

Napoleone A. Tuiteleapaga, *Samoa, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*.
New York: Todd and Honeywell Inc., 1980. Pp. xx, 165. \$9.95.

Tuiteleleapaga set himself a formidable task when he set out to sketch the story of the Samoas in 165 pages. The history and anthropology of the Samoas have been the subject of countless discourses and of much debate ever since Europeans became interested in the islands, and those looking to a resolution of some of these debates will be disappointed. Tuiteleleapaga does not set out to review and synthesize academic debates but to outline and describe certain events and institutions which he holds to be significant. In fact, he specifically states that "This book contains no scientific arguments or dissertations" and is frank about the sources of published materials which comes from "reading school geography books, magazines and newspapers" (p. viii). The most valuable resource on which the author draws is his own personal experience first as a talking chief and later as a chief, which he notes, "conferred upon me the power and privilege to mingle with all categories of chiefs, and to go through the labyrinth of the well and jealously-guarded archives of the unwritten history, traditions, folklore, and cultural customs of the Samoan people" (p. ix). The result is a short sketch of events and institutions associated with the Samoans.

The first four chapters contain basic facts on the geography and contact history; some observations on the possible origins of place names incorrectly assigned by the French to various parts of the Samoas; and Samoan impressions of the first European visitors. These chapters are brief and contain little which is new, but those seeking a short introduction to these matters may find the section useful. The fifth and sixth chapters are entitled respectively, "Whence Came the Samoan People?" and, "Who and What Kind of People Are the Samoans?" These are attempts to summarize theories of the origins of the Samoan people, and to outline certain central cultural traits, and are perhaps the weakest sections of the book. The matter of the origins of the Samoans is complex and even an accurate summary of the current state of knowledge would be difficult in ten pages. Tuiteleleapaga's discussion on the prehistoric record draws on the writings of Churchill, Tregear and Percy Smith and omits more recent archaeological and linguistic evidence, which has moved the debate forward considerably. The discussion of the "historic times" is scarcely more helpful and depends heavily on an account "found by the author twenty years ago in a book written in French and English, but, unfortunately, the title and the author have been forgotten" (p. 13). This account suggests that the ancestors of the Samoans may have peopled the Samoas after they were forced from their homeland, Papatea, in an act of retribution by a Mesopotamian king named Elo. In support of this theory, Tuiteleleapaga cites a number of coincidences in Samoan and Hebrew personal

names and customs. The four parallels between Samoan and Hebrew customs are brief, consisting in one case of five inconclusive lines. Readers wishing to pursue these leads may find the missionary Turner's more exhaustive list instructive. (1861). The chapter on the origins of the Samoans is rounded out with four brief Samoan accounts of the cosmology which are literal translations without commentary on the allusions contained therein. The sixth chapter, "Who and What Kind of People Are Samoans?" is a series of assertions about the Samoan character contained in ten pages which depend on very broad generalizations supported by evidence of somewhat uneven strength. Tuiteleapaga's observations on the role of music and the themes of song are very valuable, as are his very perceptive observations on the nature of indebtedness and reciprocity. Both might usefully have been expanded. Others, such as his assertion that "there is no desire to amass wealth," and that Samoan life is "carefree and happy," are rather less valuable and would be difficult to sustain on available evidence. The chapters on the origins and character of the Samoans are the weakest parts of the work because they are attempts to tackle complex issues without the material necessary to provide a complete and accurate summary, much less a resolution, of the issues. The contents of the chapters are in the armchair anthropology tradition, one long since set aside in favor of more rigorous attention to evidence. Tuiteleapaga's access to the labyrinths of Samoan tradition can lend little to these arguments, which are likely, ultimately, to be resolved elsewhere and with rather more complex evidence. Overall, his excursions into these areas detract from, rather than lend to, the text.

The author moves on to a discussion of various legends, including the origins of the terms Samoan and Papalagi respectively, and finally, to fourteen short chapters on various social, economic and legal institutions. These chapters might most appropriately be described as collections of observations on the various institutions, many of which are anecdotal and support the author's contentions about their nature and operation. Tuiteleapaga avoids theorizing in these chapters, and this is both their strength and their weakness. The chapters are Samoan accounts of Samoan institutions and provide an interesting insight into Samoan "world view" and the nature, and quality, of proof which supports it. The outlines are free of the theoretical perspectives which inform, and often unreasonably dominate academic discussions of Samoan institutions--and consist essentially of personal and unselfconscious accounts of the institutions and of the author's experience with them. The author's very considerable experience and his academic training combine to provide

some very valuable insights more especially in those areas, such as the legal system, in which he has special expertise. Academic readers may be confused by the organization of the accounts of the institutions, but there is a wealth of information scattered through them which may well provide valuable evidence and insights for academics' own arguments.

While these fourteen chapters on institutions are not intended to be academic and should not be judged by "academic standards," they have certain shortcomings which might usefully be made clear to the reader unfamiliar with Samoa. The first is that the author tends to generalize about Samoa in ways which might lead the reader to believe that there is rather more homogeneity than is in fact the case. The Samoans have been subject to rather divergent sets of social, economic and demographic forces which have produced a range of responses among Samoans to their various situations. Samoans themselves are patently aware of the very significant differences in the lifestyles of say the urban Tutuilan and the rural Savai'ian and distinguish between degrees of "Samoanness." This is not to suggest that some generalizations are not possible but rather that the author has not distinguished between various "levels" of generalization and has prevented the reader from appreciating the extent of variation and adaptation which Samoan society has exhibited in the face of external forces for change. The second caveat is related to the first and to the fact that although the book's title suggests that the work will cover past, present and future, the text does not always give clear indications of the periods to which generalizations refer. The result is that the reader may be led to believe that certain customs which have been extensively modified, and in some cases are defunct, are still extensively practiced. It would, admittedly, be difficult to impose a time frame on each chapter and run mechanically through the past, present and future of each topic, but this need not have precluded some passing indication of the period to which certain assertions refer.

The academic reader may also be alarmed at Tuiteleapaga's habit of inserting very considerable pieces of other authors' work (notably Turner) without acknowledging their source. Thus, very considerable sections of Tuiteleapaga's work are in fact sections of the works of early missionaries' accounts of the operation of institutions, and these sections frequently receive little or no paraphrasing. Thus, accounts of tattooing, polygamy, childbirth, divorce, and widows are frequently identical in both Turner and Tuiteleapaga as are some of the accounts of Samoan legends, including the origin of the term Samoan and the story of the original settlement of Samoa by the former residents of Papatea. But those who

are alarmed will also be well placed to estimate the value of Tuiteleapaga's contribution to the matters under discussion.

The production of *Samoa, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* might also have been improved with more conscientious editing and proofreading. The dedication contains the statement that "Dr. Margaret Mead . . . who after reading the whole manuscript in her office in New York shortly after her death, wrote a lengthy introduction to the book." There are many misspellings of varying importance scattered throughout the text in both Samoan (*fa'ama seiau/fa'amasei'au* for example) and English (*USS Vandolia/USS Vandolia*; *Roggewein/Eroggewein*); and an inconsistent use of italicization of Samoan terms in the text, all of which detract from the work.

Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings Tuiteleapaga's, *Samoa Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, is as Margaret Mead notes "a treasury of astute comments on Samoan customs and culture" and deserves attention from those interested in the Samoans. Its value will be greatest to those familiar with the literature and to Samoans who can take from the work the insights contained therein and set aside material which seems to require further evidence. It will undoubtedly generate interest and controversy among Samoan readers and may well lead to further accounts of Samoa and the Samoans.

NOTES

1. Turner, G. A., 1861, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia, Missionary Life: Travels and Researches in the Islands of the Pacific*. John Snow, London.

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