

Resistance and Colonial Government

*A Comparative Study of Samoa**

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AFTER MARGERY PERHAM, LATER THE PRE-EMINENT HISTORIAN OF BRITISH COLONIAL rule in Africa and colonial apologist, visited American Samoa and Western Samoa in 1929, she wrote that ‘successful rule in Samoa is chiefly a matter of touch’,¹ in an attempt to explain what to her was an extraordinary anomaly: Western Samoa was in ferment, while American Samoa seemed contented and at peace. Western Samoa was governed by civilians in accordance with metropolitan policies under a League of Nations Mandate, and American Samoa was an autocracy under a naval commandant on frequent rotation. His staff likewise were naval officers on two-year appointments because the United States had no colonial service. In New Zealand’s civilian Samoan government all senior staff, and all ‘native affairs’ staff, served for lengthy periods, and New Zealand officials searched repeatedly in the 1920s and 1930s for ways of providing special training and career structures for specialists in colonial government.² Military government was distasteful to Perham, but she compared it favourably to the neighbouring New Zealand civilian regime as providing intelligent, disciplined people, detached and honest, free of vested interests, and experienced in handling men. Indeed, she went further:

One cannot contemplate with any pleasure the substitution of a civilian government, affected as it must be by political changes and interests, and letting loose upon those gentle people the full force of American efficiency and idealism.³

Yet the policies that Perham praised in American Samoa were also to be found in Western Samoa: land alienation was prohibited, native custom was recognised in local administration, Samoan chiefs had advisory and judicial roles, and a government newspaper was widely distributed. The anomaly for Perham was

*Note on sources: all archival references to American Samoa in this essay are to RG284, Records of the Government of American Samoa, National Archives and Records Administration, San Bruno, California. All citations of correspondence and reports by the governor and the secretary of native affairs are to Governor’s Office, Annual Reports on Government Affairs 1902–1956, Series #5, Box 1 (1902–21), Box 2 (1922–28), Box 3 (1929–34), Box 4 (1935–40) unless otherwise indicated. All archival citations for Western Samoa are to files in the National Archives of New Zealand.

¹ Margery Perham, *Colonial Sequence 1930 to 1949* (London 1967), 3.

² I.C. Campbell, ‘Staffing native administration in the Mandated Territory of Samoa’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, 34 (2000), 277–93.

³ Perham, *Colonial Sequence*, 11.

that although New Zealand policy was enlightened, generous and in keeping with the spirit of the League of Nations mandate, there was a resistance movement that claimed support of two-thirds of the population.⁴ America, she wrote, was 'doing the wrong thing the right way', whereas New Zealand although doing the right thing was doing it the wrong way, and hence found itself in difficulty.

Ever since the 1920s, the Mau has dominated the historiography of 20th century Samoa. J.W. Davidson's history of the decolonisation of Western Samoa⁵ necessarily concentrates on the contest for power and its antecedents rather than on the history of Samoan society, or New Zealand development efforts. Other works on Samoa by Albert Wendt, Kilifoti Eteuati and Michael Field are explicitly concerned with the history of the contest, as is the relevant chapter in the survey history of Samoa by Malama Meleisea *et al.*⁶ Peter Hempenstall was concerned with the Mau as a case study of a resistance movement. Mary Boyd's treatment concerns the political relationship between New Zealand and Western Samoa. Meleisea's history of the land and titles court is unique in not concentrating on the overt contest for power.⁷

The historiography of American Samoa is not so preoccupied, but nor has American Samoa been the subject of so much attention. The Mau in American Samoa was a much less dramatic affair, and was not at any time a threat to the administration. Perhaps more importantly, since the territory did not subsequently become independent, the movement does not serve as a vehicle of nationalist discourse, and the lack of attention generally has not lent it to the purposes of proxy nationalism by American anti-colonial or post-colonial historians.⁸ A recent paper stepped into this historiographical vacuum, taking up the nationalist and anti-hegemonic cause, and arguing that the American Samoan Mau was both serious and sophisticated, and successfully manipulated the regime to achieve its purpose which happened not to be independence but dependency with dignity.⁹

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4. Davidson estimated 85% support for the Mau but with qualifications. J.W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: the emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa* (Melbourne 1967), 133.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Albert Wendt, 'Guardians and wards', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington (Wellington 1965). Kilifoti S. Eteuati, '*Evaevaga a Samoa*: assertion of Samoan autonomy, 1920–1936', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1982). Michael J. Field, *Mau. Samoa's struggle against New Zealand oppression* (Wellington 1984). Malama Meleisea et al., *Lagaga. A short history of Western Samoa* (Suva 1987).

⁷ Peter Hempenstall, 'The contest for colonial authority in Samoa', in Peter Hempenstall and Noel Rutherford, *Protest and Dissent in the Colonial Pacific* (Suva 1984), 18–43. Mary Boyd, 'The record in Western Samoa to 1945' and 'The record in Western Samoa since 1945', in Angus Ross (ed.), *New Zealand's Record in the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Auckland 1969), 115–270. Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa. Traditional authority and colonial administration in the modern history of Western Samoa* (Suva 1987).

⁸ A.C. Gray, *Amerika Samoa* (Annapolis 1960). T.F. Darden, *Historical Sketch of the Naval Administration of the Government of American Samoa* (Washington 1952). F.H. Olsen, 'The Navy and the White Man's Burden: naval administration of Samoa', PhD dissertation, Washington University (Missouri 1976). J. Robert Shaffer, *American Samoa. 100 years under the United States flag* (Honolulu 2000).

⁹ David A. Chappell, 'The forgotten Mau: anti-navy protest in American Samoa, 1920–1935', *Pacific Historical Review*, 69 (2000), 217–60.

It is surprising that with similar and contemporary movements in a homogeneous but administratively divided society a comparative approach has not been employed hitherto to explore the nature, causes and significance of Samoan protest. One reason perhaps has been the absence of controversy. While there is a broad distinction between the writings of Samoan and foreign scholars, the difference has never given rise to open debate nor to exposition framed in the discourse of debate.¹⁰ Field makes the most explicit comparison between Western and American Samoa and that only briefly, to suggest that the essence of protest was administrative styles. He concluded that in Western Samoa Major General G.S. Richardson hectorated and insulted the Samoan chiefs and exacerbated the Mau, causing needless confrontation, while in American Samoa Captain S.V. Graham defused it by meeting the Mau leaders on their own ground, listening to their complaints, and advising them how to get what they wanted: ‘Graham had met the movement on the essential point: a willingness to discuss Samoan affairs with the Samoan people.’¹¹

This conclusion merits examination. Field’s argument is echoed by David Chappell who gives partial endorsement to Field’s contrast by referring to what he calls the ‘conventional explanation’ that ‘when Samoans protested, New Zealanders massacred them, but the Americans “listened”’. Chappell, however, finds plenty of evidence of administrative arrogance and racist attitudes to explain why there was a Mau at all. In his narrative, Graham is an exceptional figure following a succession of bullies and martinets.¹²

There are difficulties with both interpretations in that Graham made no concessions to the protesters, and his recommended reforms were not implemented. In other words, nothing changed, but Chappell’s discussion posits common ground between the two Samoan protest movements. They had a good deal more in common than Perham’s symmetrical aphorism implies. Both are illuminated by comparison with German government in Western Samoa between 1900 and 1914, which also had a Mau to deal with.

The Structures of Government

The German administration was more self-consciously colonial, and seemed more knowing in its objectives and procedures than the contemporary American endeavour. Indeed, the Americans were inclined to take their lead from Germany. As the successor of Germany, New Zealand had to begin with and adapt the German arrangements.

The German administration intervened closely in Samoan affairs. Governor Wilhelm Solf intended to do away altogether with traditional government

¹⁰The division is not as one might expect: Samoan writers, Wendt, Eteuati and Meleisea, are less characterised by a ‘nationalist’ orientation than the foreign historians, Davidson, Field, Hemenstall and Chappell.

¹¹Field, *Mau*, 106.

¹²Chappell, ‘The forgotten *Mau*’, 232, 242–6.

even down to village level, and rule through European officials.¹³ This proved impractical so Solf tried to institute a system of Samoan officials at the local level supervised by European officials, including a resident commissioner on Savai'i. At a higher level, critical reforms progressively showed the Samoan chiefs that power had at last slipped from their hands. These involved the re-establishment of the *Faipule*¹⁴ as a council of chiefs to advise the highest ranking chief, Mata'afa. Mata'afa's hopes of kingship were terminated, and Solf created the title '*ali'i sili*' for him, subordinate to the Emperor of Germany who was styled '*tupu sili*'. The *Ta'imua* was also resurrected but in the form of two of the *tama'aiga* (holders of the highest titles), as advisers to the *ali'i sili*. Solf took care that neither *Faipule* nor *Ta'imua* exercised any executive or legislative authority. *Tumua* and *Pule*, the two orator confederations, were abrogated, the distribution of fine mats by which Samoans cemented or discharged obligations was appropriated by Solf, and the Land and Titles Court set up in 1903 gave the German administration the final say in matters of title succession.

After a Samoan challenge to his authority in 1905, Solf dissolved what remained of the old Samoan government at Mulinu'u, abolished the *Ta'imua*, and re-established the *Faipule* as a salaried council of 27 chiefs which met twice yearly, its members chosen by Solf and excluding the orators of *Pule* and *Tumua*.¹⁵ Solf further planned that after Mata'afa died he would have no successor, the position of *ali'i sili* would be abolished and be replaced by two positions called *fautua* to be filled by the two senior *tama'aiga*. This was not accomplished till 1913. His purpose was not to rule with or through the chiefs, but to co-opt them by bestowing empty dignities on them.

The interventionist style of government was considered by Solf to be a political necessity. By comparison with the other regimes, Solf appears ruthless where institutions were concerned, however cautious he might have been when it came to an outright struggle for power. Moreover, there had been considerable land alienation, and there was accordingly a large and influential body of foreign settlers, and of imported indentured labourers, which caused complications requiring firm government. The presence of a sizeable foreign population (albeit numbering only a few hundred) was critical in so far as the settlers were articulate and outspoken, and anticipated a future in Samoa where their social aspirations and developmental plans should take priority over the Samoan way of life. They differentiated between the roles in the new society of themselves and of the Samoans.¹⁶

¹³Peter J. Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule. A study in the meaning of colonial resistance* (Canberra 1978), 33–4.

¹⁴The *Faipule* was originally a representative group of chiefs established in the early 1870s as a legislative body along with the *Ta'imua*, a smaller assembly of senior chiefs. Both *Faipule* and *Ta'imua* were reconstituted several times and the *Ta'imua* ceased to exist in 1890. The *Faipule* continued until 1898 and was reconstituted again by Solf when he attempted to make a show of there still being a Samoan government.

¹⁵Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 47–8; Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 83–4. Solf's strategies and perceptions are also dealt with well in Evelyn S. Wareham, 'Race and realpolitik: the politics of colonisation in German Samoa', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington (Wellington 1997), ch. 2.

¹⁶Wareham, 'Race and realpolitik', especially chs 3 and 5. Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 38 ff.

The administration of American Samoa was not troubled by anything like the turbulent recent political history of Western Samoa, or by a large foreign presence. Land alienation had been negligible. Accordingly, the new administration could be more accommodating of Samoan forms. The administration was created in 1900 by Commander B.F. Tilley in consultation with E.W. Gurr, a British subject and long-term resident of Apia whom he appointed Secretary of Native Affairs. Gurr was evidently familiar with the British form of government in Fiji, for there are several similarities to what followed in American Samoa. Tilley, having no other options, left village government in traditional hands, appointed the most senior chiefs as 'county' chiefs and 'district governors'. These officials were responsible for keeping the peace, enforcing the laws and ensuring the implementation of official will. Police and judges were recruited from the Samoans. It was not so much a system of 'indirect rule' as direct rule using indigenous agents. Tilley required regular reports from the chiefs indicating the incidence of sickness, births, deaths, the state of plantations, village conditions, water supplies, roads, schools, attendance at school and any meetings, together with their resolutions. Annual meetings were held of the district, county and village 'mayors' (head chiefs) for consultation. The governor's authority was absolute, and laws were made on his sole authority. In 1902 the chiefs requested taxation so that they could be paid salaries, and recommended the amount of taxation. In another resemblance to the early Fijian administration, the tax was paid in kind, as a levy of copra per adult male. The government sold this copra in bulk, deducted the amount of tax, plus expenses, and returned any surplus to the chiefs ostensibly to distribute to their villages. Tilley's was an *ad hoc* system that became permanent: the governor (initially commandant) had no instructions on government, or on the scope and limits of his authority, and did not know what actions might be approved or disapproved. Even the question of whether the naval commandant was entitled to exercise any authority over the Samoans was unclear.¹⁷

Devolution of authority to the Samoans was not contemplated. In 1905 the governor, Commander C.B.T. Moore, anticipated demands for a Samoan government following the Lauaki affair in Western Samoa. He treated the *fono* or annual meeting as a 'representative assembly' of elected delegates. This experiment proved premature, and the chiefs in any case asked for no change in the present form of government because, Moore concluded, reform would reduce their own powers.¹⁸ Elections were attempted again in 1906, but with *matai* franchise.¹⁹ As a way of keeping in touch with Samoan opinion, it became customary for the governor to make an annual tour of the villages. This general pattern of government was maintained into the 1920s.

¹⁷The last point was particularly complained of in Commandant to Assistant Secretary of the Navy, 10 July 1903. See note on sources, above. The structure is described in various annual reports at this location; similar material is found also in Records of the Governor's Office, Series #15, Subject Files 1900–1958, Box 4, Civil Government.

¹⁸Governor to Ass't Secretary of the Navy, 9 Oct. 1905.

¹⁹Secretary of Native Affairs to Governor, 30 July 1906.

When New Zealand took over Western Samoa on a caretaker basis in 1914, the territory had already undergone a series of political disturbances and recent structural adjustments. The precise thinking behind these adjustments was not known in detail by the new rulers, who received no cooperation from the Germans. Colonel Robert Logan, as military governor, adopted British Colonial Office regulations for lack of any other guidance and devolved powers to Samoans. In local government, he left *pulenu'u* or village heads to be elected by the chiefs (*matai*) of the village. Vacancies among the *faipule* were filled by chiefs chosen by the *faipule*. Justice was administered by Samoan magistrates, and many Samoan youths were taken into the civil service both to work as clerks, and for training. In these respects, Logan returned to the Samoans some of the power and dignity that Solf had taken away. In a further move away from gubernatorial autocracy he recommended an advisory council of both officials and nominated settlers, and proposed municipal government for Apia.²⁰

Actual political reform had to await the formal establishment of civil government under New Zealand legislation which in turn awaited the proceedings of the League of Nations Mandates Commission. These formalities were not concluded until 1921 but they created the only one of the three Samoan regimes to be governed by specific legislation. Formal restraint on the authority of the Administrator (as the governor was called) was slight, but although he made the laws, his every action was subject to review by either the New Zealand Department of External Affairs or (later) the Department of Island Territories. He was advised by a Legislative Council on the British Crown Colony pattern, with representatives elected by and from the settler community. Samoan representation was proposed but rejected because they would always be outvoted and would be at a permanent disadvantage for linguistic and educational reasons. Colonel R.W. Tate, Logan's successor, realised that this would not meet Samoan aspirations.²¹ Instead, Tate treated the *Fono a Faipule*, inherited from Solf, as a proto-parliament, a role Solf never intended for it. Membership of the *fono* was confined to chiefs. In Solf's time they had been chosen by himself, and membership was permanent, or at least *sine die*. Under Logan, the *faipule* chose new members themselves. Tate appointed new members, and increased the frequency of meetings from annual to twice yearly, supplied information about government affairs to it, and gave it a semi-legislative role. He discussed draft legislation with it and sought its advice. He established specialised committees, namely the Board of Trade and the Council of Education, and appointed leading *faipule* to membership of them. He also intended that the *fono* should select representatives from its own membership to join the Legislative Council.²² Tate thus brought the *fono* into the work of government.

When Major General G.S. Richardson succeeded Tate in 1923, he extended this approach. He discussed all development projects and all matters relating to

²⁰ Administration of Samoa, Report by Colonel Logan, 8 July 1919, IT1 EX 1/10.

²¹ On representation on the Legislative Council see Tate, Confidential Report, 17 Jan. 1923, IT1 EX 2/11. This proposal was rejected by the Minister.

²² For Tate's dealings with the *faipule* generally, see file Fono of Faipule, IT1 EX 88/3.

native affairs with it, and expanded its legislative contribution. His policy on filling vacancies was to invite the chiefs and *faipule* of the district for which there was a vacancy to nominate a new representative, who would then be formally appointed by the Administrator. After four years in office, Richardson said that he had never intervened or made a selection himself. He did, however, reduce the term of appointment from life to five years.²³ Besides bolstering the *fono*, Richardson introduced district councils early in 1924. These were given tax-levying powers and were responsible for roads, water supplies and sanitation and were empowered to raise loans for such projects. Study tours to New Zealand to examine local government were provided for key people.

It is clear, therefore, that notwithstanding conventional historiographical strictures about paternalism and inadequate consultation, both the American and New Zealand regimes had made it a cardinal feature that there should be structures in place for regular consultation, participation and increasing Samoan experience in modern methods of government. In this respect the New Zealanders far out-reached the Americans. In view of the unrest later in both American and Western Samoa under New Zealand administration, Solf's policies and experiences are instructive. The Solf regime, more kindly treated than either of the others in modern historiography, was the one that was most pertinacious in neutralising or eliminating Samoan influence from government. This is not to say that Solf did not have good and sufficient reasons, but the New Zealand approach represents more than a reversal of policy, and went further than the US Navy in so far as it actively pursued the goal of Samoan empowerment under the authority of the Administrator. This encouragement of Samoan political assertion as a matter of policy was a factor in the later emergence of the Mau, but for reasons not discerned or accepted by historians to date.

Welfare and Development

As with political structure, so was it with development and welfare policies. Solf, the intellectual, so often lauded for his enlightenment and concern for Samoan standing in colonial society, shared the 19th century German philosophy of racial hierarchy. The officials of the United States, notorious for its own domestic colour bar, were less segregationist than the Germans and showed a far more practical concern for Samoan modernisation and sensitivity to the dilemmas of forced social change. Neither matched the vigour of New Zealand in striving to create a modern, self-governing society with improved living standards. New Zealand was also less attached than either to a belief in racial hierarchy and its sociopolitical implications.

In the short period of the German administration little could be expected in promoting Samoan welfare, but it is significant that less was attempted than in the adjacent American territory over the same period. Solf's major contribution

²³ Richardson's reports on the Fono of Faipule are at IT EX 88/3. The report on the appointment of *faipule* is dated 14 Jan. 1927.

to Samoan welfare was to bring peace, to disarm the population, and establish the Lands and Titles Court in 1903 to circumvent future causes of disturbance. He began with a weapons amnesty in 1900, imposed a head tax in 1901, banned gambling and confirmed the ban on alcohol for Samoans that had been in place since 1892. Land transactions were not banned until 1907. He restricted cricket-playing and *malaga* (formal village inter-visiting) in 1908 because of the expense and social disruption that they caused. A government school for Samoans was established in 1910. Solf's other measures included attempts to keep Germans and Samoans genetically separate, and to prevent social decay. Interracial marriage was banned in 1912.²⁴

Whether the naval administration on Tutuila technically had responsibility for Samoan government was a matter of some uncertainty, especially during the early years when the senior officer's title was 'commandant' not 'governor'.²⁵ The commandants were not deterred by any uncertainties, technical or philosophical. They accepted that Samoan life would continue in parallel with naval purposes, that the United States had a duty to protect the Samoans, foster their development and maintain their social autonomy. Land alienation and the supply of liquor to Samoans were banned immediately.²⁶ Regular contact and official visits were instituted with German Samoa, but influence of one administration on the other seems to have been all one way, from west to east. An arms amnesty similar to Solf's was conducted in 1902, and by arrangement with Solf, *malaga* between western and eastern Samoa were banned in 1903,²⁷ and a government Samoan newspaper was launched the same year. *Malaga* and cricket matches could not be held without permission from 1902 and 1903, respectively.²⁸ Interracial marriage was not banned until 1919, seven years after the same move by Solf, and for quite different reasons.²⁹ The Secretary of Native

²⁴ Wareham, 'Race and realpolitik', ch. 2.

²⁵ Governor to Ass't Secretary of Navy, Report for 1902, 9 Aug. 1902.

²⁶ Darden, *Historical Sketch*, 4. The matter is referred to again in Governor to Ass't Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report, 1902, 9 Aug. 1902. Settlers could import liquor for their personal use only with written permission. Liquor imports were totally banned in 1915. The manufacture, sale and use of liquor in American Samoa (presumably an absolute ban) were prohibited in 1919, about the same time as Tate acted similarly in Western Samoa. Secretary of Native Affairs to Governor, 24 June 1915; Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report for 1919, 1 July 1919.

²⁷ Commandant to Ass't Secretary of the Navy, 6 Sept. 1902, 26 Jan. 1903.

²⁸ For cricket see Shaffer, *American Samoa*, 133. The ban on *malaga* without permission arose from a request by the chiefs that they be stopped. Sebree to Mauga (District Governor Eastern Tutuila), 18 Nov. 1902, Records of the Governor's Office, Series #15, Subject Files 1900–58, Box 4.

²⁹ This was not actually an outright ban: such marriages were to be first approved by the commandant. Chappell, 'The forgotten Mau', 235, attributes this step to a wish to eliminate bigamy. Whatever the actual motive, there was a good reason: women marrying men of other nationalities lost their citizenship and took on that of their husbands. This applied also in Western Samoa, and a Samoan woman losing her citizenship thus lost her land rights, and so would her children. S.D. Hall, Secretary of Native Affairs, statement, 25 Jan. 1923, Records of the High Court, Papers of the Secretary of Native Affairs, Box 12, Unclassified 1921–1936. According to Olsen, 'The Navy and the White Man's Burden', 42, Governor Terhune's reason was that navy families were entitled to store and cold-store privileges, and that the broad definition of a Samoan family placed too great a strain on these facilities. Moreover, mixed race children tended to leave their villages, to the detriment of agriculture.

Affairs, E.W. Gurr, proposed government schools in 1901.³⁰ The governor's subsequent request for a \$5,000 federal subsidy and an American teacher elicited no response³¹ but was an indication of the orientation of the naval regime. Using local resources, a government school was established in Pago Pago in 1904; a Schools Commission was recommended in 1909;³² and a Board of Education established in 1911. The next year, three boys were sent to Hilo in Hawai'i for education for seven years so that they might return as teachers.³³ Governor J.M. Poyer established a high school, opened in 1918,³⁴ and a public school system was established by Governor W. Evans in 1921.³⁵ Successive governors and secretaries of native affairs asked repeatedly for US funding for educational development, but were as often refused.

Similarly in agriculture: land alienation was banned in 1900, and non-Samoans were required to register their land claims in 1901.³⁶ Attempts to encourage and improve agriculture began in 1902, and in 1914 Governor C.D. Stearns, having applied unsuccessfully for a federally funded agricultural experimental station, established a department of agriculture and initiated research.³⁷ Health reflected a similar story: ample initiative from the naval personnel to improve Samoan standards of living, but consistent metropolitan refusal to assist.³⁸ From 1900, the navy was supplying Samoans with medicine, though they had to pay for treatment. Attempts to improve village sanitation were incorporated in instructions for village and district chiefs, but it was not until hookworm was discovered in 1909 that formal public health regulations were promulgated and a Board of Health established. A hospital for Samoans was built in 1912, and a two-year nurse training programme opened in February 1914.³⁹

Economic development was encouraged in a superficial manner by the tax system which returned surplus moneys to the Samoans.⁴⁰ The decision to refuse and to destroy low grade copra in 1911 may be seen as an economic measure essential for the success of the bulk marketing scheme.⁴¹ Creating the Bank of American Samoa in 1914 was a very forward step, benefiting Samoans as well as

³⁰ See J.L. Joyne to Commander-in-Chief US Naval Forces, Pacific Station, 19 Nov. 1901, enclosing Gurr's report. Governor's Office, Series #15, Subject files 1900-58, Box 4, Government Affairs, General, 1900-01.

³¹ See Governor to Ass't Secretary of the Navy, Report for 1902, 9 Aug. 1902.

³² Annual Report of Secretary of Native Affairs, 30 June 1909.

³³ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report for 1913, 8 July 1913.

³⁴ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report for 1918, 14 Sept. 1918.

³⁵ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report, 1 July 1921.

³⁶ Darden, *Historical Sketch*, 20.

³⁷ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 13 Jan. 1914.

³⁸ As late as 1938 the governor referred to the fruitlessness of repeated requests by governors for federal funds for Samoan development. Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report for 1938, 15 Aug. 1938.

³⁹ See Annual Reports from 1911 onwards, particularly Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report for 1913, 8 July 1913, and Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 13 Jan. 1914. Also Darden, *Historical Sketch*, 14.

⁴⁰ These funds were usually appropriated by the chiefs and the individual tax-payers seem to have never received the refunds. Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Report, 1 July 1921.

⁴¹ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report 1911, 14 July 1911.

the trading community,⁴² and about the same time, Samoan cooperative societies were established: failures were reported in 1914, but the Leone one was successful in 1915.⁴³

Thus, the US administration demonstrated enormously increased activity early in its second decade, the last few years before the neighbouring German administration was brought to an abrupt end; but it had nevertheless done a good deal more for Samoan improvement than the German regime before 1914, and even without taking into account the frequent official statements of concern for Samoan protection, welfare and development, the record is eloquent. If the actual achievement proved insubstantial or ephemeral, or failed to impress by metropolitan standards, not all metropolitan localities rose to a high or uniform standard. Moreover, in Samoa there were the usual colonial developmental difficulties: ignorance, prejudice or preferences among the Samoans, lack of a sound economic base and therefore inadequate funding. It is, however, noteworthy that the initiative in these matters came from Pago Pago, and after initial advice by Gurr, very largely from the naval officers whose tenures in Samoa were short. While they were less hampered by the distractions of settler politics, they also lacked the intellectual advantage generally attributed to Solf of higher education. Their comparatively liberal outlook is conspicuous in comparative perspective, and especially so when it is compared to the repeated refusal of the US government to provide financial assistance. The fundamental difference is that the US administration was disinterested, whereas German Samoa was intended to be an imperial showcase, a propaganda asset and a home for German settlers.

The later New Zealand regime has been blamed for its vigour rather than for neglect, for its paternalism rather than for indifference to Samoan living standards in a post-colonial inversion of ideas about colonial responsibility. Davidson, for example, was impatient with the slowness of change in the 1940s and 1950s, but condemned as premature and paternalistic Richardson's attempts to accelerate development in the 1920s.⁴⁴ New Zealand was neither as disinterested as the US Navy nor as self-interested as the Germans, and the chief difference may be attributed to its attitude to its obligations under the League of Nations mandate agreement to prepare subject peoples for independence.

At the end of the First World War, when it was becoming possible to look forward to positive policies, Logan planned extensive public works including piped water supplies for villages, hydro-electricity generation, roads, bridges and wharves, improved shipping services, enhanced radio communications and broadcasting, telephones and profitable use of the reparation (formerly German) estates.⁴⁵ These plans required large-scale public investment, and little could be

⁴² Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 19 May 1914.

⁴³ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report 1914, 8 July 1914; Secretary of Native Affairs to Governor, 24 June 1915.

⁴⁴ Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, ch. 9, 'District and village government', cf. 127.

⁴⁵ Administration of Samoa, Report by Colonel Logan, 8 July 1919, IT1 EX 1/10; also Richardson, undated minutes of a meeting with the Minister for External Affairs [Dec. 1925], IT 1 EX 1/35.

done before Richardson took over in 1923. To meet the costs, Richardson was prepared to borrow and, for the same reason, he was opposed by the settler community. In the short term, development depended on economic growth increasing government revenue, but the administration was also concerned with Samoan purchasing power. Tate established a Prices Commission briefly in 1921 to scrutinise the discrepancy between the low prices traders paid for copra and the high prices they charged for imports. He followed this with a Board of Trade to encourage development, and was prepared to take over the marketing of copra and cocoa until the proposal forced traders to increase their prices to the producers.⁴⁶ Richardson likewise later toyed with bulk marketing of Samoan produce, again to the ire of the traders. Tate proposed in 1922 that the restrictions on Samoans obtaining credit, introduced by the Germans to prevent Samoan indebtedness, be relaxed, probably to encourage Samoan entrepreneurship, but yielded to the opposition of the *Fono a Faipule*.⁴⁷ Richardson was aware that the most fundamental issue in economic development was land tenure. He recognised that traditional tenure was complicated and an obstacle to commercial use by Samoans. He appreciated the difficulty of reforming it, but he strove to introduce the idea of individualised tenure, and arranged for the *faipule* to visit Tonga where they could see such a system in operation.⁴⁸ He understood Samoan caution on land questions and was prepared to proceed at a Samoan pace. In opposition to other uses proposed for the former German estates, he recommended that they be used to settle land-short Samoans, and to be held against future needs of an increasing population.⁴⁹

Education was similarly a major concern of the administrators. Even in Logan's time boys were trained in clerical and other work and, in 1919, one was sent to New Zealand for training as a draughtsman.⁵⁰ Tate told the *Fono a Faipule* that he would hire Samoans in preference to Europeans when suitably qualified. He created a Committee of Education with two *faipule* members, and sent boys to New Zealand for education. He also initiated nurse-training.⁵¹ Richardson, a self-educated man, was passionate about education which he believed should be relevant to Samoan life and conditions,⁵² and launched teacher-training in Samoa.⁵³

Richardson had tremendous confidence in the Samoans and was eager to build on their abilities. He found them cooperative, and eager for progress, and

⁴⁶ For the Prices Commission, see Tate, speech to the *Fono a Faipule*, 2 Feb. 1921, IT1 EX 88/3; for the Board of Trade and pricing, Tate to Minister of External Affairs, Confidential Quarterly Report, 1 July to 30 Sept. 1922, IT1 EX 2/11.

⁴⁷ Tate, Report on Fono of Faipules, 6–10 June 1922, IT1 EX 88/3.

⁴⁸ Richardson, Interim Report on Native Affairs, 13 Feb. 1924, and Report on Meeting of the Fono of Faipule, 22–31 Jan. 1924, IT1 EX 88/3.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Administration of Samoa, Report by Colonel Logan, 8 July 1919, IT1 EX 1/10.

⁵¹ Seven nurses graduated by 1922. Tate to Minister of External Affairs, 10 Apr. 1922, IT 1 EX 2/11.

⁵² Richardson, Interim Report on Native Affairs, 1 Jan. 1925, IT 1 EX 88/3.

⁵³ Richardson, Interim Report on Native Affairs, 21 Aug. 1924, IT1 EX 2/11.

quite the opposite of what settlers told him, which he paraphrased as “‘You will never get the Samoans to do anything; they will promise everything you ask them to do but will not work beyond the minimum necessary to sustain life... therefore, what you are doing is a waste of money’”.⁵⁴

Rhetoric and Colonial Welfarism

Concern for Samoan welfare was an overriding theme of despatches from colonial governors. Solf expressed a concern for the preservation of the Samoans as a distinct community, and for their progress so that they would take their place in a modern society appropriate to their aptitude and not as mere labourers for a German racial élite. White superiority occasioned a duty towards the Samoans.⁵⁵ Solf professed to have their interests at heart,⁵⁶ and when he exiled Lauaki and others after the 1908–09 protest he reminded them that ‘It is my love for you that has made me punish you so lightly’.⁵⁷ His sympathy for the Samoans increased along with his difficulties with the planter community.⁵⁸

American governors wrote similarly sentimental, sympathetic expressions of their identification with Samoans.

The people are, in many ways, happy, lazy, grown up children. They love form and ceremony. They are courteous and hospitable, brave and kind.... Most of them, however, are given to falsehood. They are suspicious of white men. I think that by treating them justly and fairly, they will soon see that it is not the purpose of the United States to take their lands, or to tax them, or to do anything but hold the Harbor, and to protect and care for the people, and to permit them, as far as may be possible, to govern themselves.⁵⁹

An attorney-general (also a naval officer) echoed these words 30 years later:

The Samoan is a happy, kindly race, not very energetic but with many admirable qualities... he must be protected.... It is not believed that undue haste should impose upon him a civilization for which he is not yet ready.⁶⁰

The indignation that other governors expressed at the lack of progress similarly stemmed from a sympathetic concern for Samoan well-being.⁶¹ However condescending these statements appear in retrospect, they indicate that paternalism was fundamentally benevolent.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Wareham, ‘Race and realpolitik,’ ch. 2.

⁵⁶ [Wilhelm Solf] [Draft] Report for the German Colonial Office, Nov. 1907 (trans.), TS copy, Oxford, UK, Rhodes House Library, MSS. Brit. Emp. S.309(2).

⁵⁷ Solf, ‘Proclamation to all Samoa’, 5 Apr. 1909, copy in the Papers of the Secretary of Native Affairs, Governor’s Office American Samoa, RG 284.

⁵⁸ Wareham, ‘Race and realpolitik’, 87.

⁵⁹ Commandant to Ass’t Secretary of the Navy, Report for 1902, 9 Aug. 1902.

⁶⁰ Attorney General to Governor, Annual Report of the Attorney General, 1 July 1933.

⁶¹ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 27 July 1931.

This outlook is not significantly different from that shared by the New Zealand administrators, despite their professional backgrounds being so different from those of the Americans.⁶² Logan wrote: 'They [the Samoans] should be treated with every consideration . . . [I]t will be necessary to let the Whites in Samoa understand this also and that theirs are not the only interests in the territory.'⁶³ Such statements as these were not shallow, disingenuous propaganda: they were often embedded in confidential reports which would be read only by a handful of officials, often to justify, explain or urge a particular policy direction. They are evidence of widely accepted assumptions about colonial government.

The fundamental character of all regimes was expressed in their development and welfare policies. The establishment of control and construction of a form of government were means to an end in each case, and the purpose was expressed less in the structural arrangements than in the policies that they made possible. There were differences of timing and intensity between the three Samoan regimes in the various welfare and development policies that they adopted, and there were certainly differences in the degree of success, and even of persistence in implementing the policies, but these relative failures do not turn the policies into their opposites, or represent either a change of official mind or hypocrisy. The problems of 'third world' development continue decades after the end of the colonial regimes, and to expect early colonial regimes to have had greater success is ahistorical.

The Protest Movements

Colonial governments protected life and property and it would be natural to assume that the life and property they were interested in was colonial, but this is contradicted by the welfare and development records of all three regimes, and by their rhetoric. All three regimes encountered vigorous opposition and stern, persistent criticism from settlers. The gravamen of this opposition was that government was not sufficiently attentive to settler needs. Although governments arose out of settlers' hopes, they all set themselves against the settler communities and in these their most serious enemies were nurtured.

German Samoa. It is generally accepted that the Solf regime in Western Samoa was continually distracted by the opposition of small settlers, usually led by Richard Deekin whose opposition to Solf personally and to his policies became notorious and was even the subject of litigation. That the incompatibility of settler interests and native interests was at the heart of this contentiousness has never been disputed. No historian has argued, as they have for the successor

⁶²The American governors were all serving or recently retired naval officers. Of the New Zealand administrators, only one was a career soldier, though all before 1934 were referred to by their wartime military titles: Logan was a farmer who was active in local government; Tate, S.S. Allen and H. Hart were all lawyers, and Allen was a town mayor. A.C. Turnbull was a career civil servant.

⁶³Administration of Samoa, Report by Colonel Logan, 8 July 1919, IT1 EX 1/10.

regime or its neighbour, that settler opposition or agitation was a canard invented by a paternalistic regime that could not believe that ‘natives’ were capable of organising resistance. Solf faced two episodes of serious resistance in 1904–05 and 1908–09, but the Samoan leadership and purposes of both is so clear that no one would think of denying them. However, these Mau were not entirely independent of settler agitation, and an ‘*afakasi*’ (‘half-caste’) provided the inspiration for the first protest, the ‘Oloa Movement. However, native Samoan resistance was as much against foreign commercial dominance as against the Solf regime. Hempenstall refers to it as an attempt not so much to reject Germany as ‘to restore the traditional system of political dynamics’.⁶⁴ For the more overtly political movement five years later, the ‘*Mau a pule*’ of 1908–09, he rejects contemporary suggestions of settler inspiration or participation, but also presents evidence that settlers were quick to take advantage of the affair in their quarrel with the governor.⁶⁵ On this occasion Solf resorted to calling in German warships, and exiled leading Samoans to the Marshall Islands. Thomas Trood, a long-time resident and trader, expressed the opinion to Solf in 1909 that Samoan unrest was inevitable, and would have occurred under a British regime as well, and praised Solf’s ‘conciliatory’ approach.

By 1914, the settlers were again becoming restless for a greater share in government, which, had German rule continued, would have been incompatible with the continuation of the pro-Samoan policies of the Solf era. Incidents of racial animosity had already taken place, and the alliance that Solf had forged between the regime and the old chiefs was breaking down as a new generation was rising to prominence.⁶⁶ Thus, both settler and indigenous politics were likely to result before long in a new confrontation with government. If a precipitant had occurred to achieve a settler–Samoa coalition against the government, the ensuing crisis could have been cataclysmic.

American Samoa. Affairs in American Samoa were quieter, probably because it was not a political centre in the way that Upolu was. Its population was much smaller, and there was only a handful of foreign settlers. The US Navy did not arrive in a territory where power was being contested. This single variable made all the difference, and the Samoan chiefs seem to have been remarkably complaisant. Indications of native discontent surfaced in 1902 and 1905–06. From a long-term perspective, this early friction has the appearance of ‘settling in’ or ‘teething’ problems. The first concerned taxation, which although suggested by the Samoan chiefs in district meetings, was resented by the people who had to pay it, and initially contributions were

⁶⁴ Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 202. This somewhat obscure phrasing masks the complexity and ambiguity of the movement which is more fully explained on pp. 43–50. The point seems to be that the Samoan leaders wanted a return to the traditional dialectic in Samoan politics between *Tumua* and *Pule*, and between *vaivai* and *malo*, rather than a return to the past *per se*.

⁶⁵ Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 64–5, 209.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 70–1. See also H.J. Hiery, *The Neglected War. The German South Pacific and the influence of World War I* (Honolulu 1995), 9.

made slowly.⁶⁷ Whether this amounts to a form of protest is a moot point, but there was reason to think that the reluctance to pay and some disquiet about the form of government might have been influenced by a general and as yet unassuaged suspicion of the new government.⁶⁸ Inseparable from this development, the traders had good reasons of their own to resent the native tax, and more than once petitioned the government unsuccessfully about it.⁶⁹ Had the tax been payable in cash, the Samoans would have had to sell their copra to the traders, who stood to gain thereby. But the government's policy of collecting the tax in copra and then selling it overseas by tender not only cut out the traders but obtained a price that was regularly double what the traders paid. This practice, and the margin, continued throughout the period before the Second World War, and continued to be resented by the traders. The events of 1905 were even less significant: rumours were heard that certain chiefs might request a government of their own, but these came to nothing.⁷⁰ On the contrary, at the meeting of representative chiefs on 20 October 1905, they asked for no change in the form of government, being fearful of losing their present authority within it.⁷¹ The only source of trouble in the governor's opinion in 1906 was ill-disposed Americans, whose resentment was provoked by the government's pro-Samoan stance. These foreign agitators had no success.⁷² There were two significant variables between the German and early American regimes: the stronger emphasis on Samoan protection under the Americans, and the pre-colonial legacy of political contention in the west. The latter had by far the greater significance.

During the 1920s American Samoa was troubled by some low-level discontent, the importance of which was magnified by the contrast to the normal placidity. By any comparative or absolute measure, the troubles in American Samoa were minor in scale and insignificant in consequences. A series of meetings was held by Samoan chiefs in February and March 1920. What the original stimulus was is unknown, but there were suspicions about the handling of tax money refunds. Village work ceased, including village cleaning, garden maintenance, road work and copra cutting.⁷³ During the year, a number of unsettling events coincided. One was the ill-health and possible mental instability of the governor, Commander Warren J. Terhune. Then there was the arrival of

⁶⁷ Commandant to Ass't Secretary of the Navy, Report for 1902, 9 Aug. 1902.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ S.H. Forsell, A.D. Meredith and Alf. Pritchard to U. Sebree, Commandant, 30 Dec. 1901, pleading for reconsideration of the policy of paying tax in kind. Records of the Governor's Office, Series #15, Subject files 1900–58, Box 4, Government Affairs General 1900–01.

⁷⁰ Governor to Ass't Secretary of the Navy, 9 Oct. 1905.

⁷¹ Governor to Ass't Secretary of the Navy, 30 Oct. 1905.

⁷² Governor to Ass't Secretary of the Navy, 16 Apr. 1906.

⁷³ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report, 1 July 1921. Independently of these troubles, the Secretary of Native Affairs in his annual report drew attention to matters needing attention, such as village sanitation, better drinking water, and improved bathing places. He recommended the government make funds available. This type of concern does not appear in any of the accounts of Samoan grievances. Secretary of Native Affairs to Governor, 1 Aug. 1920.

Lieutenant-Commander C.H. Boucher to be Terhune's second in command, whose behaviour was insubordinate almost to the point of mutiny, and who collaborated with dissident Samoans. Third was the return to Samoa after many years' absence in the United States of two members of the mixed-race Ripley family with their spouses (in one case Arthur A. Greene, a newspaper editor from Honolulu, in the other case Mrs Madge Ripley, an American college graduate who worked as secretary for a lawyer in California), and their plans for land development and well-publicised criticisms of the naval authorities and policies.⁷⁴

These matters became entangled, and there were grumbling chiefs (not of the highest rank and therefore somewhat resentful of their lack of influence) who provided fertile soil for the allegations of the Ripley associates. These, frustrated by the government's ban on land alienation, spread the opinion that the regime, besides being incompetent and oppressive, was also illegal because the cession of Samoa had never been ratified by Congress. Whether Boucher was corrupted by these same elements or whether he exploited them for his own unfathomable purposes is unknown, but the accumulation of pressure from these combined sources became too much for Terhune. He deported the Ripleys and Greens, and had his insubordinate officer transferred out of the territory. Dealing with the dissident Samoans was less effective as he employed a hostile, dishonest interpreter.⁷⁵ A few days before Terhune's replacement arrived, his mind apparently gave way and he committed suicide on 3 November 1920.

Affairs thereafter followed two directions. Along one path, the Ripleys tried to bring pressure to bear through legal action and appeals to political figures in the United States, continuing to allege the non-existence of a legal foundation for the regime, and misgovernment, for which they could instance their own deportation.⁷⁶ Their legal adviser, C.S. Hannum,⁷⁷ and Sam Ripley claimed that they were the accredited representatives of the Samoan chiefs, and were merely carrying out their wishes.⁷⁸ The evidence that the chiefs either welcomed or used Hannum's services is ambiguous,⁷⁹ but his collusion with the small number of persistently dissident chiefs is very likely.⁸⁰ His letters give the impression of a desperate, impoverished lawyer down on his luck, for whom the Samoan cause

⁷⁴ The basic facts are traversed in Gray, *Amerika Samoa*, Olsen, 'The Navy and the White Man's Burden', and Shaffer, *American Samoa*, and discussed closely by Chappell, 'The forgotten Mau'. See nn. 8 and 9 above.

⁷⁵ The interpreter about whom the allegations were made was Alex Forsythe, who aspired to the position of Secretary of Native Affairs. This lends some substance to suggestions that 'half-caste' and expatriate machinations fuelled Samoan discontent. Memo for Captain Evans USN from C.F. Ely, USS *Wyoming* (n.d.), filed with documents dated Aug. 1920 in Governor's Office, Series #15, Subject files 1900–1958, Box 4.

⁷⁶ Petition to Secretary of the Navy commented on and rebutted in Evans to Secretary of the Navy, 29 July 1921.

⁷⁷ Mrs Ripley's employer.

⁷⁸ Hannum to Pollock, 26 Jan. 1922. American Samoa Governor's Office, Series #15, Subject Files 1900–1958, Box 5, folder Government Civil (The Samoan Cause). Copies of Hannum's letters to the chiefs included in Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 6 Oct. 1921.

⁷⁹ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 6 Oct. 1921.

⁸⁰ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 11 Mar. 1922.

was his best chance of achieving dignity and revenue, and who was therefore more interested in it than the Samoan chiefs whom he tried to mobilise.⁸¹ Sam Ripley continued legal action for a short while, but faded from the scene.

The other path was pursued by the discontented chiefs with some assistance or urging from resident traders,⁸² including 'half-castes', and one of Sam Ripley's sisters, Helen Wilson, whose husband had aspirations to the position of Secretary of Native Affairs.⁸³ Governor W. Evans (1920–22) believed that he had reconciled the Samoans,⁸⁴ and had difficulty subsequently finding anyone of importance who admitted supporting the movement or leading it.⁸⁵ After a change of governors, the dissidents tried again with E.T. Pollock (1922–23), who named those associated with the unrest as Creagh,⁸⁶ Hannum and Ripley, with Samoans Fanene (an *'afakasi* also known as 'Bull' Foster), Soliai and Lemafa. In a long meeting with the last three, he could not find any specific or substantial complaints or cause of grievance. Dissatisfaction proved to be about intra-Samoan jealousies, and fancied slights.⁸⁷ It is significant that the most serious incident of the early 1920s, and the only one that led to gaol sentences, was the conspiracy in August 1921 to murder some of the high chiefs who collaborated with the administration.⁸⁸ The conspirators were tried and sentenced to long gaol terms which, in the event, were not served in full. Apart from this incident, violence was not threatened, nor was the regime ever in danger of being overthrown or neutralised by non-cooperation. Pollock was faced with a mass demonstration of 200 men beating drums and armed with machetes the day after his meeting with Fanene and the others. Pollock made a show of force with marines from USS *Ontario* and there were no further such demonstrations.⁸⁹ Except in 1920, tax copra continued to be collected and services provided without interruption.

The grumbling, if not serious, was persistent.⁹⁰ As often as officials declared the movement dead, they produced further evidence that it was not, and of continued foreign input into the confused ideas expressed by the dissidents.⁹¹

⁸¹ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 18 July 1927.

⁸² Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 6 Oct. 1921.

⁸³ F.R. Wilson became Secretary of Native Affairs in 1921, but was soon replaced by Mr S.D. Hall. Wilson was one of a number of naval men who had married locally and gone into trade, and had a history of antagonism to the naval regime. E.g. F.R. Wilson to Secretary of the Navy, 12 Nov. 1915, American Samoa Governor's Office, Series #15, Subject files 1900–1958, Box 5, Folder Government, Civil, A Record of the Controversy on this Subject, File 1.

⁸⁴ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report, 1 July 1921, and 6 Oct. 1921.

⁸⁵ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 29 July 1921.

⁸⁶ Creagh (first name unknown) was another ex-navy man and trader who lived in San Francisco, and was believed by both Evans and Pollock to have instigated disorder. His company was one of those disadvantaged by the navy's trade policy. Evans to Secretary of the Navy, 6 Oct. 1921; Pollock to Secretary of the Navy, 11 Mar. 1922.

⁸⁷ Minutes were kept of this interview which was reported in detail in Pollock to Secretary for the Navy, 10 Apr. 1922.

⁸⁸ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 31 Aug. 1921.

⁸⁹ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 10 Apr. 1922.

⁹⁰ E.g., Secretary of Native Affairs to Governor, 30 Sept. 1923; Bryan to Secretary of the Navy, 18 July 1927.

⁹¹ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 1 May 1924.

When Captain S.V. Graham arrived as governor in 1927, a tax boycott was threatened. About this time, the two divergent paths coalesced again. Graham, like his predecessors, had talks with those chiefs calling themselves the 'Mau', discovered yet again the insubstantial nature of their complaints and the politico-legal misconceptions that had been imbibed in part from Hannum on which they were based, and noticed again the importance of jealousies among the chiefs. Like his predecessors also, Graham insisted on the laws being obeyed. However, taking the grievances at face value he inferred that all that was needed was for the government of Samoa to be put on a proper constitutional basis. He therefore proposed an Organic Act under which the navy would continue to rule the territory.⁹²

Graham's suggestion came shortly after the failure in the US Congress of the Lenroot Bill, a proposal by Senator I.L. Lenroot in 1925 taking up many of the issues raised by Hannum and Ripley. The bill's failure, followed soon after by Graham's unsuccessful urging of an Organic Act, stimulated Senator Hiram Bingham to move the ratification of the deeds of cession. This occurred in February 1929. Bingham further moved for a congressional inquiry which convened in Honolulu as well as in Pago Pago and elsewhere in the territory late in 1930. A large body of evidence was taken, very little of it indicating dissatisfaction, let alone serious grievances. Much testimony was in favour of the regime and its policies. If anything, American Samoans seemed to want more American colonialism, not less. The commission recommended an Organic Act which eventually came before Congress in February 1933 and like the Lenroot Bill did not pass. There the matter rested for another two decades, with the only reforms being the introduction into the American Samoan Code of a Bill of Rights, and the separation of the offices of Secretary of Native Affairs (which was now absorbed into the new office of Attorney General) and chief judge.⁹³ The latter had been urged by officials since 1901. Ironically, the failure of the long-delayed bill to pass Congress helped to settle the political restlessness. A group calling itself the Mau continued to meet until 1933. By this time, the mainly imaginary grievances of the Samoans had had a good airing and no longer caused trouble and in the 1930s circumstances continued much as they had in the 1910s, with the rapid turnover of governors and other officials, and an oscillation between protectionist and progressive neither of which had much impact on the slow pace of Samoan modernisation.

A persistent theme in the story of protest in American Samoa was the influence of self-interested whites and 'half-castes'. Their role as agitators is undeniable, but there is perhaps room for argument over the extent to which they influenced the Mau. A Samoan comment on them may be inferred from the recommendation of the annual *fono* that *matai* titles be restricted to men of three-quarter Samoan descent who lived as Samoans.⁹⁴ Insufficiently noticed, but consistent with

⁹² Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report for 1928, 16 July 1928.

⁹³ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, Annual Report for 1931, 27 July 1931.

⁹⁴ Attorney General to Governor, Annual Report, 1 July 1933.

the trends in Western Samoa, was the degree of division among the Samoans. The initial stages of the Mau were driven by men of relatively low chiefly status, and the greatest chiefs were never part of it.⁹⁵ The greatest chiefs, moreover, were virtually immune from challenge, because colonial government had frozen the status hierarchy. The administrative structure created by Tilley and Gurr had placed patronage, cash incomes and influence almost irretrievably in the hands of a few title-holders. It is hardly surprising that the highest chiefs should have been pro-navy, and the next generation and lower status chiefs should have been dissatisfied.⁹⁶ Whatever the prime source of dissatisfaction, the accusations of misgovernment and the assumptions of naval oppression are ill-founded. Notwithstanding, the American naval regime was characterised by firmness and directness; it preferred not to interfere in Samoan custom but did not hesitate when it thought that good governance required it, and its officials give consistent testimony over three decades that discontent was more associated with settler and 'transitional' individuals (the 'half-castes') than with significant Samoan opinion. To dismiss attributions of settler involvement is contrary to the evidence and appears to be influenced by the anti-colonial interpretations of the Western Samoa Mau.

New Zealand Samoa. The German and American experiences are suggestive for understanding the most serious and so far most intensively studied resistance movement, that in Western Samoa in the 1920s. In common with the others, the influence of non-Samoan *agents-provocateurs* was a recurrent theme among contemporaries, but one which is almost universally rejected by historians; yet, as in the other cases, there was a clear coincidence of interest between dissident Europeans and dissident Samoans, and incontrovertible communication between them.⁹⁷

The departing German regime left a legacy of impending trouble for reasons beyond the ability of any external authority to change without resorting to ruthless measures. Logan discerned that there was a pro-British feeling among the Samoans, but also that it was tentative and conditional.⁹⁸ One might add, opportunist. The disastrous influenza epidemic harmed the reputation of New Zealanders, but the subsequent indications of unrest focused on other issues. The first was economic. When copra prices fell after the war, while the prices of imported goods continued to rise, a boycott of traders was organised.⁹⁹ This affected all traders, including that of the 'half-caste' O.F. Nelson, later the champion of Samoan resistance. The sullenness of the *faipule* was gradually washed away by Tate and Richardson by taking them into their

⁹⁵ Evans noted that the greatest difficulty in achieving reconciliation in 1921 was between the loyal and disloyal chiefs. Annual Report, 1 July 1921.

⁹⁶ Governor to Secretary of the Navy, 31 Aug. 1921; also Gurr to Governor, 18 June 1923.

⁹⁷ Communication was also wider. News of disturbances in American Samoa in 1920 allegedly encouraged the Western Samoans' defiance. Wendt, 'Guardians and wards', 40.

⁹⁸ Administration of Samoa, Report by Colonel Logan, 8 July 1919, IT1 EX 1/10.

⁹⁹ Tate, Report on Samoan Affairs to Governor General, 7 Jan. 1921, IT1 EX 2/9.

confidence and enhancing their status. Richardson, the *bête noire* of the post-colonialist historians, was popular during his first term, from 1923 to 1926.¹⁰⁰ He offered more than mere hope of the fulfilment of modernising aspirations, and raised Samoan expectations. When Tate and Richardson spoke of Samoan contentment during those years, there is no substantial evidence to contradict them.

Those who were dissatisfied with New Zealand rule included two sets of people: the trading community, and some high-ranking chiefs who were outside the circle of those whose status was enhanced by association with the government, such as Afamasaga and (although he was a *fautua*) Tuimaleali'ifano. The trading community was upset because the regime was so overtly pro-Samoan. It would not unlock Samoan land, and, indeed, kept former German estates off the market and even intended that they should be reserved for Samoan resettlement and use. Moreover, the labour supply was restricted by government unwillingness to import labourers, and its refusal to allow such as came to take permanent residence. More publicised was the absolute ban on liquor, formerly prohibited only to Samoans, but banned by Tate in the interests of equality before the law and the absence of any impervious membrane between the settler and native communities. In this he was doing only what had already been long-established in American Samoa. Further, it was evident from both Tate's and Richardson's threats to control produce marketing that the regime constituted a danger to the merchants' continued prosperity. Then there were added taxes on the settlers, and the increase in the number of expatriate and Samoan civil servants, which was not only expensive but reduced the opportunity (never enjoyed under the Germans) for settlers to influence policy. Finally, the creation of a legislative council with its minority three elected seats for settlers did not meet their political aspirations. They were not mollified or satisfied by the proposed municipal government.

The Samoan discontent was specific rather than general. Tuimaleali'ifano shared *fautua* status with his traditional opponent Malietoa. It was difficult for both to support the government, and Malietoa, like earlier holders of the title for generations, was pro-British and remained a supporter of the administration throughout the years of the Mau. In any case, much more attention was paid to the lower ranking *faipule* than to these august chiefs. Afamasaga was an acculturated Samoan with close links to the traders. He was a trader himself, and a manufacturer and purveyor of illicit liquor, including the notorious 'All in One' homebrew that was brought in from American Samoa.¹⁰¹ Afamasaga and other chiefs who were not *faipule* found themselves outside the scope of government incomes and patronage, and their standing and self-esteem suffered accordingly. Fundamental to the rebellious outlook was the continuity with the past, and the fact that there was no reason for Samoan chiefs to relish the

¹⁰⁰ Eteuati, 'Evaevaga a Samoa', 57–9. Also Boyd, 'The record in Western Samoa to 1945', 142.

¹⁰¹ Richardson, Interim Report No. 2 on Native Affairs, 13 Feb. 1924, IT1 EX 88/3.

usurpation of the traditional leadership roles by foreigners, however enlightened or benevolent.

Active resistance began with the formation of the Citizens' Committee in 1920, chaired by O.F. Nelson, whose identity and legal status at this stage of his career was unequivocally European and who had been 'associated with every political agitation against the administration since 1910'.¹⁰² The second round also began with a European Citizens' Committee, in 1926, which again took the lead from Nelson. The outcome was a pair of documents critical of the government. One was entitled 'European Report' and the other 'Samoan Report'. The latter purported to present Samoan grievances, but was clearly written by someone whose mother tongue was English. Both were replete with allegations that were easily refuted, and should for that reason be regarded as mischievous.¹⁰³ Collaboration between dissenting Europeans and Samoans is undeniable. This was the coalition that seemed to have been a possibility in 1914, and was, in effect, delayed 12 years by the change of regime from German to New Zealander.

As events unfolded, European leadership was overtaken by Samoan leadership and, guided by Nelson, the protest became a mass movement. Nelson's enormous wealth, derived from his successful trading enterprises in Samoa, funded a newspaper which kept up a steady stream of anti-administration propaganda. Prominent chiefs including Afamasaga, Tuimaleali'ifano, Faumuina and Tupua Tamasese joined the movement, but not Malietoa. With all the highest chiefs driving the movement, few could stay aloof, and as the agitation gathered ground and became more audacious, the unwillingness of the administration to use force or repression became both a weakness and an object of contempt. The Mau generated a momentum of excitement and defiance without danger, but it was a movement which had nothing to offer the mass of the people, and ultimately made heavy demands on them by reducing the standard of living through the vitiation of the administration's development projects.

Until confrontation led to loss of life on 29 December 1929 — one European policeman and 11 Samoans, including the high chief Tupua Tamasese — the administration's approach had been one of restraint easily seen as weakness. The Germans and the Americans called in naval support much earlier in their respective crises. New Zealand delayed, hoping more pacific measures would be effective, until the fatal riot. A warship was thereupon summoned, and the Samoans realised that defiance had its price after all, whereupon the movement collapsed quickly. It became evident that popular support had little stamina, and in the eventual resolution in 1936 the chiefs were easily satisfied with symbolic gestures that changed little structurally but increased their personal benefits from the regime and enhanced their status. In effect, what was achieved was a redistribution of privilege from those chiefs who had cooperated with the New Zealand regime to those who had been least cooperative. Many of

¹⁰² Boyd, 'The record in Western Samoa to 1945', 147.

¹⁰³ Various documents, dated Dec. 1926, at IT1 EX 88/3.

the specific grievances related to measures that the *faipule* themselves had agreed to, or suggested. It was not so much that the New Zealanders ruled badly, but that New Zealanders were ruling, and that their doing so was a standing humiliation and reproach to the highest chiefs. As many of them said on repeated occasions, the real grievance was the Three Power agreement of 1899 that took power out of Samoan hands without so much as a token acknowledgement that Samoans might have a voice in the matter.¹⁰⁴ The aftermath shows the true nature of the affair: as in Solf's time, and as indicated in American Samoa, the Mau had the appearance of an anti-colonial revolt, but the substance was more to do with asserting the traditional dynamic of indigenous Samoan politics.

It is apparent, therefore, that the greater level of resistance met with in Western Samoa is not a function of greater high-handedness and severity, or of neglect. By the standards set by the other two regimes, New Zealand's administration was anything but extreme. The allegations and justifications by both Samoans and settler critics ought not therefore to be taken at face value. Graham, the governor to whom is attributed the conceptual breakthrough that brought about a satisfactory conclusion in American Samoa, believed that that territory's uncertain legal status was the main difficulty, though not the cause. That certainly was not the case in Western Samoa, where the definite legal status was made into a grievance. But in Western Samoa there is evidence that chiefly status and jealousies were at least part of the problem, as Graham believed was the real issue in American Samoa. As an afterthought, Graham also suggested that the American lack of development policies ('drift' as he called it) was a serious problem. That, too, is quite the opposite of the Western Samoan case. The inference to be drawn from this is that whatever line a colonial government took it could be used as a justification for non-cooperation. This suggests that causes and meaning should be sought elsewhere.

Implications: The Meaning of Resistance

It is ahistorical to represent the plans and efforts of these colonial regimes as oppressive, exploitative or violent. The rationale for their existence was largely the need to reconcile or control the relationships between populations that were differently constituted. Although ethnic differences were often conceived in racial or biological terms, the essential difference was cultural, and this was understood by contemporaries. Irrespective of the perturbations and convolutions of international politics towards the end of the 19th century, which have traditionally been used as the explanation for European imperialism, foreign rule became inevitable in Samoa as soon as it became a destination for land-seeking settlers. All that was at issue was whether the foreign government would be conducted by settlers or whether it would be exercised by foreign states.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., Native Department, Report, 31 Mar.–31 Dec. 1921, IT1 EX 2/9.

For all their co-option of Samoan chiefs, the succession of governments at least from 1875 to 1890 were settler governments operating behind a Samoan façade and often undermined by the persistent reality of Samoan politics. They thus satisfied the needs of neither settlers nor Samoans and failed to establish peace. European settlement was a major factor in Samoan instability, compounding the already unstable *malo-vaivai* dynamic, and this did not cease with the establishment of colonial authority. The condominium government between 1890 and 1899 was an attempt to remedy the inherently crisis-prone imbalance but lacked the coercive power or moral authority to succeed. The civil war of 1899 did not solve any problems, but merely demonstrated their permanence. Although it was not a 'race' war, European elements were largely responsible for it in so far as they nominated a king unacceptable to the strongest Samoan interest group. Had it ever come about that settlers could identify overwhelmingly with one party, then a Samoan-settler war must have ensued. That the 1899 war was the last Samoan civil war is due to one thing only: the presence of colonial government. This background is indispensable to understanding the resistance movements of the next 30 years. The assumption built into most analyses of the various Mau in the two Samoas is that the presence or absence of a resistance movement is an index of the merit of the colonial administration: that protest means government is bad and, presumably, the absence of protest means that government is good. Most historians of both Samoas have under-rated the implications of *malo* and *vaivai*, and have likewise taken at face value the allegations of misgovernment and high-handedness that derive from the Maus' own propaganda. They have assumed for the most part that the resister must be right, that if there is a resistance movement it must be because there are grievances that are not just genuine, but legitimate, and that resisters are not capable of manufacturing false propaganda.

This is to approach the phenomenon of colonial resistance from the wrong direction, because it makes misgovernment a necessary condition for resistance. This in turn assumes an exceptionally asymmetrical moral universe: that colonised people would have no objection to colonial government as long as it was 'good' government. It follows from this that colonial administration really could acquire legitimacy by the moral value of its own actions. The explanation for resistance is therefore predicated on the assumption that the foreign government has in some way violated its legitimacy and brought about its own difficulties. This in effect denies the essential difference between colonial regimes and indigenous regimes; it transposes an implicit model of rebellion from European history to colonial history and imposes on colonial territories the same expectations that there should be unity of identity and purpose between governors and governed as should prevail in a nation state or unitary society. This further implies that governments forfeit their legitimacy by corruption, oppression or incompetence, or in some other way losing the confidence of the people.

Colonial government and colonial resistance are intrinsically different from this implied model. Colonial government does not derive legitimacy from a shared identity, for it is an alien presence. Its legitimacy is conventional rather than 'natural' or moral; often it has no legitimacy at all, but asserts its power merely on the basis of coercive strength. It may possess an external legitimacy through international agreement, and it might seek to acquire local legitimacy through good governance, but it has no inherent right to the loyalty or even acquiescence of the governed. Consequently, resistance movements in Samoa are 'over-explained' by historians who think they need a special justification, and determine to find it in misgovernment. To suggest that Samoans themselves saw things this way is to suppose that they had no objection to foreign government *per se*, that unlike Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman whom Davidson quoted, Samoans might have preferred good-government to self-government.¹⁰⁵ If Samoans themselves saw things in this way, no evidence has been presented for it. Indeed, Samoan leaders repeatedly pointed out that they had never consented to foreign rule, one characteristic of which was to freeze the late pre-colonial political order.

There is no theoretical requirement or empirical necessity that Samoans or other colonised peoples needed objective reasons to rebel: it is sufficient that they should simply prefer their own ways, and the reason for this is adequately found in their own perceptions, feelings and social organisation. The fact of the foreignness of a colonial government is justification enough. Since it lacks 'natural' legitimacy, its presence alone invites resistance. The absence of such resistance would call for explanation, and would swing on three possibilities: first that popular identity was so fragmented or vague that the differences of the foreign government were held to be insignificant; the second that governance was so good that people were fully aware that they were better off with it than without it; third, that colonial authority was so powerful or ruthless that people did not dare resist. All pre-colonial governments in the Pacific were of the society that they governed: threads of kinship, obligation, culture and expectation were shared by governed and governors. Even this did not ensure stability, but oppression and injustice were or could be tolerated as part of the natural order. Foreign benevolence could be resisted because it was not 'natural' or part of the traditional moral order. In such cases, rebellion is not a result of a colonial government forfeiting legitimacy, but of failing to gain it. The supposition that it could have gained legitimacy presupposes a willingness on the part of the governed to allow it legitimacy. If they do not, resistance will probably follow and needs no further explanation. This is what happened in colonial Samoa under three regimes in two adjacent territories over a period of 30 years. The continuity during Samoan colonial history of pre-colonial Samoan political ideas and behaviour, including the involvement of settlers in the politics of both periods, is the fundamental and unappreciated variable.

¹⁰⁵ Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, 179.

ABSTRACT

Attempts to explain the Mau in Western Samoa have generally examined it in isolation, thus throwing the emphasis onto the particularities of the New Zealand administration. Comparison has been limited to passing references intimating that the New Zealand administration was unusually incompetent and provocative. A closer comparison shows significant structural similarities between German, American and New Zealand regimes, but with the latter providing greater opportunities for Samoans in administration and development. Moreover, New Zealand officials expressed equal concern for welfare but greater confidence in Samoan capacity for development. The differences between the regimes were probably less significant in practical terms than has been assumed, and the resistance movements under each show a recurrence of certain themes, particularly the contributory role of part- and non-Samoans, and status rivalry between chiefs and lineages along traditional lines. Colonial resistance thus does not depend on colonial misgovernment so much as on a sense of indigenous identity, and the greater level of resistance in New Zealand Samoa reflects the greater opportunities for political expression.

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