NEW RITUALS FOR OLD: CHANGE AND COMPETITION IN SAMOA

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In precontact Samoa, extended families, *āiga*, and villages, *nu'u*, demonstrated their social and political cohesion in periodic, competitive displays of conspicuous consumption, hospitality, and in warfare. Demonstrations of economic capacity and military superiority increased their sociopolitical capital and established, or maintained, their claims to social and political power. These competitive rituals were central features of precontact social organization: the *fa'asamoa*.

Early Christian missions[1] sought to contain these "wasteful displays" and to divert Samoans' energies into "more productive" religious and industrial activities. Missionaries encouraged Samoans to divert their energies into the construction of churches, pastors' homes, and ancillary buildings to provide the physical infrastructure for the advance of Christian religion in Samoa. Missions then encouraged the villages to "call", and then support pastors, and to maintain church property to demonstrate continued commitment to their new faith.

Samoans, in turn, appropriated these new religious sites for displays of social and political cohesion. Individuals, families, and villages demonstrated social and political cohesion and claimed sociopolitical and moral capital in periodic, competitive, public demonstrations of commitment to the church. These new competitive rituals have replaced the older ones and have

Pacific Studies, Vol. 39, No. 3—Dec. 2016

become, in turn, central features of the contemporary Samoan worldview and lifestyle: the *fa'asamoa*.

Early forms of competition were constrained by factor endowments and the resources that could be generated locally. Samoan emigration to labor markets on the Pacific Rim, and the increasing volume of remittances from migrants, has increased the amount of wealth available to those who wish to engage in these competitive displays. The increasing scale, and social consequences, of these displays has begun to concern some Samoans.

This paper explores the ways in which these customary practices became embodied in religious rituals and embedded in a single discourse within the oldest, and largest, church in Samoa. It also examines difficulties of separating the two in contemporary discourses and the ways in which this entrenchment presents difficulties to those who would question the practices. It also considers the consequences of this competition for economic development.

Competition in Precontact Samoa

Although comprehensive, definitive Samoan accounts of precontact Samoan culture and society are not available, visitors from various backgrounds have written about Samoan society and culture since continuous contact commenced in the early nineteenth century. A number of missionary accounts (Stair 1983; Moyle 1984), lay accounts (Pritchard 1863–64, 1866), and scientific accounts (Wilkes 1845) produced in the period immediately after contact commenced, and embodying varying types and degrees of bias, are readily available.

These, predominantly European, accounts are supplemented by those of Cook Island and Tahitian teachers and missionaries who worked in the Samoan mission field (Buzacott 1866) and provided much underused accounts of the society in which they labored, which reflected their cultural perspectives. The result is a continuous, comprehensive, if uneven, record of Samoan society from immediately after contact to the present (see, for instance, Taylor's Pacific Bibliography [Taylor 1965]). These postcontact accounts of Samoa have permitted historians and ethnographers to reconstruct a well-documented account of precontact Samoan culture and society.

At the center of Samoan culture are two principles that shape the organization of Samoan society: achieved status and gerontocracy. The first establishes that all valued positions in Samoan society are, technically, open to those who are able to demonstrate appropriate personal, social, and political skills.[2] Because all in Samoan society are potential leaders, competition for these valued positions is wider than is the case in other societies in which status is ascribed at birth and where valued positions are open only to a few

who are related in particular ways to the incumbents. The second of these principles is gerontocracy, which establishes that age is the basis of seniority in Samoan society. Where all other things are equal, those who are older will have greater authority and more power than those who are younger.

The principle that status was achieved, rather than ascribed, meant that all individuals in an extended family (*āiga*),[3] families in a village (*nu'u*), and villages in a district (*itu mālō*) could, technically at least, aspire to lead.[4] Because in most cases, more than one individual or entity aspired to lead, competition between contenders was both inevitable and endemic. The conversion of aspiration into acknowledged leadership involved periodic, public demonstration of the attributes sought in leaders. Individuals sought to display competence in both practical skills and esoteric knowledges and to prove their fitness to lead by showing a willingness to put their skills and wealth at the disposal of their extended family. When, for instance, the family's titular head, or *matai,* called on members of the family for contributions of labor and goods for use on their behalf in ceremonial exchanges, those who aspired to lead the family competed to provide evidence of their commitment. They did this by providing more labor and more goods than were asked of them. In the ceremonies in which these were presented, they sought, in oratory, to demonstrate greater political and social competence than their rivals. Both the matai and members of the extended family observed the performances of those who aspired to lead the āiga. Toward the end of life, the matai, in consultation with other senior members of the family, in a ceremony known as a *māvaega*, appointed a successor to the family's chiefly title and the power vested in it.

Similarly, extended families that aspired to lead within a village polity sought to demonstrate their fitness to lead in public demonstrations of their ability to generate wealth of various types and their willingness to put their resources at the disposal of the village. The village council, or *fono a matai,* comprised of the matai of all of the extended families that resided in the village, periodically called on families to provide labor and production for use in exchanges with other villages, in the creation of physical capital, in the development of village facilities and even in war. When the council called for resources, families that aspired to leadership competed with one another to demonstrate their commitment to the larger polity by committing more than might have been expected of them. In the ceremonies at which these contributions were pooled, they sought to demonstrate more political and social skill than did their rivals. Over time, and as a consequence of the continuing competition between families, the political authority and influence of the families within a village fluctuated.

Similarly, the councils of villages that aspired to lead within a district polity, itu mālō, were able to demonstrate their fitness to lead in periodic, competitive rituals in which they demonstrated their village's social and political cohesion and the quality of its leadership. They did this indirectly by showing their capacity to generate, mobilize, and distribute wealth of various kinds, their leaders' political knowledge and skill and their willingness to commit these to the district. Over time, the influence of various villages within districts rose and fell as a consequence of these "periodic competitions". Finally, the largest political entities, districts, competed with one another for dominance within the Samoan polity. The influence of districts within the Samoan polity rose and fell over time. The districts' desire to be "stronger or of more importance than the rest" were, according to the missionary George Turner, frequent causes of wars that early missionaries reported in Samoa (Turner 1983, 189).

This highly competitive element in Samoan culture produced a dynamic form of social and economic organization. The economic production of individuals, extended families, and ultimately villages was necessarily planned to meet the requirements of subsistence and then to support claims of fitness to lead. Thus, individuals, families, and villages routinely planted more than was necessary to meet the demands of subsistence. The effect of this practice was the creation of an economic surplus reserved for competitive displays in which the surpluses could be converted into sociopolitical capital. Individuals, families, and villages that were able to increase their sociopolitical capital increased their prestige and their social and political influence. Individuals, families, and villages, which became powerful by these means won the support of individuals who were free to attach themselves to entities from which they believed they would gain power and prestige by association. Individuals, families, and villages, which increased their support by these means, also increased the size of their productive base, within limits imposed by factor endowments, by increasing the numbers of people "serving" them and on whom they could call for "contributions" in labor and in kind. Over time, this allowed them to increase their wealth and allowed them to consolidate their position, at least temporarily. But the same dynamic also meant that even powerful individuals and entities were vulnerable to attempts by others to supplant them and to claim their power and authority. Thus, although the system was inherently dynamic, it was also potentially unstable.

The Missionary Presence

From 1828 on, Christian missionaries began to spread the gospel in the Samoan archipelago. A permanent missionary presence commenced when on a visit in 1830, the Reverends John Williams and Charles Barff persuaded

the leader of the dominant force, the *mālō,* of the time, Malietoa Vaiinupo, to provide a home for Tahitian and Cook Island missionary teachers and to hear their missionary message. Religious conversion followed quickly because matai who heard the missionary message, and saw potential political and commercial benefits, arranged for the mass conversion of their extended families (for instance, see Moyle 1984,170). Although there were enclaves within which the so-called heathen chiefs resisted the mission message, the conversion of the bulk of the Samoans proceeded with such speed and was so complete that the missionaries themselves, accustomed to slower progress in mission fields elsewhere, were surprised and delighted.

The depth of the resulting religious commitment has been questioned by some who argue that the chiefs converted not only, or even primarily, for religious reasons but because of anticipated political and commercial possibilities that followed from association with missions and missionary education. This would not have been surprising because Faueā had used this argument to persuade Malietoa to consider accepting the first missionary visitors and since missionary training and practice acknowledged the significance of political and economic interests in the success of the mission. In a discussion of the four-year training course of missionary teachers, Buzacott (1866, 135) noted that,

> This period allows time for the peculiar training required, which includes instruction in general knowledge, in the working of Day and Sunday Schools, in divinity, in preaching, and also in house-building, in the manufacture of chairs, beds, etc., so that the students may be able to raise the heathen in social life while they preach unto them the word of eternal life. *It is certain also that this additional knowledge pre-disposes idolaters to listen to new doctrines, taught by men so much their superiors in arts whose usefulness is at once patent to the dullest savage comprehension* (emphasis added).

The Reverend John Williams, an astute observer of Samoa society, noted with characteristic frankness after his 1832 visit, that

> All appeared to wish to embrace the *lotu*. It is not to be supposed that the motive by which they are actuated in their desire is a conviction for the excellence of the Gospel (Moyle 1984, 280).

and went on to document a number of motives for possible Samoan interest in the mission including increased opportunities for trade with Europeans, increased status, protection from their own gods, longevity, an

end to war, life after death, and the economic benefits of the attenuation of war (Moyle 1984:280–81). Because, from early on, missionaries also sought to bring an end to war, without alienating their chiefly hosts, whose authority depended in part on proof of their military superiority, the missionaries simply endorsed the Samoans' own expressed desire for an end to war (Moyle 1984, 124, 155, 171).Although Williams' assessment may explain the speed of conversion, experienced missionaries such as long-time London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary in Eastern Polynesia, Aaron Buzacott, on a visit to Samoa in 1848, continued to be concerned that the speed of conversion might indicate shallow religious commitment,

> We have been very much gratified by our visit to Samoa. A great work is being carried out there. Much, very much, has already been effected. To us who have seen the mission in its infancy, the improvement seemed truly wonderful, and we are frequently led to exclaim, "What hath God Wrought!" The churches appeared to us to have sprung up like Jonah's gourd. God forbid that, like it, a worm should be found at the root to wither and to destroy (Buzacott 1866, 163).

The Consequences of Success

The missions found themselves confronted with an unanticipated demand for teachers and pastors and without the means to meet this. As a means of rationing these relatively "scarce resources", until such time as more could be provided, the missionaries called on villages to demonstrate their willingness to submit to the religion to be assigned a teacher and or pastor.

Villages were effectively locked in a competition with other villages for these scarce resources: missionaries, teachers, and the attendant benefits of their residence. The stakes were high because, as Williams noted, Samoans appreciated the additional political and economic possibilities of missionary presence. Although the "contest" was ostensibly about the demonstration of commitment to the new religion, it was also site for villages to establish their fitness to lead other villages within the district polity. The mobilization process provided an opportunity for villages to compete to demonstrate a higher level of commitment to the new religion and to obtain the services of a pastor or teacher before others, while simultaneously establishing their secular fitness to lead.

The councils of villages determined what was required to secure the services of a missionary or teacher.[5] This was typically a large, multipurpose building that could be used as a church, a school, a guest house; another

building for the pastor and his family and young women attached to the household; a small Samoan *fale o'o* for young men attached to the household; and a cooking house. These first buildings were constructed in local building materials and in traditional style. The *fono* then set about mobilizing their village's resources to provide these in much the same ways as they had always provided public buildings. The matai, who comprised the village councils, established the amount of land, labor, and material needed to construct the buildings and then divided this among contributing village families.

The matai of each of the village families then set about mobilizing their family's resources to meet their contributions within the assigned time. This phase locked village families into a competition with other families to demonstrate their commitment to the new faith. Although the contest was ostensibly about their desire to obtain the means of enlightenment, it provided another public opportunity, for those families who aspired to leadership within the village, to establish their fitness to lead. Thus, aspiring families competed with one another to provide sites for the church buildings, labor and building materials for construction, cash to acquire materials that were not available locally, and later, plantations to support the pastor's family.

The resource mobilization process also locked some individuals into competition with others within āiga. The mobilization, although ostensibly about demonstrating individual commitment to the new faith, provided an opportunity for those who aspired to leadership within the family to demonstrate their fitness to lead by showing their capacity to and willingness to meet and exceed their required level of contribution. Individuals, and the entities that supported them, sought to demonstrate their willingness to serve the family in this religious arena while at the same time surreptitiously serving their own longer-term political interests within the family.

Once villages acquired their ministers, the form and venue of the competition shifted from securing the pastor to supporting the pastor and his family. Again, although the formal rationale was couched in terms of supporting the servant, which God in his infinite wisdom had provided for them, the requirement of ongoing support provided another opportunity for legitimate and competitive displays of individuals', families', and villages' capacity to lead. The energy formerly devoted to other forms of competition, which were being progressively discouraged, and in a few cases banned, by missionaries, found an outlet in these new sites of competition.

Thus, villages sought to provide larger, more elaborate church buildings, pastors' accommodation, larger plantations, more food, and more generous offertories, *alofa*, for their pastors and their families. They placed more children with the pastor and his wife for instruction in religion, basic literacy, and numeracy and to provide for their domestic needs. The boys provided labor

for the pastor's plantation and the girls provided domestic assistance for the pastor's wife. There is no doubt that villages' well-documented generosity was, in significant part, a reflection of their growing devotion to the new faith, but the public nature of this giving also provided an opportunity for villages that aspired to leadership to demonstrate their fitness to do so. Their demonstrations were fuelled in part by the belief that their omniscient God would observe their efforts and reward them for their generosity to his servant and, in part, by the belief that other villages would also observe its generosity and compare its performances with their own.

Families within villages also competed with one another to provide better service, more generous food offerings, and more in the way of alofa or "free-will offerings". Families that aspired to leadership sought to provide more labor for the pastor's plantation, more food for the pastor's table, and more money for the regular offertory. Their escalating display of generosity was undoubtedly driven in large part by religious commitment. It was validated, and indeed mandated, by passages in the Old Testament that dealt with the fate of those towns whose inhabitants had heard the word of God but who had not obeyed God and his prophets. Passages of New Testament scripture were also invoked in support of the practice.[6] It was also motivated, in part, by the belief that their generosity was witnessed by God, from whom nothing can be hidden.[7] Those who were generous to his servant would be rewarded and those who were not would be punished.

It was also, in part, motivated by the fact that their generosity was witnessed by other families from whom nothing was hidden. The families' contributions of labor and cash were announced and discussed periodically within the deacons' meetings, and their offerings were reported in detail in a roll call, during church services, by the deacons' representative. This provided extended families, whose offerings were reported collectively,[8] with an opportunity to demonstrate the level of their commitment to their faith and their fitness for leadership within the village, in a single act, and in a very public forum.

Finally, individuals who aspired to leadership within the family competed with one another to contribute to the family's regular offerings of service and offerings to the pastor and his family. The contributions of each of the households, *fuaifale*, which constitute the extended family, were noted as they were pooled. The generosity of the various households reflected, in part, on those who led them and were responsible for encouraging members to contribute. Thus again, within the context of displays of religious commitment, individuals could advance claims to consideration for secular leadership within the āiga.

Missionaries and Competition

Early on, missionaries were, of necessity, willing to allow Samoans to determine how the needs of the fledgling mission would be met. Faueā, the chief who escorted the Reverends Williams Barff and their party to Samoa, and introduced them to Malietoa, had warned Williams to avoid wholesale condemnation of Samoan custom and practice and against attempts to ban it (Gilson 1970). Williams later thanked God for this advice and clearly heeded it (Moyle 1984). Indeed, he had little option because the mission force was small, had very limited resources, and was almost completely dependent for their protection and support on the chiefs who controlled Samoan society (Macpherson 1997a). Gilson argues that early on Williams had little option but to tread carefully and to accept Samoan practices that were not clearly contrary to fundamental tenets of Christian teaching (Gilson 1970).

Even later, as their influence grew, their continuing dependence on the goodwill of chiefs for access to their people and for the maintenance of the mission discouraged them from interfering with chiefs' decisions about how to create and maintain support for the mission, as long as the means were not inconsistent with Christian doctrine (Gilson 1970; Macpherson 1997a). It could be argued, on this basis, that the missionaries were compelled by circumstance to accept many practices about which they had reservations. Although this may have been true in the early stages of the mission, it was less true later as the influence of the mission within Samoan society broadened and deepened. Where, later, they chose not to discourage a practice, it is reasonable to assume that it was either because the practice was not contrary to fundamental tenets of the faith or because it suited the interests of the mission or both.

This may well have been the case with competition. Missionaries were well aware of the competitive dynamic that existed within the Samoan culture. In this case, it was not competition per se, but the ends it served that missionaries considered problematical. Indeed, it could be used to channel Samoan energy into productive religious activity, which they found highly acceptable, and out of other activities, which they found much less acceptable but which they were disinclined to ban outright. It seems likely that, as the energy devoted to competition in such traditional pursuits as warfare and conspicuous consumption was channeled into more productive activity such as displays of individual and collective religious commitment, missionaries saw little reason to attempt to contain it. Indeed, the chiefs' use of competition provided not only self-financing congregations, but later the funds to provide a theological training institute,[9] an administrative center, a theological training institution to provide education for those identified as

appropriate missionary leaders, a translation facility, and a printing press to publish written instructional material for adherents. This use of competition in the mobilization of resources meant that the LMS mission was free to contemplate a westward expansion of the mission's work.

In fact, it was their concern with the funding of continued expansion of the mission into western Polynesia and Melanesia that led them to harness the Samoan tendency to competition in a novel and unique way. Every year, in May, the London Missionary Society sponsored a competition to generate funds for missionary expansion into the western Pacific, which became known as the *M*ē. The Christians in the villages were encouraged to see themselves as carrying out Christ's injunction to take the Gospel of Light abroad as St. Paul and other disciples had done before them. It was, at one level, an opportunity to make a selfless gesture to ensure that those who had not yet heard the "good news" could hear it and, like the Samoans themselves, enjoy God's grace and the prospect of eternal life. At another level, the annual missionary offering had a somewhat different consequence.

The missionary offering or Mē, was assembled within the village by regular giving through the year and finally presented by a series of steps. Families' offerings were announced within the village and consolidated. Villages' offerings were then announced within the district and consolidated. The districts' offerings were finally presented at a national meeting held in May. The Mē also pitted individuals against one another within families, families against one another within villages, villages against one another within districts, and eventually districts against one another within the nation.[10] At each level, the most generous givers were publicly acknowledged in the presence of both God and their peers.

The Samoans' determination to be as generous as circumstances, and factor endowments, permitted was motivated in part by their commitment to the idea of mission and desire to see the gospel taken among the "heathen nations". This was evident in the numbers of Samoans who offered themselves for theological training and in the number of graduates of the Malua Theological College who went abroad as missionaries from 1846 onward in newly opened mission fields as far west as Papua New Guinea (Gunson 1976). Their generosity was also, in part at least, motivated by a desire to win the approval of both God and their counterparts to whom their commitment was publicly announced and to establish, or consolidate, their fitness to lead within various spheres of Samoan society.

The same competitive urge was harnessed in another annual ritual known as the *Fa'amati*. Every year, senior deacons (*tiakono toeaina)* visited all of the ministers and congregations in a given district (*pulega*) to inspect and report on their accommodation and work; and European ministers and the Samoan

ministry trainees visited villages to test the general and religious knowledge of the children in the pastor's schools, which at that time were the sole vehicles for both religious and secular formal education. In conjunction with these visits, a special offering was made in March of each year by the congregation to refurbish the pastor's house and to ensure that the pastor had the appropriate furnishings[11] for entertaining these guests from the church hierarchy. Although the village deacons set a suggested minimum gift, they set no maximum, on these occasions. This effectively allowed those who sought leadership an opportunity to exceed the suggested level of contribution and to display their wealth in a socially approved context. Those who succeeded in these contexts accumulated sociopolitical capital in the form of prestige that came with their appointment as deacons and the extension of their influence into the religious arena.

Every year too, the pastors and representatives of all the LMS church congregations met at the church's center at Malua on Upolu for their annual conference which lasted as long as seven days.[12] Villages were represented at these conferences by their minister and his wife and, often, several deacons and their wives. Because all of the parties from a particular church district (pulega) shared accommodation at Malua, the levels of support that they enjoyed within their congregations were, thus, highly visible. On these occasions, families from within a congregation took turns to cook lunch and dinner on given days and to deliver these to their representatives at the conference. This event, too, became a site in which families within a congregation, and congregations within a district, could compete with one another to provide more and more varied food for their representatives.

This, in turn, became elaborated as village congregations sought to impress the representatives of other villages in the pulega with their collective generosity by making additional gifts (*asiga*) to the pulega as a whole. They would present gifts of food for all of the representatives of the pulega to share. This practice became an opportunity for villages to compete to demonstrate religious commitment, economic capacity, and generosity. People speak with pride of,

> the year when we took three barrels of home made ice cream of different flavours as an *asiga* for the representatives of the *pulega*. When the food was taken into the house which they shared and presented, the eyes of the people of the other villages from the *pulega* almost popped out. It was the first time they had seen ice cream machine and the first time they had tasted such cold food. The other representatives of the other villages in the *pulega* always waited for the day of our village's *asiga* because, although our village

was small, it was rich and our congregation always surprised them with its generosity.

Constraints on Competition

Throughout the nineteenth century, competition was vigorous but was kept in check by several factors. First, factor endowments limited the amount of wealth that villages could produce. Missions and traders provided markets for copra and coconut oil, but distances to and from plantations, the technologies available, and the frequency of shipping limited the amount that could be harvested for the market. Villages with larger areas of flat land near major centers were able to raise significant amounts of cash from the sale of copra, but other more remote villages with smaller populations and landholdings were constrained by these factors. Larger families, with more resources, were better able to press claims and to do so more decisively than those families with more limited resources, which, over time, reduced competition as hierarchies became established.

Second, throughout the nineteenth century, Samoans were engaged in a series of interfamily wars, which were waged to establish political dominance over all Samoa (Gilson 1970). These wars were prolonged by the misguided attempts of European consuls in Samoa to back various competing factions, which they hoped would be more sympathetic to their interests if, and when, they were installed in power (Meleiseā and Schoeffel 1987: ch. 5 and 6). These wars also disrupted village production as Samoans prepared for wars, destroyed the plantations of vanquished villages, and invested in arms and equipment with which to wage wars. These were some of the few times when Samoans would work for wages in the commercial plantations of the Europeans settlers to earn cash to fund wars. This commitment of labor to commercial plantations also limited the volume and value of village production that could be invested in religious competition.

By the end of the nineteenth century, religious teachings and a disillusion with the escalating capital and human costs of the wars led Samoans to accept and embrace the advantages of peace (Meleiseā and Schoeffel 1987:89–105). This desire coincided with a determination on the part of the European powers in Samoa to replace tense and competitive relationships between the consuls of three aspiring colonial powers and to establish a single political authority and civil administration. This was achieved by the Treaty of Berlin of 1899 that recognized the authority of the German government in the western islands of the Samoas, the United States in the eastern islands, and the English in Tonga (Cyclopedia of Samoa 1907:21–22). After the Germans

were installed as the colonial power in the western islands of the group and the US naval administration was installed in the eastern islands of the archipelago at the turn of the twentieth century, war largely ended. A new period of prosperity commenced as Samoan agricultural production increased and as markets developed. Samoan production of copra and coconut oil increased steadily and found ready markets. The missions encouraged the introduction of new technologies and crops and effectively broadened the productive base of Samoan agriculture and the cash returns available from plantation agriculture.

The political stability and new wealth started a round of church rebuilding using new materials and technologies. Villages started using reef corral, burned in huge pits, to produce a form of lime cement with which much larger, permanent structures could be built. Available cash from trade was used to buy the permanent roofing materials and fastening, ceilings, windows, doors, furnishings, and occasionally pews. The same technology, and increasing cash income from trade, later led to another round of pastor's house rebuilding. The rationale for this round of construction was to provide more appropriate buildings in which to house pastors, receive religious and secular instruction, and in which the steadily growing populations could worship. These more permanent structures also saved congregations the cost of regular reroofing and refurbishing of traditional buildings. Although this produced another round of competition within Samoan society, which was driven by the same cultural dynamics and resembled the earlier rounds, it was still constrained by the prices for the limited range of products that villages could grow and trade and the relatively high costs of imported building materials for permanent construction.

Pastors presided over the church government, prepared lay people for roles in the church, and ran and oversaw the pastor's school that provided basic instruction in literacy, numeracy, history, biology, geography, music, and of course the Bible for both adults and children in their congregations who would otherwise have had no formal education. Pastors' wives provided instruction in such things as handwork, embroidery, and health and hygiene for the women in their congregations. Between them, they maintained a vigorous round of pastoral visiting and visited and ministered to the sick. People speak with great respect and fondness of those pastors and their wives,

> P…. was a remarkable man. He worked hard in his plantation and worked hard for his congregation. He walked with boys all the way up the hill and inland to his plantation, worked with them and then turned around and carried his share of the load back to the village. He went fishing for all of the years he was here and shared his fish,

> and food with families that didn't have any without any fuss. He taught several generations of kids, and their parents, to read, write and count and opened up a world beyond the village to them. His wife, was a good woman, quiet and effective with a good sense of humour who did a lot for women around the village in a quiet way.
>
> You might say they were truly shepherds of their flock and they guided the village, calmed things down by helping people to see the right path. They looked after the village very well and the village looked after them, and their family, very well in return. People respected them and did what they did out of respect for him. That was in the end why he was appointed as a senior minister in the L.M.S church and went on to become well-known and respected in the L.M.S church.

Competition also found continuous expression in daily provision of labor for the pastor's plantation and food for his household, regularly fortnightly freewill offerings, annual meetings of the church at Malua, and the yearly missionary offerings. Competition between those who aspired to lead was intense but was capped by factor endowments, technology, and the market for primary production. Thus, although pastors' families may have enjoyed a higher standard of living than those who made up their congregations, the gap was limited by these factors, and they were seen to work and contribute in important ways in the villages in which they served.

The outbreak of World War I saw New Zealand depose the German administration and assume responsibility for the administration of Western Samoa. This transition of control was formalized when the League of Nations assigned New Zealand a mandate. Throughout the early part of the mandate, New Zealand did not change very much in Samoan society. Personal and institutional racism[13] (Va'ai 1999), some singularly inept, and ultimately tragic,[14] decisions on the part of the New Zealand administrators resulted in a widespread Samoan disillusion with New Zealand administrators and administration (Boyd 1969a). Samoan distanced themselves from a range of New Zealand initiatives and reformed a political movement, *Mau a Pule*, which actively opposed others (Field 1984).

Competition Unchained

World War II was a watershed in Samoan economic history. First, in the later part of the war, there were, at any one time, between 25,000 and 30,000

US troops living close to Samoans around the coastline of Western Samoa (Stanner 1953). The US forces employed some 2,600 Samoans and bought goods and services from others (Shankman 2001). The deployment of US Marines in Samoa exposed the Samoans to a level of wealth, new technologies, and a culture not previously seen. Some argue that WWII awakened an appreciation of the possibilities of new technologies, a desire to become more actively engaged in commerce, and an interest in travel. Second, in the postwar period, a range of public health campaigns resulted in a rapid increase in the Western Samoan birthrate, and reductions in neonatal death rates resulted in a rapidly expanding and relatively younger population (McArthur 1967). The population began to expand at unprecedented rates and caused some consternation about the sustainability of the growth rates of over 4 percent. Third, New Zealand and Australia chose to transform their economies from primarily agricultural to increasingly industrial ones. As they exhausted supplies of local labor for this transformation they began to look to nontraditional sources for new labor. In New Zealand's case, this included Western Samoa for which New Zealand was still responsible under a United Nations Trusteeship assigned after WWll (Boyd 1969b).

When opportunities for out-migration presented themselves after WWII, young Samoans went abroad with the encouragement of their parents and without opposition from the government of the day. Emigrants went in search of adventure, educational opportunities for themselves and their children, new types of work, higher wages, and, in some cases, to escape the constraints of Samoan society (Pitt and Macpherson 1974). Many Samoans who went abroad continued to see themselves as expatriate members of the family, church, and village. The acknowledgment of their indebtedness to "home" committed them to continue to serve, *tautua,* and to repay their debt to those whose "sweat they had eaten".[15] This resulted in a steady and growing flow of remittances in cash and kind (Shankman 1976) to their families, churches, and villages (Macpherson 1974; Pitt and Macpherson 1974).

This flow of remittances was effectively assured by the nature of migrant selection process that ensured that those selected to go abroad by their families were those who were committed to the continuing support of their families (Macpherson 1974, 1997b) and by the character and organization of the expatriate community that developed abroad (Macpherson 1974, 1997b). The steady growth in both the volume and value of remittances from expatriate communities was, in turn, assured by the steady demand for unskilled and semiskilled labor in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s (Ahlburg 1991).

This flow of remittances effectively severed the linkage between local factor endowments and disposable wealth, which had formerly limited the

resources available to families and villages. Individuals, families, and villages whose aspirations to lead had, in the past, been limited by factor endowments were now able to compete with established leaders using their newly expanded resource base. This new source of funds fuelled a new round of competition within Samoan society.

Individuals with migrant relatives abroad found themselves with access to relatively large new sources of funds. Furthermore, as Shankman noted, these funds did not, as in the past, necessarily flow to the matai who then used them on behalf of the family or distributed them to members of the family at their pleasure. Individual migrants sent remittances directly to their parents and families, which meant that more individuals and families now had direct access to funds. They were no longer solely dependent on their matai for access to land for their subsistence and cash needs and were in a position to compete with their former "patrons". Traditional rank-wealth relationships, whereas flexible earlier, were seriously destabilized by this new wealth in the hands of people who might not traditionally have had access to it. The consequences of this redistribution of village wealth became quickly evident, for instance, in two areas: house building, and political representation.

Before large-scale migration commenced, the homes of villages' most prominent families were obvious from their size, their condition, and by the height of their stone foundations. Those entering a village could determine relatively easily where the high chiefs of the village resided. Lesser families could not compete openly with the established families in this area even when they had the resources to do so. However, once remittances started to flow back into villages, a round of house building commenced as families with relatives abroad began to build new European-style homes, *fale papālagi,* in permanent materials.

Although there were good pragmatic, economic reasons for using these materials to build homes, which needed less maintenance than traditional ones, the building allowed families that aspired to leadership to demonstrate their economic capability.

Until then, large homes had belonged to chiefs and part-Samoan traders, and European style homes had belonged mainly to pastors. Although the size and placement of traditional houses that were governed by traditions that effectively prevented competition, no such conventions existed to outlaw competition in this new type of house building. Now, any family with resources could demonstrate that they, too, could build houses that were as large as those of their political leaders and as European as those of their religious leaders and representatives of the *afakasi* or part-Samoan commercial élite. The consequences of this new force for competition were apparent,

and problematical, throughout Samoa as the historian Meleiseā has shown (Meleiseā 2000).

Furthermore, the buildings themselves were only signs of individuals' and families' growing capacity to mobilize wealth offshore. The political significance of this new reality did not escape the traditional leadership. They too sought to demonstrate their continued fitness to lead by rebuilding their own homes in the European style, but they were now competing on a more level playing field. They sought to harness the energies and to tie up the capital of others in a round of church building renewal and the building of such ancillary buildings as schools and women's committee houses, which consumed significant amounts of private capital in the service of the village. But, after these projects were complete, there was little to stop people who aspired to leadership from building homes that could establish their financial capacity both publicly and permanently. Some villages, as Meleiseā has shown, did attempt to limit this, but this was difficult to do (Meleiseā 2000) and produced mixed feelings. One section within the leadership, for instance, argued that many new European-style homes in a village reflected favorably on the village as a whole and could materially assist its claims to a more prominent role in local leadership.

The qualitative change in the character and cost of electoral campaigns, as more people gained access to funds with which to wage election campaigns, signaled another challenge to traditional rank-wealth correlations. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the matai in a district had quietly chosen a single candidate who enjoyed the respect of the majority to represent the electorate. This arrangement allowed them to compare the genealogies, wealth, political skills, and records of service of various contenders and to pick a single candidate who had the political skills to represent them and who had proven willing in the past to put his personal and family resources at the service of the electorate. This, people reasoned, was evidence that such a person would, in power, continue to use his new offices to attend to the needs of his constituents. These electoral "contests" were replaced by increasingly vigorous campaigns between many candidates for public office (So'o 1998). In some respects, the prospect of success was now significantly influenced by a candidate's access to wealth.

Within the religious sphere, this new wealth sparked a round of intense competition as more players, with more wealth at their disposal, sought to demonstrate their commitment to the faith while simultaneously laying claim to fitness to lead in other spheres. The church organization remained, as before, another sphere in which individuals, families, and villages could demonstrate economic and political capacity. Although the channels were the same, the volumes of resource that flowed within them increased at a

remarkable rate. Families, which had until that time been unable to lay effective claim to leadership because of their size and the size of their plantations, could, with willing migrants abroad, now do so. Villages with limited endowments could now pursue claims to district leadership more forcefully with the new inflow of resources from abroad.

Pastors' homes, churches, and pulpits were rebuilt or refurbished, and louvered windows, pews, organs, wall-hangings, and clocks were added to churches. The alofa or regular offerings increased in value. The periodic offerings such as the Mē, Fa'amati, and Christmas offering began to increase significantly. Individuals, families, villages continue to compete with one another but without the constraints formerly imposed by factor endowments and the realities of subsistence and the size of the village economy (Pitt 1970; Lockwood 1971). New costs, such as electricity, water, and in some cases vehicles and vehicles' running expenses were shouldered by the congregation. Congregations have begun to take responsibility for weddings for their pastor's[16] and their pastor's children particularly where they have grown up in the village and sabbaticals for their spiritual leaders.

The LMS pastor was becoming very attractive as people have channelled more of their capital into competition within the church sphere and the once humble alofa, or cash offering, became tax-free annual salaries that range between SAT28,000 and SAT208,000[17] at a time when the average government servant's salary is SAT8000, a factory worker's is around SAT3500, and a casual plantation worker's around SAT3000. The pastors typically live rent-free in some of the largest homes in the village and with all of their families' expenses met by the congregation. Some are provided with private vehicles and even running expenses for them. They are still provided with plantation lands and labor to work them and in some cases sell the food produced in them in the market for cash. Pastors continue to receive generous gifts, usually in food and cash, whenever a family within the village celebrates a life crisis.

Every year, the Fa'amati provides new home appliances and pieces of furniture that pastors are free to take when they leave the service of the village. In 2001, for instance, congregations were invited to provide bedroom furniture for their pastors' houses, and in what followed, many congregations went offshore to purchase more elaborate furnishings than were available in Samoa. One older woman told us with considerable pride that,

> This year, the village bought the pastor a bedroom suite which cost, after transport costs, $US4500, that's about SAT13,000. It has mirror tiles on the head and foot. In the headboard there is a radio, an alarm clock and a tape player and there are reading lights and

> bookshelves on each side. The set includes a matching blanket box, two chests of drawers and two chairs. It is very nice but I don't know if they ever use it. The children who stay with the pastor just polish it apparently. Maybe they're keeping it in case they have important guests.

The Emerging Private Debates

Where, earlier, gaps between the standard of living of the pastor and members of the congregation were either small or nonexistent, they are now increasingly significant. These gaps have become a matter of considerable private debate, and more than a little criticism, as congregations see these gaps grow and start to question the theological and practical issues that surround this growing inequality. The discussions focus on the causes and consequences of the growing gap and the theological issues that its existence raises.

Explanations of the causes of the growing gap are divided between those who attribute it to the growing greed of a new generation of pastors, those who attribute it to the escalating competition within fa'asamoa, and those who believe these have combined. They are best summarized in composites of the arguments of their respective proponents. Some focus on the focus of new pastors' interest in their material comfort.

> These young pastors are not like the older men who preceded them in the Lord's service. They won't go to a village unless that they know it is wealthy. Then, they want new paint, new furniture, new furnishings, and now "studies", and more children to work in their plantations. They are not like the old men who came with a Bible and a glory box which contained all of their possessions and went and worked in their own plantations and went fishing. These new young men live like lords in the village.

Some focus on their use of the pulpit to criticize congregations for a lack of generosity.

> Many pastors now use the pulpit to complain to their congregations when the level of the *alofa* falls. They may wrap up the message in theological argument but their intention is always clear to Samoans who know their Bible so well. Some of these pastors don't even bother to wrap it up in soft words. Our last pastor said told us there

> was no shame in poverty and that in the gospels the poor are promised the earth as are those who are poor because they serve God and his servants on earth. That was, to say the least, a fairly transparent, message. In truth, I think he was embarrassed publicly because his *alofa* was falling because members of the congregation were getting tired of his poorly prepared sermons and his failure to provide new ideas.

Some focus on some pastors' willingness to engage in commerce while in the service of the Lord and the village.

> There was a pastor in a nearby village, A, who built up a business. At one time he had a store, and three buses in the village where his family lived. He even had plantations from which he sold food, in addition to the plantations he had in the village in which he was a pastor. The congregation worked very hard to provide for him and he was using their *alofa* to build his business. Much of his time and his wife's time was spent running the business instead of running the congregation. He really ate their sweat. ….Two of the buses crashed and one broke down and I think that was what brought the rest of the business down. I suppose there's a lesson in that, eh?

Many have stories about the excesses of this sort of conduct that get traded at sessions where these matters are discussed. One, for instance, recalled when,

> The pastor at my wife's village was called to another village. The relationship had not always been entirely happy and so people were not unhappy to see him go. When he went, he took every stick of furniture and every fitting and all of the crockery and all of the soft furnishings. Mate, you wouldn't believe what we found when we went inside. The plugs and taps were taken from the kitchen sink and bathroom basins. The toilet seats were gone. Even the light wall sockets had been taken and all there were wires hanging out of the roof and walls. His brothers were about to remove the gutterings from the house when the *matai* realised what was happening and moved in.

Those who have become increasingly disappointed with the quality of theological discussion and spiritual leadership over time attribute it to the new pastors' preoccupation with material comfort.

> I don't think that all of these new pastors go to theological college because they are "called" like the old pastors. Some go because their family have been pastors before them and they have enjoyed the lifestyle. Others go because they see it is the best-paid job in Samoa and even a chance to go overseas where, incidentally, the rewards are even higher. Some only go so they can serve a congregation for a few years, maybe five maybe ten, save some money, and then start a business. They don't have a true sense of vocation and don't provide effective spiritual leadership because they are not truly serving the Lord and are not filled with the desire to guide their people. They watch television instead of studying the Bible, and go to the movies instead of visiting their congregation. They are nothing like my grandfather who went to the plantation to get his food, then went around the village visiting, then taught in the pastor's school and then studied his bible and prepared his service by the light of the old kerosene lantern.

The situation that these people see is one in which,

> The Bible says in numerous places that the pastors are, like God, to be the shepherds of the flock. Their role is to lead the sheep to food and to rivers where they can find water and protect them from harm. Look, for instance, at Isaiah 40:11, where shepherds are supposed "to feed the flock, gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom and shall gently lead those who are with young", These new pastors leave their flocks to find their own food and then starve the flock and eat the sheep. Well, that is not, in my thinking, the correct conduct.

Some, however, accept a degree of personal responsibility for the situation they see developing. They point to the fact that the pastors are used by their congregations and that they may not have as much power over their flock as is commonly supposed.

> People use the church setting to establish their position within a village and sometimes in a family. They do this by giving more than other people so that the rest of the congregation can hear their names and their offerings called every Sunday. If the church has a special offering, they give more again so that people can hear their name and hopefully, remember it. Then they become deacons in the church which is a recognition of leadership which opens other

> doors. You can't really blame the pastors who come to a form of organisation which was set up a very long ago and find themselves caught in it.

Others note that if the villages sought to change the situation they could because,

> The pastor and his wife serve at the pleasure of the church and the village. If the village is unhappy with their pastor's performance, there are procedures which can be invoked to dismiss the pastor and call another. Villages do this periodically, but when they do it is usually because of something like inappropriate personal behaviour rather than because of the organisation of the church itself which is largely in the hands of the *fono a tiakono* anyhow. So you hear of pastor's being dismissed because of adultery, or the pastor's wife's conduct, or for poor preaching but not because of the organisation of the church.

This is possibly true because young pastors may have limited influence over the session that actually controls the organization of the parish.

> Remember that when a young pastor goes to a village, he has to work with a group of deacons who have been there for most of their lives and know exactly how they want the church to run. The pastor can try and persuade them to do something differently but unless they want to do it too, then it's dead. People think the pastors have all the power but I think the relationship is more like the horse and rider. The riders sits on top with the reins in his hand, but if the horse doesn't want to move, there's not a lot the rider can do. The horse is bigger and stronger. The rider can kick the horse, or whip it, but if the horse gets sick of the treatment, it can just rear up and throw the rider on the ground.

Another pointed out that how this might work.

> In our village the pastor tried to prevent all of the children whose parents did not come to church regularly from taking part in the festivities on White Sunday. This meant that children were denied a right that their parents had because they were born in the village. Well the pastor persisted with this "ban" to try and get the people who lived outside the village to come to church. The people resisted

> by deliberately reducing their *alofa* offerings. The first offering fell by a significant figure because the people who lived outside the village had good jobs in town and were big givers. The pastor held his ground and the next offering really delivered the message more forcefully. Eventually, the pastor relented and allowed the kids to take part. After all, it was becoming a matter of discussion within and beyond the village and it must have been embarrassing because nobody was actually 'resisting' but they were protesting in a very public way. But it was a lesson to the pastor about where the power lies.

Others are less partisan and see the situation as one that suits both the pastor and the deacons and, indirectly, a significant part of the village. The existing arrangements allow the church setting to be used by the people of the village as a site in which families can lay claims to both secular and religious leadership. Their collective generosity in turn allows the village to advance its status and claims to leadership within the district. This competition, which is ostensibly about commitment to the faith, is by definition a morally defensible one and provides a site for the use of the village. The pastor also benefits directly from the situation. The competition draws people to the church regularly, which appears to reflect his gift as a teacher and augments both the offerings and the resources the village places at his disposal. As one woman noted,

> The arrangement was put in place by the *Pāpalagi* missionaries to help the mission, but Samoans embraced and refined the arrangement because it suited us because it was part of our culture, *fa'asamoa*. Once the missionaries took away the wars and the competitive visiting, *malaga*, the church was an obvious place in which these contests could be continued. The situation continues and the pastors' and the villages' interests are bound together in this symbiotic relationship. It has become tradition and no one has much interest in changing it.

This may overstate the case. In fact, there is significant private discussion of this arrangement, and much of it is critical. Much is fuelled by the observation of and increasing awareness of other denominations' forms of organization and may, in fact, be reflected in the growth of other denominations in Samoa. There is for instance considerable interest in the organization of the Mormon Church, which has been in Samoa since 1884 but which has recently begun to grow more rapidly. People noted, for instance, differences in the nature of leadership and the organization of the church.

> You know that in the LDS church, the young people pay to take part in the mission work. They pay their fares, clothes, shoes, bicycles, and in some places even their food. They go wherever the church sends them. Some of those young kids go to the poorest countries on earth to spread the word. That seems more like what Jesus meant when he said, "leave everything and follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Their approach to discipleship seems more like the model that Jesus offered us in the New Testament.

The Mormon system of giving attracted favorable attention and not simply from those within the faith.

> The church has a system of offerings which are based on scriptural texts and is what was done in the old times. They ask only that people provide a tithe which is one tenth of their earnings. This is based directly on Holy Scripture and is clearly set out in the Old Testament in Leviticus and Numbers. That way, the amount of the offering is between the person who is giving and God. That is the way it should be. Their system depends on a person's honesty and personal honour. It does not depend on pressure from other people to give. It is not because you want to be someone in the eyes of the other people in the congregation.

Another noted a fundamental difference in the relationship between the church and its people.

> You know the Mormons support the people. After Valelia (a 1991 hurricane), Mormons went and gave out food to everybody: Mormons and non-Mormons all got the same. They store food for these sorts of occasions and their bishops directed the people to share their food with everyone in the village who needed food. Our church (LMS) was busy trying to get food for the families, and for our pastor, when the people from the Mormon Church in our village came with food for us all. It made a lot of people think and at the time a lot of people joined the Mormon Church. Some have begun to trickle back to the Methodist and LMS, but in some villages, after Valelia, a lot of people who went away stayed away.

Finally, people compared the difference between Mormon and LMS means of expansion.

> The Mormons can call on the support of Mormons all over the world. The Mormons in the rich countries help their brothers and sisters in poor countries. That is why they can build so many and such large buildings all over the place. The people in the villages don't become impoverished raising money to build and furnish new churches like us. They make a contribution, of course, but building companies do the actual work and the people are free to concentrate on their learning and teaching. I don't know if they feel so proud of their churches because they didn't make extreme sacrifices to build them like we do in our church, but they are not always complaining about their church's demands. I have Mormon relations and their life is a lot smoother in some ways than ours because of their church.

The Muted Public Debate

Only occasionally, however, do these discussions spread into the public arena. Some have exposed aspects of the issue to scrutiny in public venues. The most visible of these are the comedy sketches, *faleaitu*, performed at the annual Teuila Festival, which has become a major attraction for local and overseas Samoans and increasing numbers of tourists. For several years, two of Samoa's favorite exponents of faleaitu, Siaki and Petelo, caricatured traditional pastors and satirized their conduct in a series of skits to large, appreciative audiences at Teuila Festival. These highly irreverent performances were recorded are rebroadcast regularly on Televise Samoa and on the Radio 2AP, both of which are owned by the government, and still get many laughs. The form of the criticism, however, may have been too strong for some who complained at their irreverence. The Organizing Committee, which screens performances for the festival, in 2001, for the first time, warned would-be performers that such performances will not be considered for the public stages and competitions. Can the public discussion of these issues be headed off this easily?

The connection between a tradition of competitive giving and the organization of some mainstream denominations makes it difficult to raise questions about the former issue without being seen to be questioning the legitimacy of the latter. The situation is made more difficult by the principle of gerontocracy, which ensures that most of the church's leaders are appointed when they are in middle-age, are well accustomed to the church's organization, and are chosen as leaders for their unstinting commitment to its work over time. Many have a vested interest in its maintenance and are highly unlikely to accept the need to make more than cosmetic changes. Even people who have

become uncomfortable with the consequences of competition, but remain committed to the faith, may choose to avoid discussion of the issue in church forums to avoid exposing themselves to the accusation of failing religious commitment, which may have higher personal social costs than accommodation. Although elements of tradition and religion organization have become so closely intertwined that overt criticism is difficult, change may occur as a consequence of internal and external actions taken by members.

Some influential people who reach leadership positions within the church may start to bring a halt to the competition from within. One well-educated, influential, high chief, with a record of exemplary service to the church, became concerned about the impact of constantly escalating expectations of giving on his village his village's welfare. He "capped" the alofa contributions, which he made under two of his chiefly titles, and effectively ended the annual inflation of expectation. He explained that, as long as he maintained his contributions at a given level, no one in the village could, except in exceptional circumstances, give more without showing disrespect and disturbing historical relativities between the families and titles within the village. This move, he explained, effectively ended the upward trend, which he would have been expected to lead as the holder of two of the village's highest titles and which others would then have had to match to maintain relativities. Such moves from within depend, however, on the presence of leaders who can take a broader view of the process and may not occur fast enough for some people.

Congregations may take advantage of their pastors' sabbatical absences to discuss the pastors' performance and expectations. In cases where pastors' conduct has been found wanting, the congregations have been able to take the opportunity to indicate that they will not accept their pastor's return. Among reasons given for taking this action were pastor's greed and for unremitting or unreasonable demands on congregations.[18] One elder, whose congregation had taken such action, pointed out that their former pastor's greed had been his undoing because he now served a small, poor congregation where his fortnightly offering was about one-tenth of that which he had received when he had served them. Furthermore, the elder noted, his prospects of being called to another larger, more generous congregation was now irreparably damaged by widespread knowledge of the background to his departure from their service. The congregation has since called another pastor to whom they continued to give at the same level. This case suggests that it is not competition as such that is considered problematic so much as who manages it.

There are also external forces that are challenging the legitimacy of the demands made in mainstream churches. People are becoming increasingly

dependent on cash to purchase goods and services they once produced and were effectively free or inexpensive. As people find that demands generated by competition within mainstream churches prevent them from obtaining basic goods and services, they may feel increasing inclined to transfer their membership to denominations that make fewer or lesser financial demands. People who find themselves in this situation can change denominations without exposing themselves to accusation of declining commitment to faith. People can, and do, vote with their feet, removing themselves from churches whose demands they consider excessive or theologically unjustifiable. This is a simple solution to the dilemma and one taken by increasing numbers of people as the relative shares of the population worshiping in "new faiths" show. This is not always easy for several reasons. First, a number of mainly rural villages actively resist[19] the establishment of new denominations within their boundaries and force members who wish to worship in those churches to travel further to do so. Second, long histories of family association with, support for and leadership in particular denominations, can mean that decisions to leave raise questions about family loyalty. These may expose individuals to accusations of declining commitment to one's family, which is another uncomfortable burden to bear[20] and may have significant social consequences in a society in which kinship is a fundamental element of personal and social identity.

Conclusion

If these reactions to the escalating demands imposed by competition seem less intense than might be expected, it may be for one of two reasons: one sociological and one theological. First, as people grow up and become familiar with a particular set of practices, and in the absence of feasible and visible alternatives, these become norms and are not routinely subject to questioning. In fact, as we have suggested above, denominations such as the Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, Baha'i, and now some Pentecostal denominations are increasingly providing bases for comparison. Mormon and Seventh Day Adventist congregations, which effectively cap competition by tithing, are becoming established in villages, but Pentecostal denominations that are implicitly and, in some cases explicitly, critical of practices of the mainstream denominations are confined principally to the urban areas. Their practices and critiques are not readily visible to many people living in the rural villages. Second, when people travel overseas, as they routinely do, they often visit churches in overseas Samoan communities, which are organized in very much the same way as their own village churches and in which competition on an even larger scale has become endemic (Macpherson and

Macpherson 2001). They do not always see the significant numbers of people who have moved away from the offshoots of mainstream churches to either new denominations or away from organized religion altogether.

The second reason why criticism of the consequence of the competitive practices remains muted derives from the scriptures themselves. Samoans who are concerned, routinely refer to a number of passages in scripture that enjoin followers to refrain from judgement of others and in particular their pastors and leaders. The task of judgement is to be left to the Lord who will, in the last days, judge their leaders. People know from Old Testament scripture, that He will punish errant leaders as he has in the past and far more severely than they could. Indeed, some even speculate about the sort of punishment that might be visited upon their pastors. Furthermore, because current interpretation favors imminent end to the world, this judgement is not far away and will be public. In the meantime, their situation is made no worse by giving and remaining poor as a consequence. Scripture assures them that the poor will enter Heaven and find God, whereas the rich, including their pastors, will have more trouble entering Heaven than a camel will have passing through the eye of a needle.

NOTES

1. The earliest missionaries in Samoa were from the Methodist or Wesleyan Church and the London Missionary Society (LMS), which were known early as the Lotu Tōga and Lotu Ta'iti, respectively, after their origins in Tonga and Tahiti, and these have, along with the Roman Catholic Church or Lotu Pope, become the largest and most influential denominations in Samoa. This paper focuses on the organization of current form of the LMS denomination, the Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano o Samoa (EFKS).

2. In practice, the competition for valued positions involved primarily men. Although women did exercise significant amounts of influence through their relationships with their brothers and through their linkages to other families, they tended not to hold the titles in which power was formally vested. In contemporary Samoa, the competition is typically more open, and the valued positions are increasingly sought and held by women on the basis of their demonstrated skill and educational attainments.

3. Sometimes also referred to as *āiga potopoto* meaning the family in convocation that typically occurred when family gathered to appoint leaders and take decisions.

4. Technically because, over time, individuals, families, and villages that won leadership could, with the right set of political skills, consolidate their positions, which made it more difficult, but not impossible, for others to displace them.

5. Early missionaries' accounts of their travels contain many reports of inquiries by Samoan chiefs as to how they could prove their commitment to the new faith and secure the permanent services of a missionary or teacher.

6. Mark 9:35–37; Mark 12:1–11; and Matthew 25:31–45 popularly invoked texts used to justify generosity to God's servants on earth.

7. Chronicles 28:9; Psalms 44:21; and Proverbs 15:3 are some of the most frequently quoted scriptural justifications of this belief.

8. Extended families pooled their contribution and presented them as a single entity (*matāfale*), but the contributions of each of its constituent households was known and in some cases documented.

9. Malua Theological College, Upolu.

10. The term "nation" is used with some reservations here because there was at the time no formally designated nation in existence when the practice commenced.

11. These typically comprised woven sleeping mats (*fala lili'i*), floor mats (*papa laufala*), bamboo pillows (*aluga*), and domestic furnishings such as sheets, pillowcases, mosquito nets, and kerosene lights.

12. In practice, it was often longer because the general meetings were preceded by meetings of the senior ministers (*faife'au toeaina*) that lasted another two or three days.

13. Racism was clearly evident in their relations with the Samoans and their expressed attitudes to Samoan self-government. Samoan–European and Samoan–Chinese relations are readily evident in their reports, their application of legislation, and indeed their personal conduct.

14. The decision to allow the *SS Talune* to land in Apia in 1918, after it had been refused permission to land in American Samoa, resulted in the introduction of the influenza strain that had caused a pandemic in Europe. The "Spanish flu" resulted in the death of between 22 percent and 24 percent of the Samoan population.

15. A metaphor reflecting the idea that individual success was built on the collective efforts of those around them.

16. This is unusual because LMS pastors are typically married when they are called to a village to serve. In some cases, however, the costs of widowers' weddings are paid for by villages as was the case of the Lalomanu village pastor in 2001.

17. The actual income of a given pastor depends on the factor endowment of the village, the number of churches in a village, the number of expatriate members of a congregation, and even relationships between the pastor and the congregation.

18. Others included misconduct of various sorts, inappropriate conduct of pastor's spouses, deterioration of relations with the congregation, incompetence as a preacher and teacher, and disorganization.

19. In 1997, in Samalaeulu Savai'i, a man who established an LDS study group was warned by the village council to desist. When he invoked his constitutional right to religious freedom and continued, he was taken by other villagers, and at the direction of the

fono, to be burned. Village pastors and the rain intervened, but after the event, the police advised him that they could not enforce his right and warned him to take his family to another village where he could worship in safety.

20. When a family, whose forebears were responsible for the establishment of the LMS church in the village in Faleata, became members of the SDA church, they were accused of turning their back on their history and were for a time ostracized from family and village affairs.

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