

# AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM IN AMERICAN SAMOA

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## ABSTRACT

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American Samoa has been a territory of the United States for 108 years. For fifty years of this period, American Samoa was administered by the U.S. Navy. The policies of the naval administration established practices of militarization—that is, integrating the military and its values into the lives of the locals—that continue today. Significant numbers of American Samoans serve in the various branches of the U.S. military; Samoans participate in, and support, the ‘incoherent empire’ of the United States. The ideology of ‘American exceptionalism’—the incorporation of democracy, freedom and human rights as features purportedly distinguishing U.S. imperialist practice from its colonizing forebears—was never effectively part of the administration of American Samoa. Nevertheless, when debating their future political status, Samoans choose to keep the present political arrangement as long as they can control their land and titles system and practice *fa’aSamoa*, the Samoan way.

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Keywords: American Samoa, American exceptionalism, militarization, *fa’aSamoa*

### *Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

American Samoa has been a territory of the United States since April 1900, when the High Chiefs of Tutuila signed what they understood as a gift of their islands to the U.S. in return for protection, and 1904, when the High Chiefs of the Manu’a island group agreed to sign a treaty with the U.S. in return for promoting education on the islands.<sup>2</sup> Since that time, the Samoan chiefs have worked to keep the integrity of their land and titles system in the new political arrangement. The islands were governed by the U.S. naval administration for the first fifty years of the twentieth century and were separated politically from other islands with a shared culture. American Samoa is still on the UN list of occupied territories and periodically American Samoans review their political status and their options. The most recent review took place in 2006 and the final report of the Future Political Status Study Commission of American Samoa was issued on January 2, 2007. The final decision about sovereignty, which is to be debated by the general population, is still not clear at the time of this writing (April 2008). The Samoans are free to decide what kind of government they want, but, as it turns out, the choice is not so easy. This paper, based on my research in 2006–07, looks at the context for that choice and contemporary issues which concern Samoans. It is an attempt to contribute to an understanding of “empire in the details” as called for by Catherine Lutz (2006) and to suggest where the fault lines might lie in the American empire as experienced in one territory.

I will focus my discussion of American involvement in Samoa around three concepts: imperialist activities, American exceptionalism, and militarization. These concepts are part of a larger debate about American empire: whether there is one, when it began, and what its status is now. *Imperialist activities* refer to the political control or use of force over other states or territories, either temporary or permanent, as a measure of U.S. involvement in various global sites (Go 2007b: 8). By this standard, there were four waves of U.S. imperialist activity: 1810–25, 1840–70, 1898–1926 and 1981–2003 (Go 2007b: 18). The first two waves were part of establishing the nation-state. Prior to 1898, the expansion west of the American nation was done with the intention of creating European-American settler colonies in newly acquired territories at the expense of the Native American inhabitants. However, the acquisition of distant territories in 1898, which were not intended to be inhabited by large numbers of European-Americans, changed the nature of the expansion and required new categories of governance (Thompson 2002: 537). Since 1898, the U.S. has had a colonial empire, and one territory is American Samoa. George Steinmetz (2003, for Western Samoa), Julian Go (2007a) and others have pointed out that there was no one clear face of colonialism in general or American colonialism in particular. Despite an ideological position of *exceptionalism*—that is, that the United States was not a colonial master in the same way as previous empires because of its emphasis on democratic values—the evidence in Samoa and other territories undermines this position (Go 2007a). What happened in Samoa was similar to what happened in Guam at the same time because both were ruled by the U.S. Navy for approximately the same fifty-year period. In both places there was a military governor who was the commander of the naval station and the governor of the islands, with jurisdiction over all military and civil matters (Thompson 2002: 560). From the beginning, the Navy established practices of *militarization*—integrating the military and its values into the lives of the locals—that continues today, although there are also significant differences between Guam and Samoa.

As useful as they are, these three concepts put the emphasis on American activities, while Samoan involvement with America begins with *fā'aSamoa*, the Samoan way. A long time ago, Te Rangi Hiroa (also known as Peter H. Buck) noted that Samoan persistence in custom led to the retention of much of their material culture compared to other Pacific islands. Hiroa felt that, as a result of this persistence, the introduction of a foreign culture made little fundamental difference to the basis of Samoan society (Hiroa 1971 [1930]: 5–6). Of course, historically there have been major changes in Samoan society, as a result of Christianity, for example; I am simply looking at how a certain persistent Samoan structure and logic interacted with a particular colonial endeavor in the twentieth century. A phrase heard commonly today, “our land and titles system”, is shorthand for a ranked social structure based on extended families (*'aiga*), each with a head (*matai*) who is in charge of the family's land and resources. Gradually men (sometimes women) earn a title or titles, which are ranked from lesser *matais* to high chiefs. *Matais* meet for consensual political decision-making from the family to the village to the national level, in meetings called *fonos*. I will focus here on three aspects of the Samoan situation: how Samoan social structure, with its own internal conflicts, has had to balance *fā'aSamoa* with American interests; how the Samoan islands have been incorporated into the American nation-state as part of the larger process of militarization of local communities (Lutz 2001, 2002, 2005); and the implications today of what Michael Mann (2003) calls the “incoherent empire”.

*The Fita Fita guard*

American Samoa consists of the small island of Tutuila and the Manu'a group of three small islands (Ofu, Olesega and Ta'û). Nearby is the independent state of Samoa (formerly Western Samoa), consisting of two large islands, Upolu and Savai'i, and several smaller islands. Before 1900, all the Samoan islands formed one cultural and political unit and today they still see themselves as one cultural unit. Based on her research in the 1980s, Eleanor Leacock (1988) argued that both Samoas formed a unity. By 2008, they continue to form a cultural unity that is becoming skewed by global economic and political events. Nevertheless, 50% of the population currently living in American Samoa was born in independent Samoa, so there is unity between the islands through kinship connections, family rituals and common projects.<sup>3</sup>

The Samoan islands were split up during the colonial era in the Pacific. In 1900 the Eastern Samoan islands were colonized by the Americans while the Western Samoan islands were colonized by the Germans. After Germany was defeated in the First World War, New Zealand was made the administrator of Western Samoa, and eventually Western Samoa achieved independence in 1962. American Samoa shows no interest in being reunited with independent Samoa and every time the issue of American Samoa as a colony comes before the UN, American Samoa says it prefers its status and asks to be taken off the list of colonies. The lack of interest in unity on the part of American Samoans has been on record since the 1950s and the underlying points of tension are land and titles: at one time Tutuila was under the authority of high chiefs on Upolu (Atua district) and chiefs from Upolu owned land on Tutuila (which they might try to claim again), while Manu'a was never under the authority of Upolu or Savai'i. The relationship with the Americans has provided American Samoa with resources and the possibility to migrate to the U.S.; independent Samoa relies on its relationship with New Zealand, and for a long time this was seen as providing fewer opportunities (although that perception is changing today).

It has been argued that the United States was not a colonial power like others—Great Britain being the usual comparison—because of the American revolutionary history and commitment to an ideology of freedom, democracy and human rights. This has been cited as the basis for American exceptionalism: why American colonialism is different from that of European nations.<sup>4</sup> Julian Go (2007a) has shown how, despite the rhetoric, the ideals of democracy—specifically, training the colonies for self-rule and transferring power to democratically elected rulers—did not apply to most American colonies, being realized to some extent only in the Philippines. And, as Go further suggests, the American policy in all the colonies was closer to British indirect rule than many have admitted, where the Americans relied on their friendship with local leaders who, in turn, governed the people according to American interests. Thus, the ideology of winning the 'hearts and minds' of the locals (which we hear about Iraq today) was set into practice about 1900 as the U.S. expanded its global reach. In fact, the Americans were mostly interested in ruling in an easy and cheap way and the compliance of local leaders was the strategy for achieving this in all the territories (Go 2007a: 87). In American Samoa and Guam, because both places were considered to be friendly, orderly and non-violent, and because they did not have plantation commodities for global trade, the naval administration had a paternal tone to its rule and saw its role as keeping the peace and protecting the 'natives'. This is what Go

(2004, 2007a) calls the “provinciality” of American empire: there were variations in the nature of colonial governance based on the perceived characteristics of those it claimed to rule. Samoa was perceived as a land of plenty, where the natives did not have to work too hard in order to get food and where life was lived in an easy natural state.

In Samoa, the U.S. Navy relied on the traditional system of chiefs and in Guam they relied on district officers who had run the regions under the Spanish. In both cases, all decisions rested with the Naval Governor so that there was no separation of powers and no democratic rule on the islands. The Naval Governor rotated through the job for about two years, resulting in a succession of officers who changed frequently, usually before they knew much about the local situation. In both colonies, the Navy moved quickly to set up local militias. In Guam, in 1915, they set up an Insular Force with Chamorro men and in 1917 they organized a system of universal military training, where every fit man between sixteen and twenty-three years of age served in active duty (unpaid) in the Guam Militia. The Guam Militia grew to about 900 men and in 1919 it became part of the U.S. Naval Reserve (Rogers 1995: 138). In Samoa, the Navy immediately organized the *Fita Fita* Guard, a paid volunteer militia that became a sign of status with its uniform, payments and benefits (for example, access to purchasing goods in the Naval Station store). In Guam, over time, every family came to have at least one member in the military (Rogers 1995: 140). While American Samoa did not have a compulsory militia, over time, families gained a reputation as military families, with several generations of men (and now women) who have served in the U.S. military.

Guam was given an Organic Act by the U.S. Congress in 1950, which made Guam’s population citizens of the United States.<sup>5</sup> It remained, however, an unorganized territory, meaning that it was not on a path to statehood. For years, Guam has tried for the status of commonwealth, without success (Rogers 1995; Perez 2005).<sup>6</sup> Guam has always been too important as a military base. In 1950, as part of the Organic Act legislation, President Truman claimed, for security reasons, 36% of the island’s land for the U.S. military, as well as military control of the harbor, water and electricity services, and communications systems. Guam has become a major supply depot and base in the Pacific. When the Samoan team investigating the future political status of Samoa visited Guam in 2006, they heard unhappy stories about being second class citizens of the United States and many complaints about immigration and the loss of Chamorro land and culture. Such stories are red flags of warning for the Samoans as they consider their own political future and these stories were repeated in the public meetings about political status that I attended in 2006 in Samoa.

Researchers know about the activities of the naval administration in Samoa through the Navy’s archival materials, and these materials reflect the concerns of the Navy. J. A. C. Gray (1960), a medical doctor for the Naval Station, had direct access to court records in American Samoa and anthropologist Felix Keesing (1934) obviously gathered information directly from the local American administrators. More recently, researchers have relied on microfiche versions of the archives, housed in American Samoa or on the mainland at San Bruno, California and Washington D.C. (Olsen 1976; Chappell 2000; Sunia 2001; Kennedy 2004). The court cases, which are one section of the total archives, are housed only in American Samoa and offer the best insight into the dialogue that went on between Samoans and the American judges. I have reviewed the court cases (which are no longer complete) and the naval archives; this account is based on the previous research and my own interpretation of the archival data.

The first Naval Commander, B.F. Tilley, established the *Fita Fita* in June 1900 because he believed that military training was good for establishing discipline (Gray 1960: 127).<sup>7</sup> Tilley also designed the *Fita Fita* uniforms: white Navy undershirts, blue lava-lavas, turbans and waist sashes of Navy issue red muslin, and bare feet. The guardsmen were issued cutlasses and revolvers and M1895 6mm Lee navy rifles (Kennedy 2004: 156), at a time when other Samoans had been stripped of their weapons. In 1904 they were issued musical instruments and part of their activity was as a drum corps; they performed at most of the naval ceremonies. By 1911, English was being taught to *Fita Fita* guardsmen. There were originally thirty-five guardsmen; this number grew to seventy-six by the 1930s, and they were paid \$25.00 per month (Kennedy 2004: 142, 154).

Respect (*fā'aaloalo*) is very important in Samoan culture and service (*tautua*) is one way in which one earns respect. Generally, young people work for the extended family (the *'aiga*), the church and the village and through this service they gain respect and high status as they grow older. It is a cultural pattern that could—and does—dovetail easily with military service. Because Samoan social structure revolves around questions of ranking and status, it is not surprising that the *Fita Fita* guards had to be placed appropriately into the ranking system. In the early years, some tension over status was reported between the *Fita Fita* guardsmen and the village associations of young men (*aumaga*). In one instance in the village of Fagatoga, a *taupou* (high-ranking chief's daughter) from Upolu was visiting with her female entourage when the *aumaga* hosting her got into a fight with some *Fita Fita* guardsmen who showed up unannounced to meet the women. Five men from each group were fined for fighting but the incident, and the ranking, was finally resolved when 60 members of the *aumaga* went to apologize to the *Fita Fita* guardsmen (Gray 1960: 155–56).

Recognizing that a new hierarchical arrangement had to be worked out with the presence of the Americans, many of the early *Fita Fita* guard members were chiefs or the sons of high-ranking chiefs (Kennedy 2004: 159). For example, in 1902, the title of paramount chief, Tuitele, became open after the death of Tuitele Penitila. From his deathbed, Penitila named his son, Toomata, as his successor but this was disputed by the man holding the high orator title, Leoso, who claimed that it was his right to name the Tuitele. A court case was held to determine who had the right to name the successor and who should hold the title. Toomata was chosen by the court but Toomata did not want to accept the title because he was in the *Fita Fita* and he preferred that role to the title. As a result, the decision awarded the title to an old man, Save, an outsider, with the provision that Toomata would succeed after Save's death (HC Case 1–1902). Toomata eventually became Tuitele in 1912. The point is, with the presence of the U.S. Naval Station on Tutuila, the chiefly hierarchy adjusted its preferences in order to be sure to cover all the political possibilities.

The prestige of the *Fita Fita* guard was such that Felix Keesing wrote in the 1930s:

The aristocrats of American Samoa today are the Fitafitas. In terms of their economic standing and the stimulus they give to the ambitions of Samoan youth, they are only rivaled by the government clerks and taxi-drivers of Apia. Actually their force of 76 draws in pay annually approximately a third as much as the amount received for the whole copra crop of the territory. While their outlook tends to be individualistic as their work keeps them largely outside the Samoan system until they retire, the bulk of their earnings go into the hands of relatives in the *fā'aSamoa* way. Some of the Fitafitas live in the barracks, but most have homes of white style in the neighboring communities in accordance with the official aim of keeping them in touch with their own society.

The influence of the Fitafitas and of the younger people around Pango Pango, together with the example of whites and mixed bloods, has been profound (Keesing 1934: 347, original spelling).

The function of the *Fita Fita* was often to respond to any conflicts between the laws of the United States (as enforced by the Navy) and *fa'aSamoa* (Kennedy 2004: 160). As early as 1904, there is correspondence indicating that local chiefs sometimes requested *Fita Fita* support. For example, in 1904 High Chief Fai'ivae wrote to the Naval Governor:

I hope and wait for the Fita Fita to come back to Leone in two weeks to stay here in Leone and take care of the government land and the flag, as was done before. But about any other trouble that might take place in the District, I can stop it. One Fita Fita, Taiese, remains here to look after the government land and to take care of the flag. I told Poti [the Fita Fita leader] to let your Excellency know this. (Quoted by Kennedy 2004: 166)

The traditional chiefs stretched their authority into the *Fita Fita* and the *Fita Fita* association with the naval administration. It suited the Samoan concept of service, it extended chiefly power (or *pule*), and at the same time it began a process of militarization in American Samoa that has continued over the last 108 years.

#### *Samoa titles and the naval administration*

The U.S. Navy's presence in Samoa is often characterized as being paternal, that is, somewhat condescending but also protective of Samoans (Gray 1960; Olsen 1976; Go 2004). To protect the Samoans, there were Navy rules against allowing foreign immigrants into the islands (other than Samoans from Western Samoa) and laws forbidding the marriage of Navy men with local women. A frequent example of a protective action was the decision by the Naval Governor in 1918 not to allow travel or contact with Western Samoa (which was normally quite frequent) during a major global flu epidemic. While thousands died in Western Samoa (and several hundred in Guam), American Samoa was spared. The failure of New Zealand to protect its Samoan territory from the epidemic contributed to the anti-government Mau rebellion in Western Samoa in the 1920s. The most important protective measure—and one that resounds today—was taken by Commander Tilley in 1900 when he immediately passed a regulation prohibiting the sale of Samoan land to non-Samoans.

More often, however, the Naval Governors misunderstood Samoan customs and enforced decisions in the early years according to military rules or an interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, which did not apply to Samoa according to the deeds of cession. Not surprisingly, many incidents involved issues of rank and the Navy's policy often affected Samoan social structure. There was little or no attempt to encourage Samoan independence; on the other hand, the chiefs did not back down easily regarding *fa'aSamoa* and the Navy was often involved in local title disputes. One situation which extended over at least fifteen years—and maybe even more—was the case of the Tuimanu'a, the paramount chief of the Manu'a island group. In 1900, the Tuimanu'a of the time, Elisara, would not sign the Deed of Cession with the U.S., telling the naval representative that he was the head of a sovereign state and he did not need the U.S. Although the Tuimanu'a allowed the Americans to raise their flag on Ta'u in 1900, it took several years before the Tuimanu'a agreed to sign



the Deed of Cession—on July 16, 1904—and it seems that he did so partly under pressure and partly in order to get money to establish schools on Manu'a (Gray 1960: 109–110; Chappell 2000: 223). The Naval Commanders, however, did not respond well to insubordination and over the years they worked to chip away—and eventually destroy—the title of Tuimanu'a.<sup>8</sup>

The Tuimanu'a was the highest ranking chief in American Samoa. He was a divine king in Polynesian terms and Manu'a had a special status relative to the other Samoan islands.<sup>9</sup> This meant that Tuimanu'a Elisara was treated with elaborate codes of respect regarding his body, the body language of others, the food that he ate, language used in his presence, and so on. It meant also that Samoan history, especially in Manu'a, was organized around the “heroic I” of the Tuimanu'a (Sahlins 1991). The Tuimanu'a was an individual who had an extraordinary position in Samoan society—across all the islands—even though the actual holder of the position, in good Samoan fashion, was open to debate and challenge. On Manu'a, what the Tuimanu'a did, all others followed. So when the Tuimanu'a of the day was converted to Christianity by London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries in about 1840, all of Manu'a became followers of the LMS and no other religious groups were allowed to send missionaries to Manu'a. Elisara himself had been trained as an LMS pastor at their college in Apia, Western Samoa, before he succeeded to the Tuimanu'a title.

The naval administration did not like the independence of the Tuimanu'a (Olsen 1976: 10). Although ‘king’ was not an appropriate English translation of the Tuimanu'a's position—and he and others tried for years to explain this to the Americans—the naval government applied American logic: a king was a threat to the authority of the Naval Commander. Later, Governor Bryan described him as holding three positions: a preacher, a governor and a king (Bryan 1926).

The case of the *ipu* cup in 1902 was the first step to undermine the Tuimanu'a's status and it illustrates how internal Samoan competition could combine with naval logic. Briefly, in this incident a group of government visitors visited the island of Ofu, part of Manu'a, but not where the Tuimanu'a resided. The visiting delegation included High Chief Mauga Moimoi from Pago Pago. Under the naval government of the time, High Chief Mauga was District Governor of the Eastern District, High Chief Tuitele was District Governor of the Western District and the Tuimanu'a was District Governor of Manu'a. The visiting delegation was greeted with the customary 'ava ceremony by the Ofu chiefs although the Ofu high chief was absent. The ceremonial drinking of 'ava (commonly spelled *kava*) is highly ritualized, where the 'ava drink is distributed according to rules of precedence and ranking. Important *matai* often have “ava titles” by which their 'ava cups are known. The Tuimanu'a's cup was called “*o le ipu*” (the cup) and no one else in the islands could use the word “*ipu*”, using instead “*o le taumafu*” (the cup) (Gray 1960: 142). In the ceremony, Mauga demanded to be served 'ava by using the word *ipu*, which he knew was not allowed. However, Mauga argued that he was now equal to the Tuimanu'a since both were District Governors, so he too was entitled to be served with the term *ipu*. It was a challenge to the Ofu chiefs and they responded with a compromise: they addressed Mauga by saying “*Aumai le ipu o le Kovana!*” (‘Bring the Governor's cup!’), as they had used for the Naval Commandant (Gray 1960: 144). Nevertheless, when the Tuimanu'a heard about this he was enraged and ordered exile, a traditional punishment, for the Ofu chiefs. The pro-Mauga chiefs gathered 250 warriors in preparation for war in response (Chappell 2000:

228). The Naval Commander had to ensure that he controlled order and punishment on the islands and, after several court hearings, the Tuimanu'a was rebuffed by the court and he had to back down. The Tuimanu'a himself was silent about the case but years later, in 1927, old Mauga Moimoi told Bruce Cartwright—referring to the *ipu* cup case—that the title of Tuimanu'a had been lost in battle with the chiefs of Tutuila and thus the title became extinct (Cartwright Notebook I: 90). The event was an internal power struggle among the Samoan chiefs, a push by Moimoi for status, and a chance for the Americans to exercise the rule of law. In later cases with other Tuimanu'a title claims, the naval government took the position that there can be no kings in U.S. territories, according to the Constitution of the United States. As the Samoans correctly noted, however, there was a treaty with the United States but no official recognition of Samoa as a territory of the United States until 1929. So it was a bit premature, legally, for the Naval Commanders to assume that the laws of the U.S. applied to Samoa (and to this day, not all the rights and duties of the U.S. Constitution apply to American Samoa).

The militarization of American Samoa went hand-in-hand with the accepted rightness of the 'rule of law'. However, decisions were contested at every point by the Samoans, and in many ways the naval presence did not intrude on Samoan social structure and customs (McMullin 2005). But the tension remained: who had the ultimate authority, the chiefs or the naval administration? Military concepts intertwined with Samoan practices of hierarchy, sometimes smoothly, and sometimes by breaking traditional modes of authority. One example in 1900—the skipjack affair—seemed relatively insignificant to the naval administration but it had repercussions for the chiefs, according to their testimony later (Gray 1960: 134; Keesing 1934: 244; Olsen 1976: 78). In the skipjack case, a village man, a junior *matai*, caught a *malauli* (a bonito of a certain size, called a skipjack by the Americans). At this size, it was a fish reserved for chiefs although both smaller and larger versions of bonito could be eaten by everyone. The junior *matai* took it home, cooked it for his family, and they ate it. His chief, High Chief Letuli, saw the family eating the fish and punished the junior chief for breaking *fa'aSamoa*. As punishment, Letuli ordered that the man be banished from the village and that his house and plantations be burned (a common sanction). The man went for protection to Leone to Paramount Chief Tuitele (a common procedure). Tuitele in turn granted him protection and ordered Letuli to come to him. Letuli refused to come and either Tuitele, acting in his role as District Governor, or perhaps it was the London Missionary Society representative (Wright n.d.), reported him to the naval administration. The Naval Governor sent the police to bring Letuli in and Letuli was tried and punished for taking authority into his own hands. As punishment, Letuli was stripped of his chiefly title and made to stay at the Naval Station for one year. The military chain of command had been broken and Letuli was a public example of what would happen to those who ignored it. Many years later, the Samoan chiefs told a visiting commission that the skipjack case had broken the authority of the Samoan chiefs, especially their authority over junior *matais*. The chiefs complained to Felix Keesing in the 1930s that this incident contributed to the lack of respect and bad behavior of young Samoans in and around the Naval Station. Specifically, one chief complained that *tautua* (the tradition of service) had been broken: the young men who knew they were in line for a title did not care to obey or serve the chiefs because they knew that the High Court, which emphasized inheritance, would award them the title without service. The result was that the chiefs



relied on unrelated young men to serve them, even though these men could never assume the title (Keesing 1934: 244, 348). This same issue of recognizing service over inheritance in *matai* title cases was still being debated in 2007, with Congressman Faleomavaega being very outspoken in favor of service as the more important criterion.

The Mau movement against the U.S. Navy in American Samoa, which was active during the 1920s, revealed clearly Samoan grievances caused by the presence of the Americans. Ever since 1905, when Governor Moore set up a territory-level *fono* where the chiefs could send their delegates, the chiefs had been asking questions about how money was raised and spent, and how the islands were governed. By 1920, the chiefs openly challenged the naval administration (Chappell 2000: 233). Mauga Moimoi—the same man who had signed the Deed of Cession in 1900, challenged the Tuimanu’a, and who lived until 1935—began to question the financial affairs of the colony, the lack of respect for the chiefs, the fact that the gift of Samoa was never officially accepted by the U.S. Congress, the unequal pay for the *Fita Fita* guards as compared to naval personnel, the protection of Samoan women and many other issues. In fact, David Chappell (2000: 231) calls it “the Mauga’s Mau” because Mauga was so active against the Navy.

As tensions rose among the chiefs and the Navy became nervous, High Chiefs Mauga and Satele were removed from their District Governorships. In one incident, called the “Faleniu 17”, the Navy used the *Fita Fita* on Tutuila as a militia against the rebellious chiefs (Chappell 2000: 241; Kennedy 2004: 277). During this incident, an armed detachment of *Fita Fita* was sent to the village of Faleniu (a Mau center) to break up an anti-government *fono*. Chief Fonoti said to the *Fita Fita*, “if you want war with us, you have to shoot first.” To diffuse the situation, seventeen chiefs returned to Pago Pago with the *Fita Fita* and were put on trial the next day (Kennedy 2004: 308). The trial revealed internal tensions about rank as some of the chiefs said that they did not oppose the naval administration so much as the failure of certain high chiefs to acknowledge them (309). Ten of these men received sentences of seven and a half years in prison at hard labor and twelve and a half years probation. Seven received sentences of five years in prison and ten years probation. In addition, the defendants were told to instruct their followers to behave and were informed that they were all stripped of their titles (313). This was especially offensive to the Samoans, since the cession treaties had agreed not to impinge on *fā’a Samoa*.

Lualemaga stood up and said: “Nobody in this world will take my title away from me. The governor has no power to take my title.” (...) Similarly, Galeai spoke up and correctly informed the court that his title was not a matter over which any American had jurisdiction. Judge (Sydney) Hall [not a lawyer] replied to this by saying, “Just for that, I’ll make your sentence 5 years.” (Kennedy 2004: 313, quoting a letter from Ripley to Harding, December 30, 1921; also in Chappell 2000: 242)

The chiefs were referring to the fact that the U.S. Congress had never ratified the Deeds of Cession of 1900 and 1904. Therefore, Samoans were in a peculiar position regarding legitimacy and Mauga asked in the national *fono* whether civil or Navy laws applied to them (Chappell 2000: 235). From prison, Chief Fonoti wrote a letter about the Declaration of Independence and citizens’ rights, asking if the Navy was the same as the U.S. government (246). In December 1926 twenty-nine American Samoan Mau chiefs sent a petition to President Calvin Coolidge asking for a civil government with a representative legislature, plus courts, schools, and economic development equal to those enjoyed by citizens of the

United States (249). The Mau accused the Navy of abusing *fūa Samoa* and punishing Samoan chiefs without cause, and demanded that the U.S. make them American citizens (249). By 1927, Governor Graham recognized that Samoans needed a clarification of their relationship to the U.S. because “they felt humiliated in the eyes of the world” (251).

Bruce Cartwright’s field notes capture this sense of humiliation. Cartwright, an ethnologist at the Bishop Museum in Hawai’i, visited American Samoa in September 1927 during a trip organized by the museum. Cartwright’s field notes describe a visit to the village of Aoloau, where the orator, Lefotu, expressed Samoan unhappiness with the naval government by using metaphors of marriage and reciprocity.

Talking Chief LEFOTU clad in white with fly-flap over right shoulder talking stick held by right hand extended end on ground between big toe and 2<sup>nd</sup> toe of right foot (the talking chief position—other chiefs do not hold end of staff with toes), addressed us in a trembling voice of emotion. He said we were brothers and high Samoan chiefs. Said that Hawaii was married to America—that her sister Samoa longed to be married but could not be. Asked why Samoa could not be married to America, then after discoursing on other subjects said that Samoa was sick—that she was suffering from an awful disease like leprosy but that no doctor had come to cure her. Why was no doctor sent to help her? Why was she left to suffer?—evidently referring to the present Naval Government. He ended by saying, “I am speaking for the Island of Tutuila” and invited us to spend the night with them. (Cartwright Field Notebook I: 66, in the Bishop Museum Archives)

As a result of the Samoan unrest Congress recognized the Deed of Cession in 1929 and a commission headed by Senator Hiram Bingham III was sent to Samoa in 1930 to gather information and to make a recommendation to the U.S. Congress. The commission recommended an Organic Act for Samoa but it never passed in Congress.

American exceptionalism includes the ideology that the colonies were to be educated in order to govern themselves. As Go (2007a) points out, whether or not this became policy depended on the local situation. In American Samoa, the naval administration focused on compliance with the laws, collecting taxes, health and social control of the population (e.g. clinics, censuses, regulation of marriage), physical infrastructure and education, in that order. However, there is evidence that the chiefs were often frustrated with the naval administration because of the lack of educational options on the islands. By the 1920s, small numbers of exceptional young Samoans, like Tufele, Margaret Mead’s informant on Manu’a, were sent elsewhere for an education, often to Hawai’i. But for the majority of the population, there were few alternatives (Olsen 1976: 87). Working for the Navy, therefore, offered the possibility of a good income and the chance to learn English.

Significantly, when *matai* title cases were decided in Court in Samoa, where Samoan judges worked under a white Chief Justice, it was often to a claimant’s benefit if he had worked for the naval administration and could speak some English. The guidelines for judging the Ilaoa title case in 1940, and the court’s decision, illustrate how the Naval Station had become involved in decisions about titles. However, this is a complicated issue because, on the one hand, the Navy involved itself in the cases and, on the other hand, the Samoans used the court to resolve disputes and to further certain claims among themselves.<sup>10</sup>

The Navy considered the battles over *matai* titles to be problematic and from the beginning the naval administration tried to establish a clear formula and procedure for filling an empty title in order to avoid conflict among the Samoans. An early step was to fix

the number of *matai* titles in American Samoa, unlike Western Samoa, where new titles could always be created as needed (Keesing 1934: 245–46). And over time, with input from the Samoans, the standards for judging the candidates were changed (Tiffany 1975), and they continue to be reviewed and changed even today. In 1940 there were new standards for judging which were established in 1937. According to Sec. 79 (4A) of the [1937] Codification of the Regulations and Orders for the Government of American Samoa:

In the trial of Matai name cases, the High Court shall be guided by the following in the priority listed:

1. The wish of the majority of the family.
2. The forcefulness, character, personality, and leadership of the candidate.
3. The best hereditary right in which the male and female descendants shall be equal in the family where this has been customary, otherwise, the male descendant shall prevail.
4. The value of the holder of the Matai name to the Government of American Samoa.

There were three contenders for the Ilaoa *matai* name in the 1940 case: Candidate A was fifty-four years old, with the best hereditary right as the grandson of a former Ilaoa through his father, an income of \$60.10 per month as a retired *Fita Fita* guard, plus some income from his plantations; Candidate B was a respected former village mayor, aged fifty-nine, in poor health, with a weaker hereditary right, and an income from his plantations and selling curios; and Candidate C was 34, worked as a carpenter at the Naval Station in the Public Works Department with an income of \$21.12 per week plus an income from his plantations and selling curios to tourists, and was the grandson of a former Ilaoa through his mother, which was considered a weaker link than through a father. Candidate A was disqualified because he had been convicted of committing a crime; Candidate B was considered to be too old and sickly to provide for a large extended family, and the title was awarded to Candidate C because of his steady income, his ability to teach carpentry skills, his sale of curios to tourists and the fact that he could speak English. According to the decision, all these conditions made him the most valuable candidate to the Government, point 4 in the Code. The decision was explicit about English: “Since [Candidate C] speaks English the Government can deal with the family better through him than through a matai who does not speak English” (HC Case 5–1940).

Against this background, the U.S. entered the Pacific theater of the Second World War and Samoans were readily drawn into military work on Tutuila. From 1942–45, about 10,000 Samoan and U.S. marines and staff were stationed on Tutuila. Two airstrips were built, along with a ship repair dock, a mobile hospital, a jungle warfare training center, radar stations, firing ranges, barracks and defense positions on the whole island. The U.S. Government claimed property rights over large tracts of land as part of the war effort; some of it was later returned to the families and some land—like around one of the airports—was put to industrial and government use. Large amounts of cash and equipment entered the island economy. Before 1950, Samoans could be guards, police and marines at the Naval Station in Tutuila but they could not hold military jobs in Hawai‘i or the U.S. mainland (Moore and Farrington 1931: 9). Between 1945–50, the Samoan chiefs complained repeatedly to the naval administration about three issues: that the U.S. military selected low-ranking chiefs for high-ranking jobs; that *Fita Fita* and Samoan marines should be made American citizens; and that there should be a constitution for Samoa (Kennedy 2004: 481). Not much came of these complaints; by 1950 the first large scale migration of Samoans occurred when Samoans in military service moved to bases in Hawai‘i.

After the war, there were debates among Samoan chiefs about whether the Navy should stay or leave, but the decision was likely already made in Washington to transfer the Pacific colonies to the Department of the Interior. In 1951, the Navy left and the administration of Samoa shifted to the Department of the Interior. Money was spent on development in American Samoa under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the 1960s and island politics gradually shifted toward local rule. David Chappell says American Samoa thus developed its own niche, a “gray area” (2000: 256), as a territory working to hold sovereignty over its affairs. Military service remained a career option and Samoans served in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and many other locations since then. Around 1980 the first military recruiters began to visit the islands and in 2006–07, the Army, Marines and Air Force had recruiting offices and active recruiting personnel on the islands, with plans by the Navy to open an office also.

### *Toa o Samoa*

As an unorganized, unincorporated<sup>11</sup> territory of the United States, Samoans are nationals, not citizens, of the United States. Since 1978, the American Samoa Government has an elected Governor and House of Representatives, and a Senate composed of hereditary chiefs. They have a non-voting representative in the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. (at present, Faleomavaega Eni Hunkin). The American Samoa Government is supported by tax revenue from American Samoa and by funding for special projects from the U.S. Government; Samoans do not pay Federal U.S. taxes. They receive some subsidies from the U.S. Government (e.g., the Women and Infant Care program, food stamps, support for seniors and health programs) and major awards of money for island infrastructure (e.g., roads and ports, water supply, airport, communications). The main employers in the territory are the American Samoa Government and two large fish canneries, and the average annual salary is about \$9,000. In Samoa, the locals confront the U.S. Federal Government most commonly regarding laws about communication and aviation, environmental protection, jurisdiction of the courts, educational practices, sports, participation in the military, and security/immigration law. Samoans are still concerned with their titles and still performing *fūa Samoa*; the islands are the site of frequent events marked by the exchange of fine mats and other gifts, speeches, singing and dancing. However, despite *fūa Samoa*, or perhaps because of it, the military is one way that Samoans are well-integrated into an institution of the American state.<sup>12</sup>

*Toa o Samoa* means ‘warriors of Samoa’ and Samoans are proud of their service in the U.S. military, as they should be. My point is not to deny this, but to describe the context for why more Samoans have died in Iraq and Afghanistan, per capita of population, than any other group by region in the United States. A headline in the local newspaper announced: *Another local soldier loses his life in Iraq: 2007 deadliest year for Toa o Samoa* (Sagapolutele 2007) and by the end of 2007, seven Samoans had died in Iraq.<sup>13</sup>

My first short research trip to the island of Tutuila in July 2005 was dominated by the war in Iraq. A Samoan had just been killed in the war, the island was decorated with yellow ribbons (a sign of support for the troops), church services were held to support the troops and to pray for forgiveness for war, the local paper carried news about Samoans in the military, the Army Reserve was evident on the island, and the dead man’s body came home

to a hero's welcome. On Tutuila and Manu'a, Samoans are supportive of the war and of their family members who serve in the military. One woman said to me, "I know you are not a supporter of the war, but every family here has a member in the military and we support the family". Later she teased me that I had to come all the way to Samoa to learn about my country's war in Iraq. Since family means extended family, it doesn't take anyone too long to trace a relationship to someone in the military, and then to someone serving in the war zones. There is a church service every month—rotating among the villages and the denominations—to pray for and honor the *Toa o Samoa*. In one that I attended, a traditional apology (*ifoga*) was made to all the victims of war. The elaborately marked graves of the *Toa o Samoa* are visible as you drive around the island. In one case, there is a large memorial to the first Samoan woman to die in Iraq, situated along the main road to the village of Leone.<sup>14</sup> In another case, the widow of a soldier killed in Iraq used her death benefit money to start a car rental agency called *Toa o Samoa*.<sup>15</sup>



A memorial for a dead *Toa o Samoa*. The sign reads: "The mighty have fallen, the weapons of war have perished" (Second Samuel, Chapter 1, Verse 27).

"We will never forget you. Love always for you my brother, Sgt. Lui Tumanu'ao".  
Photo courtesy of David Herdrich, American Samoa Historic Preservation Office.



Family relations are one form of the entrenchment of the military. Another is the military institutional presence during the Veteran's Day (November) and Flag Day (April) ceremonies, which both begin with military groups marching in front of the stands in Veteran's Stadium with their banners and flags. On the stage, representatives of the military branches salute the marchers; for Flag Day 2007 the head of the Coast Guard, a woman Captain, came in from Hawai'i as the guest of honor. Many students have participated in these military programs by the time they graduate from high school. When the official program ends, the military theme fades away, however, and in my experience Samoan music and dancing takes over the parade grounds after the speeches are finished. On Memorial Day (May), the Governor holds a ceremony in the Satala Naval Cemetery for those in the military who died on land and a ceremony in a boat in the ocean for those who died at sea.

There are three military recruiting offices on the island of Tutuila, an Army Reserve Center, a Post-Exchange, and a new health facility for veterans but the U.S. has no military base in the islands. Nevertheless, Samoans are integrated into the military through their service, their activities in the local Army Reserve, and their social relations with Samoans on other U.S. bases; for example there is a Samoan-Korean friendship group at a U.S. base in South Korea. Many Samoans hold high positions in the military and move in the world of U.S. bases; many have traveled extensively from base to base. This is part of the 'footprint' and 'lily pads' strategy emanating from the Defense Department in Washington. The U.S. has at least 737 military bases in 132 countries around the world, in what some have called "an empire of bases" or the "military empire" (Mann 2003; Johnson 2004, 2007; Englehardt 2007b). These bases give the U.S. a global 'footprint', even though they are often hidden from the mainstream of the country in which they are located (Mann 2003). 'Lily pads', like Guam, are bases on islands where materials and manpower can be moved quickly from one part of the world to another as part of the global presence.

This strategy, combined with an all-volunteer force, signed into operation by President Nixon in 1973, means that the U.S. has, in essence, a 'standing army', a professional army, which the founding fathers of the country explicitly wanted to avoid (Gerstle 2006: 138–39). The Vietnam War raised serious questions about loyalty and obedience within the military and the all-volunteer force was created as a way to avoid this in the future. As a result, today the military employs 2,500 recruiters who can offer sign-up bonuses and health and social benefits for those who make the military their career.<sup>16</sup> Military benefits for healthcare, childcare and education are the closest thing to a welfare state that Americans can experience. With a starting salary of \$17,000 per year in the Army, it is no wonder that recruits come largely from the lower classes and rural areas, including American Samoa (Englehardt 2007a). In Samoa, school children in middle and high school belong to JR-ROTC<sup>17</sup> and there is a ROTC program at the community college; all these train students for a career in one of the branches of the military. On a typical day, you will see them dressed in their military fatigues and discussing which branch of the military is the best (in one conversation I heard, the consensus was the Air Force). The recruiting is unlikely to let up anytime soon; General George Casey of the Army reported to Congress that the Army has been stretched so thin by the war in Iraq that "the current demand for our forces exceeds the sustainable supply" (Cramer 2007).



KAREN ARMSTRONG



Middle school students in uniform, Manulele Junior High School. Photo courtesy of Samoa News, 2006.

*American Samoa and the incoherent empire*

If there is *exceptionalism* in the American empire it is because of its particular military nature and lack of commitment to the responsibilities of governing. In the Pacific, similar processes of militarization have happened in Hawai'i and Guam over the last one hundred years. Hawai'i has major military installments, military monuments, a large number of military personnel, and an active program of militarization (Ferguson and Turnbull 1999). In Guam, the U.S. Congress authorized \$193 million for military construction in fiscal year 2007 and is expected to spend an equal or greater amount there per year over the next six to ten years (Defense Industry Daily 26.3. 2008). Eight thousand U.S. Marines will be moved from Japan to Guam, with an additional twelve thousand troops expected to move in as Guam becomes a major Pacific air and naval base. The U.S Navy plans to shift its fleet from the Atlantic to the Pacific region. Enormous ships—with hospitals and missile-launching capacity—will be ready in the Pacific for any emergency and Guam will be the supply base for them. “Sea Power 21, the Navy’s broad plan to respond to the post-9/11 era of small wars and uncertain alliances, is a military policy for a day when America might find itself without allies” (Baum 2005).

Unlike previous empires the U.S. does not fully occupy territories; it relies on a global network of bases to exercise its authority. This is the footprint and lily pads strategy, and I am arguing that a version of this has been in place for a long time.<sup>18</sup> Michael Mann (2003)

calls this the *incoherent empire* because the U.S. presence is often invisible, unlike previous world empires, and does not do the job of actually ruling the territories. For Mann (2003: 16), the “new American imperialism is becoming the new American militarism” through its superior fire power and capacity for global deployment (however temporary this advantage might prove to be). But, Mann claims, “that is not sufficient for Empire [sic]” because there is “an internal contradiction that generates resistance as the unintended consequence of their own actions” (15–16). On the one hand, the U.S. preaches an ideology of democracy, freedom and human rights, which is attractive to people—and this ideology is the basis for the claims of *exceptionalism*—while on the other hand, the U.S. uses military force for strategic purposes, which undercuts the ideological message (15, 259).

From the more economic view of world-system theory, Immanuel Wallerstein (2002a, 2002b) and other theorists have dated the end of American hegemonic power to 1972 (or at the latest, 1980). Julian Go (2007b) has demonstrated that the decline is accompanied by increased imperialist activities, as exemplified by all the small conflicts from 1981–2003. From either perspective—the political or world-system theory—U.S military activity is global and contributes to what Bruce Kapferer (2004) has described as a constant state of low-level warfare in the world today.

American Samoa is part of the larger presence of the U.S. military in the Pacific, even though it is a minor player at the moment. Samoa is considered an important site, near Australia and New Zealand, but because it is farther away from the U.S. mainland than the other territories it has remained marginal in the development of a military infrastructure.<sup>19</sup> Although militarization has influenced interactions on the islands ever since the Americans came, most Samoans have been able to use their military experience for their own advantage, and serving in the military brings an individual and his/her family respect. Military traditions and institutions are deeply entrenched in American Samoa, with the support of much of the population. Samoans are proud to serve the nation. To enter the military is a natural career choice for which they are prepared both in school and by family and community values. Military service does not directly threaten the land and titles system, although it can result in challenges to the traditional *matai* system by individuals who come back after many years of living elsewhere during their military service. Criticisms against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may increase if the number of dead Samoans continues at the high levels of 2007 but serving in the military does not threaten Samoan sovereignty and it is one way in which Samoans are Americans. While Catherine Lutz (2005) looks for resistance to American militarization—and finds it in the Philippines—it is not found in American Samoa apart from a few individuals.<sup>20</sup>

Even remote islands are not exempt from the processes of the incoherent empire and for this reason there are tensions in American Samoa. Samoan leaders repeatedly work to define their relationship with the U.S. nation-state along with their relationships with neighboring independent Pacific island populations.<sup>21</sup> The most recent structural tension can be heard in the debates around immigration policies that follow from decisions about homeland security in the United States. The current question is who controls immigration in American Samoa? Until now, the American Samoan Government has had its own immigration policy and immigration service and its policies are overwhelmingly concerned with the relation between the two Samoas: who can come to American Samoa for work, how long can they stay, what is the charge for a visa to visit, and are Samoan women coming to American Samoa to give

birth so that their children can be American nationals? However, in last year's debates about Samoan political status, one of the points of tension concerned non-Samoan immigrants, mainly Filipinos and Koreans, who are growing minority groups.

Samoans are worried that an increase in the number of immigrants from outside will affect their land tenure system. This is a delicate issue because, at present, there are three categories of land in the territory. Most land is communal land under the control of the village *matais*. Some land can be bought and sold by individuals, and some is government land. A person is required to have 50% Samoan blood in order to have usage rights to communal land, and this in turn affects the composition of the Senate, whose members are high chiefs elected by their peers. Immigration could add to the stress on available land and put non-Samoans into positions in the Government. At the moment, because of the war on terror, the U.S. is claiming that it must control immigration in the Commonwealth of the Marianna Islands (doing away with local control) and Samoans are worried that a change in law concerning the Marianna Islands will affect Samoa as well (as did a bill to impose minimum wage laws earlier in 2007). Will they be forced—for reasons of security and economic flexibility—to adhere to American immigration law? Will they have to admit foreign workers as has happened in Guam and other U.S. Pacific territories?

The problems created during the expansion of the U.S. nation-state are still confronted today in the courts. Under Title VIII of the 1975 Native American Programs Act, American Indians, Alaska natives, Native Hawaiians, Samoans and other native Pacific Islanders were defined as Native Americans. Hawaiians and Samoans therefore look at the protection of land and culture granted to American Indians as a model for their own situation since they are all classified as Native Americans. However, in recent decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, the Hawaiian rule of blood as a measure for determining land rights has been declared illegal (i.e., blood is a racial marker, there can be no decision based on race under the Constitution, not even for native groups) (Kauanui 2005). The Hawaiian case points out serious discrepancies in the American legal system. Samoans fear that, like Hawai'i, they could lose their land system in the courts if they were to become incorporated and, eventually, a state. While many young Samoans apparently would like citizenship, according to what I heard in the meetings, the situation of Native Hawaiians is watched by Samoans with concern. At the moment, it is impossible for Samoans to know how they would be treated—and what would happen to the land—if they vote for incorporation. A Samoan woman living in Hawai'i told me that she has no sympathy for the Native Hawaiian movement and she thinks Samoans must be cautious because "they gave their land away and we cannot do the same".

### *Conclusion*

The Future Political Status Study Commission discussed the options for political status: do they remain an unincorporated territory, do they push to become an incorporated territory, a commonwealth, or a state, do they want to be citizens of the U.S., do they decide for independence, or do they reunite with independent Samoa? After visiting independent Samoa and other present and former U.S. territories in the Pacific, the Study Commission recommended that they continue as they are to "preserve our land and titles system". This recommendation reflects a deep suspicion of becoming too integrated into

the American nation-state. If the land and titles system changes, communal land ownership will break down and the islands will be open to development, which in turn will dispossess many people of their land. Samoan participation in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has the support of the population and does not seem to generate anti-American sentiment. However, the insecurity that would result from breaking the land and titles system is something they are not prepared to face.

The contingencies of global economic and political hegemony create structural tensions in American Samoa as Samoans face an uncertain future. The U.S. military presence in the Pacific is going to increase, the neo-liberal economy demands flexibility of the workforce (e.g., in the canneries), the islands cannot support the increasing population, and people are unsure how they will be affected by global climate change. All of these factors could affect the Samoan way of life. As a result, forces which are hard to control locally condition discussions about the future of American Samoa. Perhaps this is why the Future Political Status Study Commission recommended that American Samoa should not change its government; that they should continue in the “gray area”. The chiefs have worked in alliance with the Americans for 108 years, balancing their social and political structure with the need to work within a government that often denied them access to democratic decision-making and has conflicting policies regarding its indigenous groups. There is no easy solution. High Chief Fai’ivae, a member of the Political Status Study Commission who died in June 2007, remembered the history of fighting for Samoan self-respect during the Mau in an interview with David Chappell (2000: 251) and in 2006 again encouraged Samoans to put Samoan culture first (public meeting 2006). And so the idea of “preserving our land and titles system” translates into “preserving our culture” and takes center stage in every discussion of political status. The Governor put ‘culture’ as a top priority for funding in 2008; *fā’a Samoa* is something to fight for, as they have been doing all along.

## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> The population of American Samoa in 1900 was estimated to be 5,499 (Keesing 1934: 33). It is now ca 65,000.

<sup>3</sup> When Malietoa, the President and highest ranking chief of Samoa, died in 2007, a delegation from American Samoa went to the funeral and took their appropriate position in the ranking of chiefs.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase “American exceptionalism” has a long history, dating back to de Tocqueville and referring to different aspects of American society. I am using it to talk about ideological claims and colonial projects. S. M. Lipset (1997), for example, links it to class and political positions in the U.S.

<sup>5</sup> It was the legal procedure to first claim a territory, then organize it, then move it toward statehood. This happened with all the new territories beyond the original 13 colonies on the east coast.

<sup>6</sup> By comparison, Hawai’i was given an Organic Act in 1900, which set it on its way to eventual statehood in 1959.

<sup>7</sup> Tilley’s German counterpart in Western Samoa also established a *Fita Fita* guard in 1900. Sons of leading Samoan families enlisted (Keesing 1934: 220).

<sup>8</sup> There has been no Tuimanu’a since the death of Elisara in 1909, in part because of internal Samoan conflict, but that is a story for another time.

<sup>9</sup> The Hon. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Tupuola Tufuga Efi (2007: 6) is very clear that Manu’a was

a distinct political entity: “In 1900, Manu’a, by colonial design, was joined to Tutuila (however, Manu’a only acceded after considerable colonial pressure in 1904). The joining has no basis in Samoan historical precedent.”

<sup>10</sup> Keesing (1930: 246) reported that “nowadays from 50 to 75 percent of the titles are brought to the authorities for settlement by process of law” because of factionalism. Many chiefs—particularly in Manu’a—argued that Samoan title cases should not be aired in court, that they should be decided by Samoan families. More recently, the late High Chief Sala from Fagasa, Tutuila, spoke out against the courts being involved in title cases. His view was that the court decisions were destroying Samoan culture.

<sup>11</sup> The acquisition of territories that were not intended to be European-American settler colonies required new legal categories: unincorporated territories were never intended to become states, whereas incorporated territories, like Hawai’i, which was incorporated in 1900, were intended for eventual statehood (Thompson 2002: 538).

<sup>12</sup> *Fa’aSamoa* and the military come together in the story of Sergeant Tuimaleali’ifano, who was wounded in Afghanistan and eventually moved to the Tampa Florida Veteran’s Hospital in 2008. His parents traveled from Samoa to Florida and presented fine mats to the Tampa Samoan community to express their appreciation for the love and support given to their son. They also presented the fine mat “le o le Auafa, Tapaau o le Talalelei” to the Samoan service members and their families at Fort Bragg who have supported SSG Tuimaleali’ifano (Laupola 2008). According to the law, you are not supposed to take fine mats out of American Samoa but they have been on every flight out that I have been on.

<sup>13</sup> The accompanying text reads, “the deadliest year for *our* Toa o Samoa” (my emphasis). The total number of dead Samoan soldiers is 15.

<sup>14</sup> She has been the subject of a TV documentary and an article in the Chicago Tribune, March 10, 2007 (Scharnberg 2007).

<sup>15</sup> The New York Times (March 22, 2008) reports that, since 2005, the so-called death gratuity—the sum given to survivors for an active-duty death—jumped to \$100,000 from \$12,420, and the military’s group life insurance maximum rose to \$400,000 from \$250,000 (Foderaro 2008). Both are retroactive to October 2001, with the result that a family can receive a lump sum of \$500,000. The spouse gets free medical care for three years—and the children into adulthood—and all receive education assistance. This is considerably more than the amount I heard on island (generally said to be \$150,000 for the widow and children).

<sup>16</sup> A description of these benefits—which are awarded according to the Army’s ranking of important skills—can be found at GoArmy.com. The requirements make it clear that not everyone gets the high enlistment bonuses or annual bonuses, although there are many subsidies for military personnel to enhance their low basic salaries.

<sup>17</sup> ROTC is Reserve Officer Training Corps and JROTC is Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps.

<sup>18</sup> BBC World News reported that China is building up its military to increase its global footprint so this is apparently common military talk (March 4, 2008). Michael Mann notes that the U.S. does not have the largest military force (China and India are larger), but the U.S. at the moment excels in high tech weapons.

<sup>19</sup> In 2006 the American Samoan Governor proposed a plan to train U.S. troops on Samoan land—he proposed a site in Savai’i, independent Samoa.

<sup>20</sup> There is a new column in Samoa News, “Tala Mai Tafa o Taua” (‘Stories from the War Zone’) in 2008 (Bruce 2008a, 2008b).

<sup>21</sup> The U.S. does not allow American Samoa to attend certain Pacific Regional planning conferences and only certain NGOs are allowed in American Samoa (for example, Christian organizations).

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