; they are reference to a network of dynamic human relationships (Tui Atua, *ibid.*). The boundaries (*tua'oi*) are multi-layered and can operate simultaneously (*ibid.*). Symbolically they are respected as much as they are in practice, not just for sake of human *va* tending but the belief that power relations involve the whole of the cosmos. A breach of the *tua'oi* will deserve punishment; such is required in order to restore *mana* and cosmic balance (*ibid.*).

Most societies have incorporated the modern state with own set of boundaries; the most notable is that between itself and the church. Samoa has managed to incorporate the state through an ideological immersion. Thus, state *tua'oi* is a merge of the culture and elements of other systems. Contemporary politics has expanded the state territory

⁴⁰ Raising awareness among the young Samoans about such abuse is a collective responsibility. An academic debate entitled *Ua leaga le aganu'u a Samoa i le tele o le fia fai mea* ~ The Samoan culture is spoilt because of greed; highlighted the concern of a number of New Zealand Samoan educators about the problem.

beyond the mere physical boundaries to overlap with other aspects such as environmental concerns, local politics (Hayward, 2012) and church authority also (Nieuwenhuis, 2012).

This has posed a series of dilemmas sometimes as of who defines the functions, demarcations, and even policing of the boundaries. This may not be easy to determine in some situations and unfamiliar spaces (*ibid.*). As implied earlier, the boundary may be real or ideological as in Samoa's situation. The *tua'oi* of land is governed by *tapu* of culture hence the view that Samoa's state institution of the Land and Titles was an encroachment on those *tapu*. Of particular interest is the demarcation of such boundary between state and church; wherein mutual interests in civil politics are shared (*ibid.*). For example, the row between the government and the EFKS on the pastors' tax is a case in point, when one party decides to redefine the boundary by itself. What was once imagined and *tapu* by society (symbolic) has become real once defined by law.

5.6 Pule

The term *pule* is not unique to the Samoan vocabulary. It has shared nuances with the Tongan. Pratt, the most noted lexicographer of the Samoan language, who started working in his dictionary in the 1850s, equates *pule* with the English authority, order, command; a synonym *aiā* is defined as 'to have authority over'. Another century on, another Samoan lexicographer, George Milner, who worked in Samoa in the mid-1950s confirmed. The English synonyms 'authority', 'power' and 'governance' were equivalents of the Samoan *pule*. Milner made eight entries in reference to its noun usage. These are related mostly in terms of its application and general understanding (*pule* as a modern corporate manager or a traditional village chief and exercise of one's influence over the others under his chain of command). Such understanding relates to the moral, mental and physical capacity, or ability of a person to exercise power or deal with it in a particular situation or context. *Pule* when exercised fairly and mildly, it is then perceived from a moral stance of wisdom, clemency, fair judgement, good governance.

The word *pule* can be traced back to its Proto-Malayo-Polynesian origin (Kirch & Green, 2001). Little is known of its initial formation. The four languages: Tongan, Tokelauan, Tuvaluan and Samoan share the same meaning of authority, of which close proximity linguistically, ethnically and geographically would attest to such historical

uniformity, compared with Maori and/or Hawaiian understanding, the two being the most isolated posts of the Polynesian triangle. The argument is this close identification with the socio-political authority wouldn't have been simpler and more clear-cut during the precontact period (ibid.). Authority rests with the leadership of which the *ariki* institution was part of virtually all Polynesian societies (Rigo, 2016). While authority is shared among the rank and file, it is the chief (*alii, ariki, eiki, aiki, akariki, aliki*) whose special powers set him apart from the rest (*tapu*). He has *mana* through which he controls his subjects and environment (Tominiko, 2014). His authority is considered sacred due to the nature of his claim to leadership or that which the followers had preconceived by means of group ideology. With the acceptance of Protestant Christianity, a new order was realized in terms of own forms of interpretive paradigms. From then on, the source of power and legitimacy is derived no longer from indigenous gods or nature but has shifted to one universal god, the Christian God (Kamu, 1989).

With the rise of the modern state, Samoa being the first Pacific country to regain independence, legitimate *pule* has, by the people's consensus been reconceptualized to align more with the democratic state authority (Meleisea, 1987). The state is the modern *ariki* and agent of legitimate power, enabled by the new institutions of democracy and Christianity. *Pule* then has refashioned itself like a modern man. A man of two worlds. While adhering to the rule of law in the Weberian sense, he is as much a traditional man as charismatic all at once. His power base is the village polity, wherein temporal power is still defined, recreated, and maintained (Vaai, 1999). So, while the state wields its *pule* at national level, real *pule* is still in the hands of the *faamatai*, in the village leaders where its impact is keenly felt or anticipated.

5.7 A new power configuration

The fact that churches have chosen the village as their bases for mission has resulted in a new configuration of *pule* which share the same space (Samuelu, 1999, Tuiai, 2012). Ecclesiastical authority is autonomous in villages, their officers operate independently under their national church constitutions. Each church denomination exercises own *pule* in tandem with the village authority freely. Harmonious co-existence of the two *pule* is the goal. As mentioned earlier, village leaders are themselves part of the church leadership and such goal is hardly an effort for villages having one or a couple

of churches. For other villages who may have as many as five or six churches co-existing, such dynamics are sustained through the power of human relations and *tapu* of the culture. A lot depends on the quality of leadership and personalities too.

The church's own *pule* is founded on a religious ideology (Foucault, 1982). For the Samoan Protestants, God is the source of all *pule* including secular, and the pastor is the messenger/ speaker. The office of the village pastor has become prominent due to the hold of such religious beliefs on the believers (Taule'ale'ausumai, 2019). The institutional church through its denominations has become a national 'village' council in its own right, with own power hierarchy and systems of governance. As organisations of structures and functions they are a fusion of democracy, modernity and *faaSamoa* (Ioka, 1998; Liuaana, 2002). Samoa's constitution acknowledged God as the foundation of its establishment. In theory, both church and state exercise *pule* on the strength of three pillars: religion, Samoa's indigenous institutions, and liberal democracy. Traditional *pule* bears the indulgences of the past in terms of its ideological underpinnings (Meleisea, 1987). To have *pule* implies the essence of *mana*, a supernatural endowment in terms of special virtues or leadership clout, and protection of *tapu* (sacred sanction). Ecclesiastical *pule* on the other hand draws its *mana* and *pule* also from tradition, plus a superior source, God.

While church *pule* is limited to each one's own religious jurisdiction, the state goes further, by asserting authority on behalf of all citizens irrespective of the people's religious affiliations.

5.8 Soalaupule

The traditional European view of power as an exercise in authority has been a sticking point in the relationship between the Samoan subjects and their colonial masters (Meleisea, 1987; So'o, 2008). The latter, who hailed from a background of historical feudalism and monarchical tradition, wherein vertical power structure was the rule, found Samoa's own approach quite a different proposition (Meleisea, *ibid.*). This approach favours consensus, matai style, arguably a style of political decision making that is unique to Samoa. It has been the mainstay of their politics for many generations. The clash therefore between two worldviews was obvious. Research agreed that both the German and New Zealand administrations had failed for the fact that they really

misunderstood the way power relations worked for their Samoan subjects (ibid.). It comes to this concept, *soalaupule*. It is a principle of power dealing based on mutual consensus among its stakeholders. Samoa's ontology of power and leadership viewed these concepts holistically; a collective undertaking, a process of mutual interests, an egalitarian exercise in decision making that defers to the goodwill of all parties involved (So'o, 2008; Tcherkezoff, 2000).

In contrast to democracy, it is not a rule of the majority. This is better understood in the way politics is played out at the grassroots level, or the village polity. A typical village council is made up of two major ruling cohorts, *tamalii* ceremonial chiefs (consisting of titular *tapa'au*, *aiga* and lesser ranking cohort) and orators (consisting of titular *tulafale* and entourage of lesser ranking cohort). Tradition has apportioned roles by which the latter group does the practical side of politics on behalf of the *tamalii* group. Members of the orators' group will deliberate and negotiate on a matter until everyone agrees. The orators' consensus is called *moe* (sleep) or *faautaga* (discretion); the titular chiefs' collective resolution is called *tofa* (polite term for sleep). The reference to the human activity of sleep alludes to the discerning power of the mind to reflect and make connections, the Samoans believe, with their past ancestors and prior experiences (Tui Atua, 2018).

Upon reaching a consensus, their senior spokesperson will request the mutual endorsement of the *tamalii* group. A member of the titular group will respond on their behalf in support or else beg to differ by offering some advice for a review of a decision. Supported, the process ends, reviewed it means postponement until another day. It is not uncommon the practice of deferring a matter, particularly a difficult issue, for further deliberation in the next meeting. This is called *moe le toa*. Let the rooster sleep on it. Like the rooster, once replenished in the process of sleep, a matai will come out fresh for the next day's round. In other terms, *soalaupule* is about power dealing in partnership, which procedure by Western standards can be strenuous and time consuming, its advantages though outweigh the disadvantages for small communities. The psychological impact on members and political environment is hugely empowering, doing so without the divisive and restrictive nature of democracy's majority ruling. Inclusiveness is considered its most appealing feature in group decision-making.

5.9 Malo

Malo is the Samoan equivalent of both government and state. It is a noun, a verb, and an exclamation; as a noun it has multiple meanings. The Pratt dictionary definition, ‘a conquering party’ alludes to a political context of one-party usurping power by defeating the other party in war. Malo is victory, victorious and refers to guests too. The word *manumalo* (manu le malo) is a conjoint of *manu* (to herald) and *malo* (government). Governors and victors are synonymous. The popular exclamation *Malo! Congratulations!* connotes a political salute. *Ua o mai malo! The guests are coming!* is a call of welcome and hospitality. To salute the guests can only be interpreted as a subtle propaganda on behalf of the rulers; a political normalization of power legitimacy as a daily ritual. The victors are welcomed the losers are jeered at and shamed. They are called the weaker side (*itu vaivai*) as opposed to the stronger side that is the government (*itu malo*). Turner’s (1884) interpretation was strictly in terms of political organisation which is the matai system (*pule a alii ma faipule*). The village polity was the place of government activity, the parliament of the people.

Other conjoint terms pertaining to are: *maumalo* – the government is established; *faumalo* - to vie for power; *faimalo* – to join the government; *tautua malo* – in service of the government. Samoan folklore referred to a number of its principal chiefs who strived to establish own governments. There were those who used force (*faumalo*); some who sought the help of higher powers through peaceful means (*su'emalo*). Others were drawn into for sake of higher principles (*laga le to'ilalo*). The renowned stories of the brothers Tuna and Fata, and the war-goddess, Nafanua, fit the third criteria.

The idea of establishing governments is both practical and symbolic basically. It was for security purposes but mainly a political statement of power. The Salamasina monarchy, due to strong claims of the *tafa'ifa* holder to royal lineage, was consensual and therefore mainly symbolic. Behind the symbolism though were power politics of ambitious elite groups of powerbrokers at play apparently (Tui Atua, 1995; So'o, 2008; Kramer, 1994). Other governments such as Funefe'ai, Tamafaiga and Nofoaefafa's were constituted and driven by individual ambition and violent tendencies (Tui Atua, 2017). None lasted for long which proved a point that Samoa cannot tolerate despotic rulership (Turner, 1884). Those who were politically astute like Vainuupo knew how to go with the flow of Samoan politics where foes were family too (ibid.). But even the most ambitious weren't

able to establish a centralized government in the framework of a dictatorship would last. Even the efforts of colonial governments to promote a new kind of kingship under various titles (*tupu, sui tupu, alii sili, tamaaiga*) ended in failure (Meleisea, 1987, 1987a). By contrast, Tuna, Fata and Ulumasui were motivated by patriotism as much as love of family.

The same with Nafanua. She too was motivated to intervene for sake of family; but as a god, it was a matter of principle.⁴¹ Nafanua, the story about a warrior goddess, born a blood clot who became a saviour of her people and others, even renowned as an oracle, is legendary. The myths built around the figure have been perpetuated by the culture. The most notable was an encounter she had with a Malietoa who sought a mandate to form government; but he came late; instead, he was told to wait for the heavens to deliver in its own opportune time. When the Christian missionaries arrived, this was interpreted along the line of Nafanua's premonition. The mandate for government being awaited was then narrated as peaceful as it was originally conceived by the goddess (Meleisea, 1987a). The name of the ship that brought the messengers ashore aptly fit the narrative.

While Nafanua usurped power coercively, it was out of love and loyalty to kins in trouble (Kramer, 1994). More importantly hers was a response to the call to restore *mana*, to re-establish the balance of power. It was no less than a divine intervention.⁴² To prove, Nafanua seized power temporarily for sake of peace, then surrendered it over to the people once her mission was accomplished. Her legacy would have a lasting influence on the Samoan psyche, due to its emancipatory appeal in the history of a people. The ascendancy of the Fe'epo line, or the Tonumaie'a for that matter began at that point in history (Tui Atua, 2017). The message, if not the narrative, was further reinforced with those of the missionaries and own redemptive narrative in Christ's sacrifice, the likes of Moses and the Esthers of the Bible.

⁴¹ In a discussion (faafaletui) with Participant 5, we arrived at a consensus that Nafanua's intervention in Samoan history was unique; the fact that she left Pulotu in order to attend to her people's plight was heaven's will. As a goddess, she has the mandate to rectify the imbalance of relations and set it right again. The fact that she surrendered the papa over to Levalasi (Salamasina) was a symbolic gesture of goodwill, a way of bonding the country closer through the lineage. Even part of the narrative which pointed to the ascendancy of the Lotu, makes sense to many, given the fact that she was in essence a goddess, a heavenly missioner. Even the war effort was done with all due discretion, there were tapu of boundaries to be heeded; one of her weapons was named, to strike with courtesy. No one can do such unless they be divine.

⁴² Personal communications with an elder matai, the late Auimatagi K; and elder pastor, Tumama Vili, in private faafaletui with the writer.

On its own, the *malo* narrative is interesting for Samoa from the perspective of cultural hegemony or the dominant ideologies involved. It is important that research on Samoa's power relations take due consideration of the ideological factor. For instance, the role of the missionaries in the fusion of an indigenous narrative with the ascent of the church as a new reckoning force (Tui Atua, 2018). Even so the environment was the impetus. For instance, the stark parallels of the Christian narrative with the indigenous own was a crucial coincidence. In addition to, the missionaries were able facilitators from a position of power. Soon the Christian message was appropriated and later became an extension of Samoa's modern *malo* narrative. The search for spiritual freedom also became the rallying call to be set free from the bondage of colonialism.

Samoa's own struggle against foreign domination was all part of the 'in search of freedom' narrative to which the legacies of Tuna, Fata, Ulumasui, Nafanua, the Matuna couple and Ta'i'i all belong; not because of the missionaries' intervention but purely on the strength of the principle upon which they acted. Thus, it can be argued that Samoa's old *malo* narrative was strongly partial to the *faumalo* principle. Folklore attested that this has been achieved by symbolic and coercive means. Rather, Samoa's quest to regain freedom now and then was directly related to the third criteria, *laga le to'ilalo*, or to restore lost *mana*. The rupture in relations became the motive to regain the balance which led to these random acts of individuals or even the intervention of supernatural powers themselves.

Hence Samoa's idea of government from the start was all-embracing; it was never meant to be an imperialistic intent at all (*malo*) but a consensual arrangement at the village-district level, through appointments (*tofiga*); a free federation of local governments in partnership (*pulega*) guided by the principle of *soalaupule*. It was *faumalo* that vied for total domination. While the true saviours of Samoa were applauded somehow, they have proved their true worth by surrendering power over to the people (Lukes, 1974; Dauvergne, 1998). In sum, freedom should not be equated with centralized government.

5.10 Mana

Like *pule* the concept of *mana* cannot be pinned down to a singular equivalent in English or described in a sentence or two. This study will not pretend to know everything apart from its ideological association with the Samoan culture. To begin with, *mana* belongs to all the Pacific, as much as *moana* (sea) that envelops Oceania and continues to nourish its indigenous beliefs (Blust, 2009); an elemental foundation of its peoples' worldviews, a spiritual quality with a supernatural origin, a sacred, impersonal force (ibid.) Blust (2007) argued that *mana* implies an association of meanings pertaining to human power, influence, prestige, authority, demeanour, efficacy. The ability to lead or command, to perform a task in a given situation; the aura that surrounds such a competent performer are outward manifestations of *mana* (ibid.). The quality of *mana* is not limited to humans; animals, places, inanimate objects may also possess *mana*, and accorded respect as much as ideologies attached to (Stair, 1897).

Mana is a noun and a verb according to Pratt (1897). As a verb it means to exert supernatural power. To breathe or to speak to somebody is the way to impart *mana* or empowering that person in such a way. Empowering by means of a blessing or a curse to disempower are both done in the medium of the spoken word. The power of the word brings life or death to people in traditional Pacific-Polynesian beliefs (Turner, 1884). The derivative *mananū* (*mana nu*) describes the surge of power in the spoken word as akin to a human murmur. The reduplication *Manamana* appeals to the forbidding power of the word; its other meaning is to bear constantly in mind; which links to the faculty of the memory. Hence *manamana i loto* means to cherish in the memory (ibid.); or be empowered with *mana* by means of retaining words in the memory, alludes to a close association of *mana* with the spoken word in Samoan beliefs (Tui Atua, 2018).

A derivation, *Manatu* (*mana atu*) is a verb which meaning is to recall; its reduplicated form *manatunatu*, means to think deeply about something or someone by recall; a telepathic form of reaching out. It also means to ponder seriously in the power of the memory as inclusive of *mauli* (inner person of soul and spirit). The Maori describes *mana* as an extraordinary power that comes from *te kore*, beyond the natural world. *Mauri ora*, the breath of life that animates and binds all things (Royal, 2007). Differences can still be identified today among the Pacific cultures on its various and subtle interpretations. The Samoans have long identified 'mana' with both the unexplained

power of nature and human. Anything supernatural or superhuman therefore has *mana*—good or bad. Such *mana* (quality, energy, power, force) has a dualistic appeal in that it is derived from the forbears whose *aitu* are still with us, implying therefore such unbroken link with the past ancestral gods (Tui Atua, 2001).

With the accession of Christianity *mana* is now widely accepted to be sourced directly from the Christian God. In the translation of the Bible in Samoan, the word *mana* was equated with *pule*; reserved specifically for God and his power or the manifestation of such power both outwardly and inwardly. Only God has *mana*; he alone can impart *mana*; human has none unless given to him/her from above; as the founder of Christianity related to Pilate, a symbol of secular authority (John 19.11). The missionaries successfully supplanted and recontextualised such idea by means of the language, both written and spoken, that found its way in the public narrative (ibid). The idea that *mana* is an inborn quality or an integral part of our pre-Christian divine heritage, as understood by the Maori culture, and Hawaiian to some extent, is a matter of contention (Rigo, 2016). For instance, together with *tapu* concept its application in certain quarters of old Polynesia could be as different as it were from others even now. While *mana* is reserved by the Maori for its earthly manifestations particularly in humans, the Samoans have given this to God, the source of all power.

Today it can be argued that the Samoan Christian church holds the monopoly on its use and interpretation. The pastor, in his capacity as head of church and a member of the village community has become the spiritual head of the polity (Ioka, 1996). Presumably, he has *mana* imbued from below and above in his role as God's spokesperson (*tulafale*) and intermediary for the people. In the old days, it was the matai (orator) who blessed a new title holder, now it is surrendered over to the village pastor. The allusion is obvious. For an average Christian devout believer, it is no mere assumption of a belief; *mana* as the work of God in the personal and spiritual dimensions is as real as anything in life, as some participants of this research were happy to testify to. Otherwise, the matai cohort, whose strong presence in the church hierarchy enabled their right of access to the '*mana*' by being active members of their church communities, hence legitimizing their claim to this godly power. Notwithstanding, the older generation still holds onto old beliefs in the supernatural *mana* of the spoken word through their elders, in a form of a blessing or a farewell testament or even a curse to befall on a person or group (Turner, 1884).

5.11 Tapu

Tapu is a common term among the Pacific languages in their various socio-political contexts (Mills, 2016). The English word taboo was adopted from this Pacific conception of setting something aside as sacred or prohibited as to be left alone. Tui Atua (2007, 2018) refers to *tapu* as a sacred essence that underpins man's relations with all things, with the gods, the cosmos, environment, other men and self. The verb form *tapui* means to sanction by means of prohibiting access to something as opposed to the ordinariness of acquiring things in everyday human transactions. The term *va tapuia* means space that is claimed as sacred and must be treated as such. There is a sense of reverence and cautiousness when treating things that are set apart as sacred or forbidden. Such an attitude is meant to govern every aspect of human relation to human, to God, spirits, other animals, the natural environment in all their diversity and complexity. The basic supposition is, all relations are *tapu*, at both their macro and micro levels and dimensions.

Tagaloa the creator, for who he is in essence and capacity is *tapu*; which sets him apart as well as define his relationship with his creation (Tui Atua, 2018). So is human, a man is *tapu* for who and what he has become. His body is *tapu*, his family, his belongings, his status in society, his titles, food, animals for example. The higher the status the more reserved the *tapu* pertaining to. For example, a paramount title is reserved for only one title holder as opposed to a lesser title which can be shared. More importantly, his relationships are defined in the same way. As said earlier, reference to a relational space between two people is *tapu* to both persons. The sacred space (*va tapuia*) implies a sense of caring and maintaining such a relationship by own code of ethics and etiquette. Tending to the *va* (relational space) is a moral obligation that directs each and every relation according to custom. The relationship between man and God is *tapu*, so as man with woman, matai and *tautua*, human and nature, human and animal, and so forth.

Mills (2016) in his study of *tapu* in pre-Christian Tonga proposed three different senses of the term as sanction in Tongan history. These are: episodic *tapu*, relational *tapu*, and regulatory *tapu*. The first refers to a potentially fatal episode such as sickness or untimely death due to violation of a *tapu*, reserved especially for a chief or a senior. The second refers to a prohibitive nature of sacredness which prescribes boundaries between all types of relations. Any violation may lead to episodic *tapu* consequences. For example,

Samoan *tapu* that governs the sister-brother relationship shares similar features with Tongan's own. The sister is called *feagaiga* (the covenant of a brother) deferred to by the brother as well as protected. The third sense refers to prohibition (*tapu*) imposed on specific food resources or activities. It is the role of authority to impose *tapu* for political, economic, or religious reasons. *Tapu* needs to be lifted or the victim may die (Turner, 1884).

There is a political, economic and even psychological sense in the link between food and stomach (*manava*). Thus, *tapu* from a chiefly perspective gives stress on this particular part of the human body. Touching food that is prohibited is akin to touching the head of a chief which consequence is episodic (Mills, 2016). Research lay emphasis on the role of the *manava* as a system regulated by *tapu* in both its disciplinary and emancipatory roles (ibid.). There is an interconnection of the bodily systems – the digestive (*manava*) and the reproductive (*fuāmanava*), more so the role of *manava* in human procreation and nurturing. All of these allude to the sanctity of human life even if higher *tapu* relating to are politically motivated or partial to the leadership (elite). For example, *tapu* reserved for *taupou* or the village maiden (Tcherkezoff, 2004).⁴³ From the above, it is evident that the employment of *tapu* as ideological tools for political control has long existed in pre-European Pacific. First, the idea of a leader as *tapu* is very much ingrained in the Polynesian-Pacific psyche. The human genealogy is traced back to the chief progenitor, Tagaloa, thus legitimizing a person's claim to a higher relationship. A leader is declared *tapu* (sacred, dignified) on the basis of such higher claim or simply *tapu* as the basis of all human relations (Mills, 2016). Foucault talked about how power controls the human body through a highly structured regulatory regime (1988).

Secondly, the way *tapu* has evolved conceptually and practically down human history has often been to support a status quo in power relations (Mills, 2016; Rigo, 2016). Such status quo usually favours the ruling regime. Today *tapu* still connotes traditional religious significance of the past while catering to secular tendencies of the present (ibid.). Whereas the human body and relations were *tapu* in their time and space, they have been subjects of the power system ever since, a pivotal focus of interest, reviewed

⁴³The *taupou* or the village maiden, is sanctioned by *tapu*, meaning that she keeps herself chaste for her first marriage. The politics of such disciplinary regime are described in the literature. For instance, the *taupou* figure was central in the maintenance of Samoa's old power relations. To give in marriage is only for political-purposes, to form alliances, boost social prestige, etc. (Tcherkezoff, 2004).

to suit the needs of successive authorities (Foucault, 2008). If the body then was regulated for political and economic goals then food and sex were the means to achieving those ends. The human body is the object of modern state preoccupation (ibid.). For instance, such *tapu* system is now reconstituted through state legislation or any such regulatory control. And in these activities the dual role of *tapu* is realized; first by declaring something as sacred or using the modern term legitimization; second, through prohibition or control (Foucault, 1992). Thus, it is interesting to note that when Foucault talked about the phenomenon of biopolitics or its dual role; that is to conserve life as well as discipline life for sake of political control, the Pacific peoples have been practising these for generations long beforehand.

5.12 The Fa'amatai

The word power in the Pacific literature has always been nuanced and complicated (Rumsey (2016); it is even so in the Samoan concept of *pule faamatai* (matai authority system), the basis of Samoa's political authority for many generations. For instance, to understand *pule* means to be informed of its functions in Samoa's cosmological beliefs and social systems, most importantly the intricate nature of the relationships and manner by which they operate harmoniously (Turner, 1884; Tui Atua, 2018). Such complexity can only be deduced using the tools of historical analysis. Relations of power implies context. In the case of the Samoan society, it is *faaSamoa*. The concept embraces an all-encompassing system of social functions and relations which political framework and organisation is *faamatai* (Le Tagaloa, 1992; Tofaeono, 1998).

Fa'amatai refers to a system of chiefly rule which has been upheld by the constitution and perpetuated through legislation and machinery of modern government (Va'ai, 1999). Chiefly rule in contemporary Polynesia evolved from the *ariki* institution that most society members nurtured and fashioned as they liked; Samoa for one developed its own system under a new name, matai (Tcherkezoff, 2000). The word *matai* is derived from the verb '*mata*' (eye) meaning to behold so as to emulate (*mata i ai*). Hence this new chief is a subject for emulation, a role model that is relatable, not the old *ariki* which is shrouded in mystery and strange aura, a supernatural object detached from the ordinary. Tcherkezoff (2000), argued that this new institution was a breakaway from the old one-dimensional notion of *ariki* to a more egalitarian type of political organisation.

Two sub-groups were identified; first, *tamalii*, *alii* for short (ceremonial chiefs), comprising titular chiefs, also called sacred chiefs (*alii pa'ia*)⁴⁴ and subordinates (*aiga*, *usoalii*). The second sub-group, *tulafale* (orators or talking chiefs) whose ranks depend on their titles or positions in the hierarchy. Tradition usually identifies political will and authority collectively with both sub-groups (*pule a alii ma faipule*); though it is the *tulafale* cohort who wields more administrative power in terms of making decisions and taking care of the daily affairs of a village. This subgroup also was reserved the speech-making functions on behalf of the *alii* subgroup and village as a unit. But as a collective body both subgroups complement each other in terms of vested power interests as leaders of the village polity (Meleisea, 1987; So'o, 2008, Va'ai, 1999).

As a political system *faamatai* is highly organised in terms of roles, division of work, discourse, and supporting ideology. Authority rests in the hands of the matai under three forums: 1. family meeting 2. village fono 3. the country's legislative chamber. First, the family or *aiga*. Members are made up of a lineage with a common progenitor. Politically it is always a collective; as a unit it consists of a principal matai (*matai sa'o*) and a number of *matai* who holds subordinate roles. They are called *matai tautua* because their role is to provide the principal matai with the moral and cultural support that he or she needs. Then there is the untitled group of young men (*taulele'a*) whose main role is to serve the matai or the family on the matais' behalf; they are supported by another group consisting mostly of young unmarried women of the family who attends to the catering needs of elders or guests inside the house. Together with older kins of both genders who are not matai, they all contribute.

Family meetings are called by the principal matai particularly on matters of best interests to the family. This involves titles, lands and disciplinary issues affecting family reputation, among other things. Every matai has a say in his own time according to rank-and-file procedures of matai protocols. Decisions are usually by consensus though the influence of the principal matai may be evident at times or most of the time. In the village fono (matai council), it is the principal matai who speaks on behalf of the *aiga potopoto* (the extended family); his/her senior subordinates lend their support.

⁴⁴ Also called *alii sili*, *alii ta'i*, *tapa'au*, *suafa*, *tumutumu*.

Matai influence at district level could not be stronger politically. As mentioned earlier many Samoan villages fall into clusters of much larger political units bound through traditional allegiance to a royal line or else aligned by common purposes; they are called *aiga o Samoa* (families of Samoa). Such influential relations are called upon by leaders of political parties for their own political ends now and then (So'o, 2008, Meleisea, 1987). Such a privilege is extended at the national level in the selection of the members of parliament. One of the criteria for entry to parliament is to be identified as a *matai*. Parliament therefore is an assembly of matai. They speak in the best interests of the *fa'amatai*, they perpetuate the *pule-tautua* ideology that underpins the *fa'amatai*. All of these reinforce power relations from top down with regards to the modern state system as well as bottom up with regards to the grassroots ideology that supports *fa'amatai*.

5.13 Matai ideology: an ethnohistorical overview

To understand the relationships of political power in the Samoan context, one needs to look closely into the ideological ethos behind the *fa'amatai*, or the *pule-tautua* principle (Tominiko, 2014). As defined earlier, *pule* stands for authority and power that is embodied in the person of a matai whose power base is found at all three levels of popular political organisation/activities—family meeting, village fono, national assembly. Old Samoan cosmology is pantheistic and supports the belief in the divinity of human and sanctity of its leaders (ibid.). Tagaloa the supreme god and progenitor of life is also human; both earth and sky are his dominion; thus, his sphere of influence on human affairs is personal and far-reaching. While the gods in heaven rule over the spiritual realm (*atua o le lagi*), matai are gods and rulers of the earthly realm (*atua o le lalolagi*) (Tcherkezoff, 1991). The gods are personified in the leadership, in the first ancestral matai, the first title bearer whose authority rests on such divine designation. This idea of ancestors as gods; their names (titles) and power perpetuated through their offspring from one generation to another, has endured (Turner, 1884; Tui Atua, 2018).

As mentioned earlier, Samoa underwent own paradigm shift. Tcherkezoff (1991) contended that the matai institution appeared later, probably around the 1850s. This shift may have been attributed to historical circumstances, a case that can be argued from the viewpoint of the influence of the new religion at this particular point in Samoa's history. It was at this point that the focus of attention was on the missionaries of the new religion, centred on a momentous event, the translation of the Bible in Samoan. Assuming the

word *Alii* was adopted for Lord (God), that would need a new substitute for earthly lords. Hence matai (leader) was born. The substitute relegated all temporal authorities to a common noun, irrespective of statuses, occupations and ranks. Hence *matai alii* (titular chief) and *matai tufuga* (master craftsman) are equated in terms of a general salutation the same with *matai tulafale* (orator). The new leader is promoted as a good role model in the new order. All are equals in the new order (ibid.).

The *faamatai*'s basic principle: *O le ala i le pule o le tautua* ~ The way to authority is through service, supports the Calvinist work ethic for its persistence on the values of hard work (Tuiai, 2012; Garrett, 1982). Such work ethic was part of the missionaries' narrative; a concept in theology, sociology, economics and history that put stress on hard work, discipline and frugality as evidence of a person's subscription to the values espoused by the Protestant faith (Garrett, 1982; Lovett, 1899). While the Calvinist work ethic supports Capitalism and individualism, the values that it espoused do complement Samoa's concept of *pule-tautua* for its end results (Tuiai, 2012). Hard work deserves a reward.

The fusion between the old and the new—the mortal *matai* professed by the new religion and the divine *alii* of pre-contact Samoa still promoted in matai propaganda, is hardly an issue of contention. Since the ascendancy of the Bible the printed word has prevailed in terms of supplanting the 'old word' that once stood to represent old tradition including Tagaloa religion (ibid.). In favour of the new is understood in the fact that today's church is another stronghold of matai leadership, anything that promotes their interests is worth defending. For example, Pauline theology is highly favoured. A strand of Calvinistic 'predestination' theology is another; an appeal to a divine call like the Jewish Prophet Jeremiah's own while still in his mother's womb; a predisposition upheld by the leadership in terms of their election to high offices.

The Bible has become the single most powerful affirming truth for those in power to defend the legitimacy of their ascendancy to important roles. Hence ideology in a new morphing continues to be a powerful underpinning force for *fa'amatai* because it is embedded in the language. In the forms of wise sayings, encased in rhetorical speeches, public discourses, propaganda, the matai discourse, had over generations, become *tapu*, an integral part of the *fa'amatai* discourse.

5.14 Tautua

To bring this discussion into perspective, the meaning of *tautua* and its understanding in such regard has changed markedly over the past 50 years. This is due to a range of factors including transmigration, modern mobility, capitalism and the technological nature of serving (Anae, 2020; Va'a, 2001; Toleafoa, 2007; Tui Atua, 2001). While in the past the *pule-tautua* (also known as *matai-tautua*) paradigm denotes a unique sense of power relations that is empowering and egalitarian (Tcherzekoff, 2009), today this has served the interests of power politics, Capitalism and human greed (Toleafoa, 2007; Thornton et al., 2010, Tui Atua, 2014).

The sweeping changes in the systems, brought about by the dictates of globalisation and money on the relationship have contributed to this shift in a very dynamic way (ibid.). For example, the proliferation of matai titles across generations has undermined the original idea of *tautua tuavae*. His is an image of a subordinate who is present and close to the matai, as opposed to *tautua 'aitaumalele* or someone who does so from afar. Such *tautua* has become more popular with the Samoans migrating overseas. They continue to serve their matai through remittances and other means of services they send home. A *matai tautua* can do *tautua upu* (serve by word) for the principal matai by speaking/orating on the latter's behalf.

The Samoan *tautua* changes his/her status the day when he/she is conferred a matai title. This initiation to mataiship gives them the authority to become leaders of their families and to participate in the matai council. It allows them to enter parliament as representatives of their constituencies. Along with a good education and some expertise they can better their chances in the ladder of leadership, in government or civil society (Chan Mow, 2007; Fuata'i, 2007; Taleni, 2017). Today, service through achievements in education that brings honour to a title, enhances a family prestige, is rewarded. From an egalitarian stance, it needs to be noted that such a seemingly clear-cut demarcation between *pule* and *tautua* can be misunderstood at times. A matai can overemphasise his authority at times though the underlying notion is, *tautua* is the prerogative of both. The *pule* (matai) does his/her *tautua* through the role of leadership/ governance, so as the untitled *tautua* cohort who do the serving. As noted earlier the meaning of *tautua* has changed with the time, any manner of serving others will qualify. Thus anyone, from the matai to the untitled, can claim the title of *tautua*, as long as this is done on behalf of the

family, strangers, charity or wider society for that matter. In sum, a matai is the visible embodiment of leadership individually or collectively; the rest of the community represents the *tautua* under various pseudonyms.

A number of studies have delved into the intricacies of the concept from a wide range of perspectives (Tofaeono, 1998; Nofoa'iga, 2017; Tominiko, 2014, Tui Atua, 2018). Noted earlier, it has been appropriated by the church to suit own reading of the Bible's notion of service or discipleship. *Tautua lotu* has become an integral part of the main menu of the church discourse. Because God loved humankind, in return, serving God is the ultimate goal and purpose of living, hence service by means of tending to the needs of the church is deemed the most appropriate form of human response. The noblest offer of *tautua* is to become a messenger in God's name (*faifeau*) or a missionary (*misionare*) as it were during the early years of church development (Latai, 2016).

Of the latest studies that referenced *tautua* directly or indirectly, Nofoaiga (2017) offers a keener insight, using the lens of biblical 'Pacific' criticism. His proposal, *tautuailava* drew theological discernment and the insights of critical theory closer together. To serve in-between spaces signifies the essence of the space in which a *tautua* is practised, dually facilitated by the lenses of *faasinomaga* (right to serve as one who belongs) and *tautua-toa* (right to serve with confidence). His space is local and political (the faamatai hierarchical social system), as it is real as the economically impoverished Galilee of Matthew; his crowd may be the misrecognized of Bourdieu (1986), compliant of Foucault (1991) but they are real people in the space with names and cultural designations. Nofoa'iga (2017), Va'ai (2015) and Latu's (2017) are representative of a few studies from a theological perspective, whose rereading of biblical scriptures have placed the people in the centre of *tautua*, which implications for the Samoan church is obvious.

Latu resonates the church's own scholars' appeal for a reenvisioning of the *faifeau* institution, or the need to rediscover the model of service, epitomized in Jesus' own *tautua*, that is subsumed into the world of 'prestige, power and wealth' (Latu, 2017, p. 137). Exemplified in Jesus *tautua* this notion of serving is politically emancipatory as well as theologically grounded. The right to serve with confidence places the onus on Jesus' followers to challenge every manner of hypocrisy and falsehood, while also striving to better their lot and those of their less fortunate peers.

5.15 Aganu'u (fa'aSamoa)

The Samoan equivalent of the English common noun 'culture' is *aganuu* or *faaSamoa* to be concise. Like the other Samoan concepts discussed already it is highly nuanced. Suffice for the purpose of this study to articulate its meaning and general application. As such the term *aganuu* refers to a system of social behaviour and norms by which the Samoan people have organised themselves socially, politically, and economically. As a system it is encompassing and self-sustained, hence knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, and creativity arisen from all serve to define its identity (Tylor, 1871). For this study's purpose, the concept is understood from the stance of social constructivism, whereby knowledge appropriated continue to evolve and in which power is implicated (Foucault, 1997).

After generations of successive socialization and enculturation the Samoan *aganuu* is a diverse organism in its own right; a living culture that withstood the test of time. In practice *faaSamoa* thrives on its indigenous institutions and systems, the foremost of which is the *faamatai*. As well, its systems of human conduct are grounded on a set of core values that are meant to empower social relations and collective wellbeing. But like all living cultures, *faaSamoa* is not immune to change. Panikkar (1991) listed a number of ways in which cultural change can be brought about. This includes growth, development, reform, innovation, syncretism, modernization, indigenization, diffusion, evolution, transformation, to name a few. The Samoan culture would have experienced many of these changes one way or another. In total, it can be argued that the *faaSamoa* of today, due mainly to its transnational flow, has been promoting trans-culturation for a growing diasporic community of two Samoas, about 600,000 in total globally (Vaa, 2001; Anae, 2020). At the same time, globalization has impacted its local community hugely as this study also attested to. In sum, most of the challenges faced by today's *faaSamoa* constitute the dilemma of power relations even from its pre-colonial past, which a growing number of research, including this research also, continue to examine closely (Maliko, 2012; Tuisugaletaua, 2011).

5.16 Fa'asinomaga

In the traditional Samoan context, the term *faasinomaga* refers generally to a person's cultural inheritance. From the verb *faasino* (to point to, to direct towards), it has a plural meaning. First it alludes to a moral direction, a pointing out of the way. Second, it alludes to a fixed designation, a cultural affirmation of belonging and therefore a rightful claim to family and its capital. This leads to the third, that is, a sense of obligation to protecting family entitlements such as titles, genealogy, lands, and even people. This comprises reputation in terms of the cultural roles or specialized skills and trades that are passed on intergenerationally within a family line (Tui Atua, 2018). A person is directed to his/her cultural designation through socialization within the family unit, the village, and the wider society (Bourdieu, 1998).

In this process individual identity is nurtured and established. Through relationship tending group identities are nurtured and perpetuated. Thus, a person has multiple sub-identities, first through his/her family, in terms of the titles, the lands, professions; secondly, his/her village, thirdly, the district and finally the country as a whole. The Samoans are deeply conscious of the fact that everyone has a cultural inheritance, a fixed designation in society through various forms of capital appropriated on behalf of the family. To verify such a claim to designation, a matai must have land upon which to build his/her house and a land for crop cultivation. Which is why the land is crucial in Samoa's traditional power relations (See Tui Atua, 2018).

5.17 Fa'alupega

Last but just as important is the concept of *faalupega*. Meleisea (1987) defined it, 'a set of ceremonial greetings which are recited when the *fono* meets. It serves as a constitution and encapsulates, in a few phrases, the origin and rank of each constituent title of the *nuu* (village) and the order of the precedence and ranking in the *fono*. There are *faalupega* for individual titles, groups of titles (as in the case of orator groups), for the village polity, districts and the nation' (1987). Lupe is Samoan for pigeon (bird) from which the verb *fa'alupe* originated, an allusion to the Samoan ideal of beauty or aesthetics of natural appreciation by which human is metaphorized. Researchers use other synonyms of greetings: complimenting, salutations, honorifics, charter. In any other terms, a *faalupega* is a Samoan way of profiling the who's who of leadership and places, of which purposes I can mention three. First, as the means to acknowledge order

of precedence and hierarchy of a polity. Second, to honour a host for sake of cordial relations, which honour is reciprocated accordingly. Thirdly, it signifies genealogies and relations. Such code of practice is reinforced at all levels of the political strata (Meleisea, 1987a).

With the inauguration of the state, a new charter was proposed, based on the state's own hierarchy, beginning with the office of the head of state. In state ceremonies where both traditional leadership and state personnel are present, a spokesperson will defer firstly to the state leadership cohort, then to traditional authority. Civil authority follows. At the village level, the village pastor(s) and titular chief(s) are saluted or acknowledged first and foremost. As a system, it is an integral part of the *faamatai* discourse with own rules, *tapu* and practice. This is the specialty of orators whose moral duty it is to upkeep on behalf of the leadership. A fine display of skills (reciting of salutations and genealogy pertaining to with precision) will enhance their reputation individually/collectively. Those who have been saluted will get more recognition than the others (Bourdieu, 1986; James, 2015).

Cultural distinction according to Bourdieu (1979) is about defining who a person is in society based on his/her title, family background, schooling, association, interests, aesthetic tastes, wealth and so forth. From the standpoint of power such ardent distinction can only serve to reinforce the conditions of subjectification and perpetuate the status quo (Heller, 1996; Foucault, 1991; James, 2015). (For further reference, see Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power on page 63).

5.18 Conclusion

This chapter was premised on the argument that any contemporary analysis of power and power relations in Samoa will have to familiarize first with the multifaceted aspects of the culture through which power or its agents thrive daily. From a critical theory viewpoint their depictions are crucial to an in-depth analysis of power from whence to where it positions itself today in Samoa's power narrative understanding (Fairclough, 1998; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008). The presentation of indigenous concepts served to inform the uninitiated about the nature of power relations in the Samoan society, more importantly in the task of producing a balanced analysis.

As Gramsci asserted, the hegemony of a system is not so much its coercive appeal but the subtle form of control it manifests itself through systems of ideology accepted as common sense by both the governors and the governed (1999). A new worldview is an extension of the old, a matter of rearticulating or disarticulating narratives wherever it suits the current status quo (ibid.). This is aptly demonstrated in the evolution and development of the power concept from Samoa's traditional village rule to centralized government. The result of this unpacking will help explain the forces behind the ambiguity of power relations, especially where multiple systems are involved.

It needs to be stressed also the importance of understanding all or most of these key concepts/principles in the light of critical theory traditions as much as possible. First and foremost, the key role of knowledge in their understanding of power relations. As Foucault asserted strongly, power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge. The Samoan indigenous knowledge applies to almost every sphere of its society, which implies the efficacy and extent of knowledge power in the Samoan society, where both social and cultural capital merge to produce symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1986). As pointed out, such power reproduction very much defines the essence of its relations as a society.

In sum, any serious observation of power in the Samoan context cannot be validated without a better grasp of most of these key power related concepts, all of which attributed to a fuller understanding of power from a Samoan perspective.