

INDIGENOUS INFORMANTS OR SAMOAN SAVANTS? GERMAN TRANSLATIONS OF SAMOAN TEXTS IN *DIE SAMOA-INSELN*

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Most studies of Samoan culture and language published since 1900 rely on Augustin Krämer's seminal ethnography *Die Samoa-Inseln*. It is unusual for a scholarly work to become so accepted and beloved by an indigenous people, but Samoans hand down copies of *Die Samoa-Inseln* from generation to generation. They particularly prize the extensive Samoan language texts that appear side by side with their German translations. However, an analysis of Krämer's personal diaries reveals that his grasp of the Samoan language was at best rudimentary. I suggest that the German translations instead reflect the efforts of highly sophisticated Samoan informants who had a complete grasp of the chiefly rhetoric of Samoa as well as a strong working knowledge of the German language.

AUGUSTIN KRÄMER IS CONSIDERED the foremost student of Samoan culture. His monumental two-volume work, *Die Samoa-Inseln* (1902, 1903), is considered by both Samoan and non-Samoan scholars alike to be the most authoritative work written on Samoan ethnology (Freeman 1983, 285). Key to the scholarly stature of *Die Samoa-Inseln* is Krämer's mastery of intricate and detailed Samoan texts. Krämer's ear for spoken Samoan was unequalled by foreign visitors. His transcriptions of kava speeches, proverbs, genealogies, funeral customs, and the structure of ancient Samoan polities, legends, and performances that fill the pages of *Die Samoa-Inseln* are deeply appreciated by the Samoan people, who are astonished that a foreigner could attain such a deep knowledge of their chiefly rhetoric.

There are two possible competing hypotheses for Augustin Krämer's understanding of Samoan language and culture. Perhaps Krämer indeed had an intricate knowledge of the nuances of spoken and written Samoan, including chiefly Samoan. Alternatively, perhaps Krämer recruited sympathetic Samoans to ghostwrite the Samoan texts in *Die Samoa-Inseln* and to assist him with their translation into German. I suggest that the key to resolving these two competing hypotheses is a close textual analysis of Krämer's personal unpublished diaries. In order to address these issues and the significance of Krämer's ethnographic study of the Samoan islands, it is important to understand the cultural template of Samoa before European contact and the cultural and political dynamism of Samoa after European contact, prior to Krämer's first visit for a German trading company.

Samoa before European Contact

Social stratification in Polynesian societies varied in degrees and was not dependent on duration of human development or time of colonization of a certain island or atoll. Samoa and Tonga, the earliest Polynesian islands to be colonized according to archeological evidence of Lapita pottery as well as linguistic evidence, were at very different levels of social stratification at the time of first European contact. The Tongan empire was ruled by a single king (*Tui*) and a linked spiritual leader (*hau*), while Samoa was ruled by warring chiefdoms, although ethnohistorical evidence suggests episodic political consolidation by deified female chiefs (Nafanua, Salamasina). Though each archipelago and islet society was of course unique, scholars classify different Polynesian societies into three basic categories of societal stratification: traditional, open, and stratified (Kirch 1984: 31–34).

Traditional Polynesian societies, which occurred in places such as Pukapuka or Futuna, showed little stratification. Though conical clans were headed by ambilateral chiefs, the role of these chiefs in society was minimal and nonreligious and had no bearing on political or military activities. The next level of stratification in Polynesian societies, Sahlins (1958) suggests (as reported in Kirch), is open. Succession within open conical clans was patrilineal, though younger brothers through war and other means often disputed these claims. Open societies had a medium level of stratification—chiefs (*ali'i*) headed political and military campaigns and played a role in religious affairs. Under this classification scheme, Samoa could be considered an open society. In the most stratified societies, such as Hawai'i, Tonga, or the Society Islands, chiefs or regional kings (*tui*) took on a much greater and separate role than they did in traditional or open societies. Conical chiefs were not only responsible for political and military decisions, they were also

a part of religion and many were seen as deity. The difference in lifestyle between a commoner in a stratified society and an ali'i (high chief) was acute (Kirch 1984: 31–40). In Samoa special fish, certain portions of baked pigs, and access to fine mats were restricted to the high chiefs, who also engaged in prestigious sports and recreation, such as fowling, and a form of shuffleboard called *tupe*, from which commoners were restricted. An elaborate rhetoric evolved around the chiefs, with their wives, children, houses, boats, livestock, and even personal anatomy referred to by special chiefly terms.

In Samoa, chiefly titles were (and remain today) linked to both family and the land, and for that reason Samoa is one of the few countries that possesses a special land and title court. Samoans claim that there is no title unassociated with a parcel of land and no land parcel unlinked to a title. As will be seen later, the distillation of chiefly titles and their linked lands, transcribed by Krämer, is one reason that his ethnographic study is held in such high regard by Samoans. Certainly there are few other ethnographic works that are regularly used in courts of law to adjudicate disputes between individuals and villages concerning chiefly titles and lands. Typically villages were divided into several *fuiala* or ramage, which consist of linear parcels occupied by the descendents of a single ancestor. In Hawai'i such ramage were linked to watersheds and were called *aupuu'a*, so any particular village and any kinship group sharing common descent from a single ancestor had unrestricted access to seacoast, coastal lands, midlands, and mountain rainforests. This normally ensured drinking water; access to the sea for fishing and sustenance; midlands where staple food crops such as taro, breadfruit, and yams could be cultivated; and access to primary rainforests that contained plants useful for both sustenance and medicine. Because of the ramage system, each village and each kinship group within the village could be self-sufficient (Kirch 1984: 31–34).

Despite the capability for autonomy, much interaction between individual villages and groups was facilitated by the chiefly or *matai* system. Just as different villages contained different chiefly titles that would then be passed down to the eldest son (or, as was often the case, another son or member of the village if he contested it), different levels of honor and respect were given to these different titles. A great chief would bring honor not only to his family but also to his village when he interacted with other leaders in a polite and respectful manner.

In Samoa there are two kinds of chiefs: high chiefs and orators (*tulafale*) (Kennedy 1974, 273). The high chiefs of a village function like the board of a corporation, setting strategic goals for the village and ensuring that the village's social standing in the region is always increasing. Orators function like the management of a corporation and are focused on execution of the

village goals and tactical management of day-to-day life in the village. High chiefs are given the most prominent positions at village functions and honored portions of mats and pigs based largely on the preeminence of their titles and families. Orators are able to reallocate the earthly goods of entire villages based solely on their personal mastery of arcane genealogies and chiefly rhetoric.

An orator has to recite without hesitation from memory intricate legends, lineages, proverbs, and oral histories. While high chiefs preside, orators must conduct all major cultural activities such as chief investiture ceremonies, weddings, births, and funerals. They must declaim with eloquence, reflecting deep cultural understanding of the genealogies and histories of their own and visiting villages. Style and flow are important. It is not unusual for a talking chief to stand and recite one particular history for over an hour. Various talking chiefs will debate one another and take turns reciting different information to bring honor to his family and to his village. Orators who are perceived as weak, tentative, or unprepared watch helplessly as all of the mats, pigs, and crops brought to a cultural function are reallocated by a better prepared orator from another family or village. For this reason, the most potent cultural duo in Samoa was a high-ranked high chief accompanied by a highly skilled orator conversant in the genealogies and proverbs of Samoa.

Samoa after European Contact

European contact with Samoa first came in 1722. Jacob Roggeveen, a Dutchman, headed an expedition to the unknown parts of the Pacific Ocean for the West India Company upon three boats: *Den Arend*, *Thienhoven*, and *De Africaansche Galeij*. While aboard *Thienhoven*, he spotted what is now present day Ta'u, the easternmost island of the Manu'a group of the Samoan islands, which is in sight of Ofu and Olosega islands. The second European visitor to Samoa, Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1782), named Samoa "l'Archipel des Navigateurs" (The Archipelago of the Navigator Islands) and spotted present day Ta'u on May 3, 1768. Like Roggeveen, he chose not to set anchor or explore any terrain.

Several decades later, on December 7, 1787, Samoa received first physical contact with Europeans when the Frenchman La Pérouse and his men set foot on Tutuila island. The encounter was brief and tragic. La Pérouse and his men renamed Samoa the "Savage Islands" (La Pérouse 1799).

This new name and the reputation for ferocity that came with it protected Samoa for half a century from entanglements with other European traders, whalers, and explorers until 1830, when missionary John Williams from the

London Missionary Society arrived aboard his ship the *Messenger of Peace*. He brought a Samoan convert from Raratonga, and his message of a new kingdom from over the seas unwittingly fulfilled an ancient prophecy by the ancient deified chief Nafanua.

After the *Messenger of Peace* landed, interaction between Samoa and Europeans became much more regular. Soon traders, whalers, criminals, adventurers, explorers, and escapists came to the islands. Different nations, most notably America, Germany, Great Britain (and subsequently New Zealand), would vie for control of this stronghold in the very heart of Polynesia.

The Samoan language was first reduced to a written orthography in the 1830s, when missionaries from the London Missionary Society, George Pratt and Charles Wilson, translated the Bible directly from the Greek into Samoan. The London Missionary Society also published pamphlets in Samoan. Yet despite their lack of a written language for over 1400 years, the Samoans kept extremely detailed accounts of histories, family relations, wars, religion, and cultural matters, passed down orally from generation to generation. The transmission of this cultural knowledge was of paramount importance to Samoan society and government.

The Role of German Trading Companies in the South Pacific and German Corporate-Funded Research

Germany entered the colonial scene in the South Pacific in the mid-1800s. At that time there were two dominating ideologies in Germany about possible and future expansion into colonial states. The first ideology was aggressively colonial. Owing to various social ills and increased urbanization, there were many citizens in what we now call Germany left unemployed. Some argued that Germans needed expansion room, a place in a warm climate where German citizens could lead traditional German peasant lives and pass on German culture, language, and traditions to their children, thus continuing the German ideals of order, efficiency, and prosperity. The second ideology behind German expansion was one not so much of spreading German culture and ideals abroad but of making profits. Tradesmen saw German expansion as a way to increase their incomes. Woodruff Smith divides the two ideologies this way:

Between 1840 and 1906, two concepts of colonialism constituted the dominant colonial ideologies in Germany. . . the two concepts can be called the "emigrationist" and the "economic." (1974, 641)

These two basic ideologies and variations of them continued in debate for the entirety of Germany's experiment with colonialism. In different localities, one or the other would take precedence.

Unlike British colonialism in the South Pacific, which, while intrinsically exploitive, claimed to increase the social, medical, and political well-being of indigenous peoples, German conquests in the islands were driven primarily by economic and strategic considerations. For the most part Germans did not seek to replicate German society in the Pacific. In contrast, Great Britain did seek to impose British manners, education, social betterment, and bureaucratic order on indigenous peoples who they believed existed in a benighted state and lived chaotic lives. Instead, the Germans sought to create new opportunities for German merchants, both as exporters and importers, and to seize geopolitically important positions superior to those of their European competitors. The lack of a German unified nation left much of the colonization effort to be carried out by transnational corporations who, in the style of modern-day Halliburton, produced economic gain when necessary by projecting quasi-military presence. These trends brought Samoa into the era of gunboat diplomacy.

The first major trading company in the Pacific was the Hamburg-based J. C. Godeffroy & Sohn, which first entered Polynesia from Valparaiso, Chile. Godeffroy & Sohn set up their headquarters for Pacific trade in Apia, Samoa, in 1857. The return on their investments was quickly repaid: they dominated Pacific trade through the 1850s and 1860s, largely because of the firm's well-established trading status and strong financial backing during the early years of operation. They quickly outstripped all of their British competitors in sheer number of shipping vessels. The initial major items of trade for this German company were coconut oil, sea turtle shell, and mother-of-pearl. Coconut oil was originally extracted in the coconut groves. Later, they shipped copra (dried coconut flesh) to distant factories where the oil could be more efficiently extracted. Workers at Godeffroy & Sohn ingeniously created a way to increase their profit from this enterprise fivefold, and other trading companies soon followed suit. Instead of shipping whole coconuts to be cut and dried later, the coconuts were first cut in half, dried out to make copra, and the leftovers were used as cattle feed (Firth 1977, 4).

Though copra trading excelled at this time, German trading in the Pacific had a negligible impact on the international market. Copra produced and traded from the Pacific Islands represented only a small fraction of the copra that was sold in Germany. As a result, Pacific trading amounted for less than 1/7th of 1 percent of all trade in Germany in 1911 (Firth 1977, 5).

The reach of Godeffroy & Sohn soon grew to cover most of Polynesia with stations in disparate outposts such as the Marshall Islands, the Duke of York Islands, and the Marquesean Islands. All collected goods were first shipped

to Apia before they began their sometimes long journey to Europe (often stopping in Australia and other islands before reaching their end). Boats would be sent out to these various islands once or twice a year for collection. Thus, the German trading system in the Pacific, at least for J. C. Godeffroy & Sohn, depended on the port in Apia, Samoa, for trade without relying on any Samoan agricultural enterprises (Firth 1977: 4–5). The powerful reign of Godeffroy & Sohn did not continue forever, however. Owing to a low crop year and poor planning, they declared sudden bankruptcy in 1879.

German traders pushed heavily for German annexation of Samoa under official sanction. If Germany annexed Samoa, then the traders would have exclusive rights to Samoan trading, plantations, and ports and could oust the British and Americans. Such sanction would rid German companies of competition with the trading companies of other countries and would provide greater control over Apia harbor.

Augustin Krämer

It is into this context that the German Augustin Krämer stepped as a young man. At this point in his life, Krämer had just finished studying medicine in Tübingen and Berlin. It does not seem surprising that he was apt for adventure since his parents had been world travelers and he himself had been born in Chile.

In the midst of the European paradigm that viewed colonized nations populated by different races as social inferiors in desperate need of civilization, Krämer was different. Despite his training in the racially charged German anthropological theories of the time, Krämer was charmed by the Samoan people and found much to admire and respect in their societies.

Krämer returned to Germany after living in Samoa and wrote the two-volume work *Die Samoa-Inseln*, which only recently was translated into English as *The Samoan Islands*. In this monumental ethnological and anthropological work, Krämer not only drew heavily from his own experiences with the Samoan people but also articulated precise details of Samoan culture. Genealogies, histories, cooking methods, medicinal practices, fishing techniques, and other detailed observations on Samoan culture are described with scientific precision. Because of the minute observations that Krämer made, *Die Samoa-Inseln* is considered to be the most comprehensive anthropological work on the Samoan people ever written.

Description of Krämer's Diaries

I was surprised to discover upon my arrival at the Linden Museum in Stuttgart that Krämer kept only two diaries during his two-year visit to the

Samoa islands. One was marked 1894, and the other 1895. The diaries were well worn, and while I obtained permission to transcribe the diaries, I was not granted permission to photograph them.

Krämer's diaries were quite exciting to look at. It is clear by their content that he enjoyed his time in Samoa. He drew pictures of boats and animals and plants alongside his text. Whenever Krämer visited another island, he drew an anchor sign. In this way he created his own little codes. Krämer was not satisfied to merely observe and record; he also actively engaged in local social activities. Several of his dance cards are neatly folded into his diaries. He also cut out newspaper articles about Germany, Bismarck, and himself. He even included the obituary of Robert Louis Stevenson.

At times his text was difficult for me to decipher since parts of the diaries have water damage, and often his handwriting was so blurred that the letters were difficult to transcribe. One helpful advantage I picked up while carefully scrutinizing Krämer's diaries was that Krämer's handwriting was more easily decipherable when he wasn't writing in German. Hence, the English and Samoan entries in his diaries were the most understandable. I posit that Krämer's handwriting improved when he wrote in English or Samoan because he was writing slower and more carefully. In any case, because of the legibility of most of the Samoan entries (those that were not water damaged), I was able to extract the passages out of his diary that he wrote in Samoan. What follows is a textual analysis of several of these Samoan entries.

Analysis of Krämer's Diary Entries

Diary transcription from 19 July 1894. Saesau au i Apia i le afiafi emula muta le Valelia i ?S?G?—angi.

Corrected Samoan. Na sau a'u i Apia i le afiafi , ae sa gata i Valelia i ___/

English gloss of the corrected Samoan. I came to Apia in the evening, but stopped at Valelia (Valerie's) for ____.

Analysis of Krämer's Samoan text. Krämer here demonstrates poor understanding of time tense indicators and combines two together with the verb in "Saesau." "Sa" means a past activity that takes a long time to transact, like a war or geological process, and "e" is a timeless tense indicator, suggesting that the action began long ago and continues today. Neither is correct, and when placed together they are meaningless—the past tense time indicator "Na" would have been correct here. "Emula" is not a word, but "muta" means to end a process; for ending a journey, the Samoan verb "gata" is more correct. Krämer's diary entry indicates broken Samoa with poor understanding of Samoan grammar. As indicated here and later in his diary, he may have had a Samoan girlfriend named "Valelia" (Valerie).

Diary transcription from 19 July. Sa mauauu i “setuse maile teine: iaetusi alu i le Tauga, (i Salemo i Aana).”

Corrected Samoan. Sa maua a’u i se tusi mai le teine: “ia e tusi mai pe afai e te alu i le taua (i Salemo i Aana).”

English gloss of the corrected Samoan. I received a letter from the girl: “write me if you are going to the contest between Salemo and A’ana.”

Analysis of Krämer’s Samoan text. Many foreigners initially have difficulties with Samoan pronouns, which have single, dual, and multiple forms in inclusive and exclusive configurations. Here, Krämer incorrectly conflates the verb “maua” (to receive) with the personal pronoun “a’u” (I). His limited vocabulary is exhibited by his inability to construct the future imperfect “pe afai e te alu” (if you will go), although he does correctly use the imperative “ie e tusi” (you should write). The girl who wrote him may have been Valelia.

Diary transcription from 7 August. Siva o le Valelia i le fale Samoa i Sogi.

Corrected Samoan. Na ou siva ma Valelia i le fale Samoa i Sogi.

English gloss of the corrected Samoan. I danced with Valelia (Valerie) in the Samoan house in Sogi.

Analysis of Krämer’s Samoan text. No time tense indicator or personal pronoun is associated with the verb. He incorrectly used the definitive article “le” with a person’s name. This is very broken Samoan, but perhaps it was written in a hurry.

Diary transcription from Thursday 9 August. Se san du i Sogi, Sa va’ai le Sae, sa nofo ile matafaga. . . ink thins out . . . i luga o nui el nusila. Fau mavo nale alu ‘ese.

Corrected Samoan. Na ou alu i Sogi. Sa ou vaai Sae, sa nofo i le matafaga . . . i luga o nu’u o nusila. Na ou alu i ai ma toe alu ‘ese.

English gloss of the corrected Samoan. I went to Sogi. I saw Sae sitting on the beach . . . above the New Zealand village. I went and then left.

Analysis of Krämer’s Samoan text. Krämer again incorrectly used the indefinite past time tense indicator “sa” instead of the more appropriate definite time tense indicator “na.” In the first sentence Krämer confused the verb “sau” (to arrive) with “alu” (to go). In the third sentence he misspelled the preposition “i luga” (above). His last sentence is barely intelligible.

Diary transcription from 23 August 1894. Moe za nofo i le afife tasile it ula i le fale.

Corrected Samoan. Sa ou moe ma nofo i le afiafi e sili i le itula i le fale.

English gloss of the corrected Samoan. I slept and then sat in the evening for more than an hour in the house.

Analysis of Krämer's Samoan text. This is a bit more complex sentence than Krämer previously attempted in his diary, but it still represents broken, ungrammatical Samoan.

Diary transcription from 16 May 1895. Sa taumiu i Apia Vlelia mai Salelesi i Atur i le i tual le fitu. Se savoli i a mai le lauea lena ilemea leo fiamoe lava ia mia nofo i le fale i le po. Na sozola i le fa ile as ivaiusu (Toeupu ma se fafine).

Corrected Samoan. Na ou ta'amilo i Apia ma Valelia mai Salelesi i Atur i le itula e fitu. Na savavalai e aumai la'ua lena i le mea lea na fia moe lava ma na nofo i le fale i le po. Na ou sosola i le fa i i le iva usu (Toeupu ma se fafine).

English gloss of the corrected Samoan. I wandered in Apia with Valerie (Valerie) from Salelei to Atur at seven o'clock. We walked to bring those two to the place to sleep in the house that night. I snuck out at 4:00 for the 9:00 work start (Toeupu and a woman).

Analysis of Krämer's Samoan text. There are consistent problems in his use of time tense indicators, personal pronouns, and prepositions.

Analysis of Samoan Texts in *Die Samoa-Inseln*

Unlike the grammatically constrained, broken Samoan passages that Krämer wrote in his personal diary, the published Samoan texts (which always appear with German translations) in *Die Samoa-Inseln* are flowing, grammatically nuanced, and culturally sophisticated. These texts appear to be highly accurate transcriptions of oral legends, proverbs, and instructions spoken by culturally adept Samoans. The Samoan texts appearing in *Die Samoa-Inseln* can be placed into two general categories: ethnographic (descriptions of Samoan life and instructions on Samoan technologies and procedures) and cultural (legends, village hierarchies, and oral histories). The ethnographic texts are typically straightforward and use standard Samoan language narrative constructions, with "ua" being the typical beginning time tense indicator, suggesting past ongoing action. Krämer never used this common narrative time tense indicator in his own diary entries. Reading his ethnographic texts in Samoan is similar to reading an instruction manual. Sentences are short, and unique grammatical features of Samoan (reflexive subjects, verbless sentences, etc.) sometimes occur.

By contrast, the cultural texts are much more complex, often indicating that the speakers were conversant not only in regular common Samoan language but also in chiefly rhetoric. It is these passages that have most interested Samoan readers of *Die Samoa-Inseln*, not only because of their compelling subject matter, but also because of their extraordinary eloquence

and poetic features. Samoans are simply stunned that a foreigner could have possibly transcribed, understood, and translated such passages. The passages commonly use the reflexive place holder “ai,” which is an advanced feature in Samoan grammar and which was never used by Krämer in his own diary.

An example of such an important, eloquent passage can be found in *Die Samoa-Inseln*'s account of the origin myth of Samoa. The name of the archipelago “Samoa” can be broken into two separate Samoan words: *Sa* (forbidden) and *Moa* (chicken). Alternatively, “Sa” can be translated as a prefix meaning “The people of,” and “Moa” can be translated as “the physiological center of being.” Thus, there are four possible literal translations of “Samoa” if, indeed, the word can be reduced to its component parts (which may not necessarily be true):

1. “Forbidden chicken”
2. “Forbidden center of being”
3. “People of the chicken”
4. “People of the center of being”

The first interpretation was recorded in a myth by Krämer that refers to the ancient progenitor of the Samoan people, Tagaloalagi. Tagaloalagi, the primary cultural hero of Samoa, was regarded as a deity and in many myths is said to be the creator of the world. “Of the primitive gods, the chief place is assigned to Tangaloa, or, as he is sometimes called Tangaloa-langi, Tangaloa of the Skies,” missionary John Stair recorded in 1897:

He was always spoken of as the principal god, the creator of the world and progenitor of the other gods and mankind. In one tradition that gives an account of the formation of the earth, mention is made of other divinities or helpers, Tangaloa-tosi, also styled Ngai-tosi (Ngai the marker), and Ngaiva'a-va'ai (Ngai the seer or beholder), also called Tangaloa-va'a-va'ai. These two helpers are introduced as being sent by Tangaloa to complete the formation of the bodies of the first two of mankind, and to impart life to them. (1897, 212)

In this sense, as creator of the world and humankind, Tagaloalagi bears some similarity to Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:16). In ancient Samoan legends, the father of Tagaloalagi is named Lu.

Tagaloalagi also is credited with creating Samoa. Some legends indicate that as these divine progenitors of the Polynesians sailed by in a raft, Tagaloalagi stole and ate one of the chickens belonging to Lu, who captained

the raft. On such a voyage, eating of the breeding stock was strictly forbidden, and so by eating the forbidden chicken, Tagaloalagi had violated a great taboo. Lu therefore banished Tagaloalagi to a mortal, temporal existence on the archipelago that was nearby, which came to be known as “Samoa.” Here is Krämer’s transcription of the oral Samoan text together with his German translation. Krämer’s transcription of this Samoan text evidences significant cultural and cosmological sophistication. For comparison purposes, I also include separate English translations of both the Samoan and German passages.¹

‘O le ali’i lenei na fai lona sã
moa; sã le ‘aiga se moa e se tasi.

‘O le mea lea na i goa ai lenei
atunu’u ‘o Samoa ona ‘o Lu.

Ona ò ifò lea ‘o Tagaloalagi, ‘ua
latou gaoi le sã moa a Lu.

Ona tan ai lea ‘o le taua. Ona
fasia lava lea ‘o Satagaloalagi.

Ona tulia lava lea ‘o
Satagaloalagi. ‘Ua pã ia le lagituaiva
i le mea, ‘o i ai le tamaita’i o
Lagituaiva.

Ona fai mai lea ‘o le ali’i o
Tagaloalagi ia Lū: Ia e
fa’amolemole, ‘a e ‘avatu le
tamaita’i o Lagituaiva ma togioa o
le nu’u nei.

Dieser Häuptling machte sein
Tabū für die Hühner; keiner durfte
Hühner essen.

Deshalb heisst diese Inselgruppe
Samoa, wegen des Lu.

Da kamen die Leute des
Tagaloalagi herunter, und stahlen die
mit Tabū belegten Hühner des Lu.

Darauf tobte der Krieg und die
Leute des Tagaloalagi wurden
geschlagen und in die Flucht gejagt.

Sie drangen bis zum neunfältigen
Himmel an den Ort zurück, wo das
Mädchen Lagituaiva war.

Darauf sprach Tagaloalagi zu Lu:
Ich bitte um Vergebung. Ich will dir
das Mädchen Lagituaiva als Lösegeld
des Ortes hier bringen. (1902, 1:25)

(Sentence 1)

Samoan Literal Translation

‘O (noun indicator)	le the	ali’i high chief	na (past tense)	fai made	lona his
sã taboo	moa; chicken;	sã taboo	le The	‘aiga eating	se a
moa chicken	e by	se any	tasi. one.		

Krämer's German Translation

Dieser	Häuptling	Machte	Sein	Tabū	für
This	chief	made	his	taboo	for
die	Hühner	keiner	durfte	Hühner	essen.
the	chickens	no one	allowed	chickens	eat.

Translation from Samoan

This high chief made his chicken taboo; eating a chicken was taboo for anyone.

Translation from German

This chief made his taboo for chickens; no one was allowed to eat chicken.

(Sentence 2)*Samoan Literal Translation*

‘O	le	mea	lea	na	igoa
(noun indicator)	the	thing	That	(past tense)	name
ai	lenei	atunu‘u	‘o	Samoa	ona
(reflexive)	this	country	of	Samoa	because
‘o	Lu.				
of	Lu.				

Krämer's German Translation

Deshalb	heisst	diese	Inselgruppe	Samoa	wegen
That is why	called	this	group of islands	Samoa	because
des	Lu.				
of	Lu.				

Translation from Samoan

That is why this country is named Samoa because of Lu.

Translation from German

That is why this group of islands is called Samoa, because of Lu.

(Sentence 3)*Samoan Literal Translation*

Ona	ō	ifo	lea	‘o	<i>word missing</i>
Then	(go, plural)	down	then	(noun indicator)	(sa)
Tagaloalagi,	‘ua	latou	gaoi	le	sā
Tagaloalagi,	(past)	they	stole	the	taboo
moa	a	Lu.			
chicken	of	Lu.			

Krämer’s German Translation

Da	Kamen	die	Leute	des	Tagaloalagi
Then	came	the	people	of	Tagaloalagi
herunter	und	stahlen	die	mit	Tabū
down	and	stole	the	with	taboo
belegten	Hühner	des	Lu.		
imposed	chickens	of	Lu.		

Translation from Samoan

Then Tagaloalagi went down, they stole the forbidden chicken of Lu.

Translation from German

Then the people of Tagaloalagi came down and stole the chickens with the imposed taboo of Lu.

(Sentences 4–6)*Samoan Literal translation*

Ona	tau	ai	lea	‘o	le
Then	fought	(reflexive)	then	(noun indicator)	the
taua.	Ona	fasia	lava	lea	‘o
war.	Then	struck	really	then	(noun indicator)
Satagaloalagi.	Ona	tulia	lava		lea
people of Tagaloalagi.	Then	chased	really		then

‘o Satagaloalagi.
 (noun indicator) people of Tagaloalagi.

Krämer's German Translation

Darauf	tobte	der	Krieg	und	die
Thereupon	raged	the	war	and	the
Leute	des	Tagaloalagi	wurden	geschlagen	und
people	of	Tagaloalagi	were	struck	and
in	die	Fluchte	gejagt.		
in	the	Flight	hunted.		

Translation from Samoan

Then the war (for this reason) was fought. The people of Tagaloalagi were struck. Then the people of Tagaloalagi were chased away.

Translation from German

Thereupon the war raged and the people of Tagaloalagi were struck and hunted into flight.

(Sentence 7)

Samoan Literal translation

‘Ua	pā	ia	le	lagituaiva	i
(Past)	Burst	those	the	beyond the ninth heaven	on
le	mea,		‘o	i	ai
the	where	noun indicator		existed	le
tamaita’i	‘o		Lagituaiva.		
maiden	Noun indicator		Beyond the ninth heaven.		

Krämer's German Translation

Sie	drangen	bis	zum	neunfältigen	Himmel
They	came through	until	to the	ninefold	heaven
an	den	Ort	zurück	wo	das
on	the	place	back	where	the

Mädchen	Lagituaiwa	war.
girl	Lagituaiwa	was.

Translation of Samoan

Then the region beyond the ninth heavens burst on the scene, where the maiden Lagituaiwa was.

Translation of German

They came through until the place of the ninefold heaven where the girl Lagituaiwa was.

(Sentence 8)*Samoan Literal translation*

Ona	fai	mai	lea		'o	le
Then	said	to	then	(noun indicator)		the
ali'i		'o	Tagaloalagi	ia	Lū:	ia
chief	(noun indicator)		Tagaloalagi	to	Lū:	(imperative)
e	fa'amolemole,		'a	e	'avatu	le
you	Please		but	you	take	the
tamaita'i		'o	Lagituaiwa	ma	togiola	o
maiden	(noun tense indicator)		Lagituaiwa	as	redeemer	of
le	nu'u	nei.				
the	country	this.				

Krämer's German Translation

Darauf	sprach	Tagaloalagi	zu	Lu:	Ich
Thereupon	spoke	Tagaloalagi	To	Lu:	I
bitte	um	Vergebung	Ich	will	dir
ask	for	forgiveness	I	want	to you
das	Mädchen	Lagituaiwa	als	Lösegeld	des
the	girl	Lagituaiwa	as	ransom	for
Orts	hier	bringen.			
place	here	to bring.			

Translation of the Samoan

The said the Lord Tagaloalagi to Lu: Please, take this maiden Lagituaiva as a redeemer for this place.

German Translation

Thereupon Tagaloalagi spoke to Lu: I ask for forgiveness. I want to bring to you, as ransom for this place, the girl Lagituaiva.

Discussion

This Samoan creation myth is grammatically and culturally sophisticated, far beyond Krämer's ability to understand and write Samoan as evidenced by the broken, ungrammatical Samoan expressions he wrote in his personal diaries. The sophisticated use of time tense indicators, the nuanced use of the reflexive "ai," the general conformity with Samoan narrative tradition, and the use of chiefly rhetoric all suggest that Krämer himself could not have translated these passages into German. Further evidence that Krämer could not have transcribed or translated this passage is found within the text itself.

Although the first two sentences of the legend correspond well in both Samoan and German, distinct and revealing differences begin in the third sentence between the Samoan text and Krämer's German translation. In Samoan, the text reads "Then Tagaloalagi went down, they stole the forbidden chicken of Lu." Krämer's German translation of this Samoan passage reads "Then the people of Tagaloalagi came down and stole the chickens with the imposed taboo of Lu." Since the plural Samoan verb "ō" (to go) is used in the original Samoan text instead of the singular verb "alu," it is clear that more individuals than just Tagaloalagi went down. This suggests a typographical error in the Samoan text—the prefix "sā" ("the people of")—was left out. However, Krämer's German translation adds this important clarification ("die Leute *des*"), which does not appear in the Samoan text, suggesting that Krämer could not have translated this from the Samoan text as transcribed. Only a speaker fluent in chiefly Samoan and with direct knowledge of this Samoan legend would have been able to spot and correct this missing word in the original Samoan text in the German translation. If Krämer could not have done this himself, then a Samoan informant—likely a chief conversant in the German language—added this missing detail.

More discrepancies between the Samoan text and the German translation occur in sentence 7. In Samoan, the text reads: "Then the region beyond the ninth heavens burst on the scene, where the maiden Lagituaiva was." This is

different from the German translation “They came through until the place of the ninefold heaven where the girl Lagituaiva was.” The operative verb in the Samoan text is “pa,” which in Samoan according to the dictionary of Milner (1966) translates as “1. Burst . . . 2. Go off, explode” and which Pratt’s earlier dictionary (1862) translates as “1. to explode, as a gun, thunder, &c, 2. to burst, as an abscess.”

In Samoan cosmology, the various heavens are concatenated and one heavenly plane of existence can sometimes burst into a lesser sphere. Hence, when Samoans first saw Europeans, they called them “papalagi” or “palagi” literally meaning “the heavens have burst,” suggesting that such unusual white individuals must have come from a different universe or heaven. Although this Samoan theory of overlapping universes would fit in quite well with modern topologists, who suggest that parallel universes not only may but must (to fulfill quantum mechanic theory) exist within a few millimeters of our current dimension, such a concept would be incomprehensible to a nineteenth-century German schooled in an era before Riemann space was part of the physics and mathematics curriculum. Here again, Krämer’s German translation evidences an understanding of Samoan cosmological view of the concatenated heavens beyond what the Samoan text indicates—the German “translation” adds information not present in the Samoan text.

The German verb “drangen” is the past tense of “dringen” which the 2005 Oxford Duden German Dictionary translates as “1. penetrate, come through . . . 2. press, or urge.” The translator failed to use the correct German translations of the Samoan word “pa”—“platzen” or “explodieren.” Again, this suggests that a knowledgeable Samoan, conversant both in the myth and in Samoan cosmology but unable to express his cosmology in meaningful terms to a German contemporary, provided Krämer with a watered-down version of the myth. Certainly, Krämer could not have derived his German translation from the Samoan text alone.

Possible Clues to the Real Translator

Augustin Krämer worked in a colonialist period when the rights, personal dignity, and individuality of indigenous peoples were routinely overlooked. Few indeed are the names of indigenous people—such as Sacagawea of the Lewis and Clark expedition—recorded with gratitude for teaching or otherwise assisting foreign travelers. Krämer, however, was an exception in recognizing the dignity of the indigenous people he studied. In his forward to *Die Samoa-Inseln*, after acknowledging several German professors, he demonstrated honor and respect for the Samoan people themselves.

Aber wie dem sein mag, niemanden werden einst Zeit, Mühren und Opfer gereuen, in dem Bewusstsein, in direkter oder indirekter Weise mit dazu beigetragen zu haben, das geistige Eigentum der dahinsterbenden pacifischen Völker am Abend ihrer eignartigen Kultur und Weltanschauung zu retten. (1902, 1:3)

(No one will ever regret having devoted time, effort and sacrifice, in the conviction that he has contributed directly or indirectly to the preservation of the cultural heritage of a slowly dying-out peoples of the Pacific in the evening of their unique culture and philosophy of life. [1994, 1:vii])

Krämer was perhaps less candid in reporting his own linguistic limitations:

Einen Vorteil hatte ich nur schon im voraus durch die Kenntnis des Landes und der Sprache, die, wenn auch dürftig, doch nicht gering angeschlagen werden darf. Dass ich mich aber auf diese Kenntnis namentlich der Sprache nicht allzusehr verliess, wird man aus dem folgenden ersehen. . .

Um möglichst Urkunden zu liefern, habe ich stets danach getrachtet, den samoanischen Text urschriftlich zu erhalten. Alle Texte sind demgemäss Originale und wurden entweder so gewonnen, dass ich von Samoanern selbsthändig gemacht Aufzeichnungen aufgriff und abschrieb oder, was zumeist erfolgte, die mündliche Erzählung mir oder meinem Diener, einem Halbblut Fred Pace, in die Feder diktieren liess. (1902, 1:3–4).

(One advantage I had in advance through my acquaintance with the country and with the language, both of which although limited must not be considered negligible. However the reader will see from subsequent accounts that I did not rely unduly upon this knowledge, particularly not of the language.

In order to bring original documents wherever possible, I always sought to obtain the Samoan text as recorded for the first time. All texts are therefore originals and were obtained either by my securing the notations made by the hands of Samoans and copying them . . . or by having the oral account dictated to me or to my servant, a half-breed Fred Pace. [1994, 1:4])

This stunning revelation shows the reason that the Samoan texts recorded by Krämer are written in such flowing, grammatically correct Samoan: they were themselves written by fully literate Samoans, most of whom were chiefs.

Who were these unknown Samoans who wrote such remarkable accounts of their cosmologies, legends, and culture? Krämer gives us a few clues:

[Ich habe] reiche Anregungen empfangen [und] viel Häuptlinge und Sprecher kennen gelernt und nach Apia eingeladen. . . Hier hatte ich mir ein Haus in Sogī, in der Nähe des Regierungsplatzes Mulinu'u, wohin die Samoaner von allen Inseln strömen, gemietet, und hier empfing ich täglich meine Getreuen. (1902, 1:4)

(. . . I received numerous leads and met many chiefs and orators whom I invited to Apia . . . I had rented a home in Sogī [a part of Apia] near the government square Mulinu'u where Samoans from all the islands gather in great numbers, and there I received my loyal friends. [1994, 1:4])

To entice his Samoan guests from distant islands and villages to remain, he offered them surgical procedures:

. . . in deren Dienst ich meine ärztliche Kenntnisse stellte, um von ihnen ihre Manuskripte zu erhalten. Den letzteren vermochte ich sogar nach Apia zu locken, wo ich ihm sein elefantiasisches Skrotum operierte und ihn dadurch wenigstens 8 Tage für meine Zwecke festlegen konnte, freilich ohne besonderen Nutzen. Dies praktikable und radikale Mittel habe ich später noch öfter angewandt, um mir die Hilfe von Samoanern zu sichern, die sonst nicht zu haben gewesen wären. (1902, 1:5).

(. . . at whose disposal I placed my medical knowledge in order to get their manuscripts from them. The latter I was indeed able to lure to Apia where I operated on his elephantiasitic scrotum and thus pinned him down for at least eight days to pursue my objectives, alas without particular benefit to me. Later I frequently employed this practical and radical measure to secure from Samoans help which otherwise could not have been available. [1994, 1:5])

Since the texts are written in chiefly Samoan language, spoken principally by orators, it is to Samoan orators that we must look for leads to Krämer's principal informant. Krämer, in his preface, gives us this key detail:

Dort gelang es mir, allerdings erst nach langer Zeit, den alten Sprecher Sauni von Tufulele, der übrigens schon als Maunu von

Leulumoega bei Stuebel genannt ist, zu gewinnen, der, vor 1830 geboren, noch aus der vorchristlichen Zeit stammt und auch unter den Samoanern allgemein als einer der wissendsten gilt. (1902, 1:4).

(This is where I succeeded—to be sure, only after a long time—with for the old orator Sauni . . . who, born prior to 1830, is of the pre-Christian era and is generally looked upon by the Samoans as one of the wisest men among them. [1994, 1:5])

Krämer also credits another informant: “Neben Sauni war es hauptsächlich noch Salaia von Siumu, von dem ich namentlich am Anfang viel Kunde erhielt” (1902, 1:4). (“Besides Sauni, it was mainly also Salaia of Siumu from whom I gleaned much information, particularly at the beginning” [1994, 1:5]).

This Salaia, however, did not rely solely on his memory: “Er besass eine Reihe von Stammbäumen aufgezeichnet” (1902, 1:4). (“He had in his possession a series of recorded pedigrees” [1994, 1:5]).

That Krämer was so deficient in his understanding of the Samoan language to personally translate these texts is evident in his handling of texts from the Manu’a islands, part of the Samoan archipelago to the east:

welche wenige Jahre vor ihrem Tode die Überlieferungen von Manu’a sich in die Feder hatte diktieren lassen, und welche ich nun abzuschreiben Gelegenheit hatte. Nach sechstägiger Arbeit hatte ich dies glücklich vollendet; ich hatte die Texte, aber keine Übersetzung. . . Die alten Samoaner von Upolu konnten aber die Überlieferungen nicht übersetzen. (1902, 1:5)

(who had the Manu’a traditions dictated to her a few years prior to her death and which I now had the opportunity to copy; I had the texts but no translations. . . The old Samoans of Upolu, however were not able to translate the traditions. [1994, 1:5])

Krämer credits another orator, Leiato of Aoa, a village on Tutuila island, with translating:

ohne den [Leiato] ich die Übersetzungen nicht zuwege gebracht hätte. . . ich habe doch nie die Übersetzung vorgenommen, ohne meinen Dolmetsch und Diener Feleti (Fred) bei mir zu haben, um allen Irrtum auch meinerseits auszuschliessen.” (1902, 1:5)

(Without him [Leiato] I would have not been able to bring about the translations. . . I nevertheless never undertook a translation without having my servant and interpreter and servant Feleti (Fred) at my side to exclude all misconceptions. [1994, 1:6])

Conclusion

Owing to the poor standard of Samoan language skills evidenced in Krämer's personal diaries, it is highly unlikely that Krämer can be considered the sole author of *Die Samoa-Inseln*. I was interested in Krämer's diaries originally because I knew they had never before been published and also because of my deep interest in both Samoan and German cultures. My original academic goal was to get Krämer's diaries published and to bring any new anthropologic information from Krämer's personal diaries to light. I had no idea how important this new anthropological information would become. To suggest that Augustin Krämer was not the primary author of *Die Samoa-Inseln* was unanticipated when I began my research.

While I was in Samoa investigating this hypothesis I found that the homes and dance halls described by Krämer are gone. (There have been several major hurricanes in the last hundred years.) Instead my greatest resource became the national library of Samoa, the Apia Library. Here I found not only copies of most of Krämer's works, but also the German/English newspaper of the islands, *die Samoansiche Zeitung*. Though *die Samoansiche Zeitung's* run was short—less than six years—its publication dates coincide with Krämer's residence in Samoa. After carefully reading issue after issue of the newspaper I found several articles that named Krämer, quoted passages from *Die Samoa-Inseln*, or described his views of native peoples. With permission from the librarian I then photographed these various articles. They have become extremely useful in placing Krämer into a more historical context, as well as showing the immediate impact that *Die Samoa-Inseln* had—not only in Germany but in the islands themselves.

I have not yet definitely identified who actually wrote *Die Samoa-Inseln*, yet I do have several leads. Since the language of the texts is written in chiefly Samoan, spoken principally by Samoan orators, Samoan orators probably played a key role in the translation process. Krämer lists several of these orators in his introduction to *Die Samoa-Inseln*. As previously mentioned, they include an old orator named Sauni, the orator Salaia of Siumu, and another orator, Leiato of Aoa.

I suggest that today Krämer might be considered more an editor or compiler of *Die Samoa-Inseln* than sole author, although in the context of his

times he was gracious to mention his indigenous informants in his introduction. Such recognition of indigenous informants was definitely not required in early twentieth-century anthropology. My analysis of Krämer's own language abilities from his diaries in the Linden Library in Stuttgart allowed me to assess his own personal contributions to *Die Samoa-Inseln*.

It is interesting to note that claims of linguistic inadequacy were later to hound other foreigners researching Samoan culture. Three decades after Krämer's residency in Samoa, a young American anthropologist performing her doctoral dissertation research in Samoa stunned the world with her assertion that adolescence in Samoa is typically untroubled because of the absence of sexual restrictions present in western societies. Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* instantly became a best seller, but its basic premise was questioned after her death when Harvard University Press published Australian researcher Derek Freeman's *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*. "Mead greatly underestimated the complexity of the culture, society, history, and psychology of the people among whom she was to study adolescence. Samoan society, so Mead would have it, is 'very simple,' and Samoan culture 'uncomplex'." (Freeman 1983).

In his claim that Samoa is not simple, Freeman appealed to Krämer:

As anyone who cares to consult Augustin Krämer's *Die Samoa-Inseln*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Footnote to History*, or J. W. Davidson (1979) *Samoa mo Samoa* will quickly discover, Samoan society and culture are by no means simple and uncomplex; they are marked by particularities, intricacies, and subtleties quite as daunting as those which face students of Europe and Asia. (1983, 285)

Clearly Augustin Krämer's work has stood the test of time, and it rightly deserves the accolades modern researchers and the Samoan community have given to it. I suggest, however, that the Samoan people themselves should also share in this praise, including those knowledgeable orators and informants who helped Krämer produce the volumes that he himself could not have done alone.

NOTE

1. For German translations, I used the *Oxford-Duden German Dictionary: German-English, English-German*, 3rd ed., ed. O. Thyen, M. Clark, Werner Scholze-Stubenrecht, J. B. Thyen Sykes.

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