

CIRCLES OF SELF: *TĀ-VĀ* EXPRESSED IN TRADITIONAL SAMOAN DANCE, CULTURE AND SELF

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Circles of Self Expressed in the *Taualuga*: Introduction

SAMOAN DANCE is an ephemeral performance of rhythm, harmony, and beauty, occurring in time and space. In the symmetrical, concentric arrangement of dancers during the traditional Samoan *taualuga*, the *taupou* dance that culminates a performance, and the movement within this dance, are performative expressions of *tā-vā* as a symmetrical idealization of social life. *Tā-vā*, a Moana (Oceanic) concept of time-space, according to Mahina (2005), is ultimately invoked to create harmony and beauty:

Both harmony and beauty are dependent on the degree of symmetry relating to the intensification of *ta* “time” and rearrangement of *va* “space”, as is the distinction between good and bad works art or literature. By transforming chaos to order, poetry undergoes a symmetrical re-arrangement of the ordinary language, the outcome of which creates harmony and beauty (138).

A primary feature of human experience, the Moana concept of *tā-vā* (time-space), defined and described by indigenous Moana writers (see, for example Mahina, Potauaine, and Ka’ili, this volume), contrasts with Western views of time, space, and existence. The latter view historically has been

imposed upon descriptions of Pacific cultures by Western anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, and artists, likely because this concept has been so deeply examined for the West by its philosophers, it was believed to be understood similarly for all humanity. We are coming to appreciate now, by examining indigenous approaches, multiple loci of understanding, all equally valid.

I admit that I am not ethnically Moana (although my friends insist that I am a reincarnated Samoan); I have been enculturated for more than a half century as an American of Slavic background, and therefore must bring an outsider's perspective to *tā-vā* theory. Interestingly, prior to my formal introduction to this theory, my dissertation (Georgina 2007) had included these concepts without naming them *tā-vā*. Much of the discussion below echoes ideas presented in that dissertation.

My fieldwork experience, from which I draw my ethnographic examples, took place on Tutuila, American Samoa, from 2002 to 2004. The examples I use here may or may not apply to independent Samoa, which has led a separate life for the past 150 years or so. Here I refer to “Samoan” culture, but recognize the distinction.

As a psychological anthropologist interested in indigenous concepts of selfhood, I see self as the most basic human experience; all elements of culture must integrate harmoniously with that society's understanding of its fundamental subjectivity. The work of Swiss psychologist Carl Jung provides an explanatory platform that, in my opinion, translates cross-culturally. This perspective frames my interpretation of *tā-vā* theory.

Tā-vā theory has several tenets, the most important to this discussion (explained in detail by Mahina) are that “*tā* and *vā* (time and space), are the abstract dimensions of *fuo* (form) and *uho* (content) of reality” (this volume), which I understand to be roughly equivalent to the time-space matrix in which human activity takes place, encompassing all of nature and human experience, physically, psychologically, and historically. Next, according to Mahina, “the eternal relations of exchange [of all things in reality] are expressed by means of *mata* (eye) or *ava* (hole), defined as points of intersection of opposite tendencies”¹ (this volume), where *ava* is a copy of *mata* and vice versa; this intersection is where energy or force is most intense. Conflict occurs where *mata* and *ava* are in a state of crisis; order occurs where they are in a state of stasis. This state of stasis is beautiful, symmetrical, and harmonious, and, according to Mahina, “the symmetrical arrangement of *tā-vā* gives rise to *mālie* (beauty) while the asymmetrical configuration of *tā-vā* leads to *tāmaki* (disharmony)” (this volume). Beauty, symmetry, and harmony are themselves “a state of *noa* (zero-point, that is, ‘0’), which is, like order, a form of conflict” (this volume). In other words, as I interpret it, *tā-vā* describes a

cultural semiosphere (and natural, noncultural sphere) in which everything in time and space exists in relation to everything else, a system of pairs of opposites that stand either in stasis, which is considered beautiful and harmonious, or in “crisis,” that is, chaos/movement, considered disharmonious. Balance (“symmetrical arrangement”) is beautiful, while imbalance (“asymmetrical configuration”) is disharmonious.

The cultural semiosphere, as defined by Yuri Lotman (1990), is a meaning-generating space-time that is bounded both geographically and psychologically, and, I would add, historically. I use this term similarly to Mahina’s use of “matrix” (this volume) to mean the cultural space-time medium. This chapter takes a psychological and semiotic approach to *tā-vā*’s explanatory power and its expression in the Samoan taupou dance, the *taualuga*, which is examined as a performance social product and embodiment of *tā-vā* literally, psychologically, and figuratively. I argue that the circular performance space matrix of the traditional Samoan *taualuga*, and the movement within this dance, are central manifestations of the Samoan *tā-vā* (time-space) semiosphere with echoes in geographic space, interpersonal relationships, performance, and the movement of power and energy within and outside of the village. I conclude that these interlinked concepts may have their origins in Samoan concepts of the self.

The Greater Samoan Cultural Semiosphere

Island life has either forced or encouraged the development of a tightly bounded semiosphere on American Samoa. The deep waters of the Pacific are a natural boundary between islands, within which culture cannot exist, at least not without life support. This forms a dichotomy between the space within which humans can live (that is, cultural space), and the space reserved primarily for nature (the fish, octopus, and so on)—a dangerous location (perhaps better described as a medium) into which humans can foray only briefly and for specific purposes, well-prepared.

Within the cultural semiosphere, *tā-vā* defines the spatio-temporal locus for human activity. Perhaps it is a morning’s walk to the next village (with one’s feet beating the *tā* measuring out the *vā*), space measured by time, time measured by the beating of the feet on the path, or perhaps the thump-thump of the flip-flops against the soles of the feet. The concept of space is measured out in time, in footsteps, in one’s *tā tā le fatu* (heartbeat) as one walks the path.

In Samoan culture, an apparent center-periphery-center conversation exists in geographic, performative, and psychological domains; that is, temporally demarcated and spatially constituted in reality, across nature, mind,

and society. These can be understood as mata and ava—mata at the center of human life, and ava the center of nature, beyond the periphery of the space defined by mata and existing as its mirror reflection.

Center-Periphery/Mata-Ava

The Samoan center-periphery, described as a dichotomy (Lotman 1990; Feinberg 1980) or a point-field (Lehman and Herdrich 2002), may be both of these or none. A holistic model may be more descriptive, one in which there are multiple centers and multiple boundary spaces where their edges meet. Some centers are mata while other centers are ava; the space where they meet is in constant flux, frequently contested. To maintain the balance harmoniously is to *tausi vā* (Van Der Ryn, this volume).

The Moana model surpasses linearity: the time-space of *tā-vā* conjoins space and time in a manner not foreseen by Nietzsche (1966). Beauty is balance; balance is the give-and-take of human life, of the beat of slippers against the soles of the feet and the silence between the beats; yet, imbalance, asymmetry, is beauty's mirror image.

In this *tā-vā* model, the center is emphasized. There are two centers, the mata center and the ava center. The geographic, cultural, or psychological center—the mata—is the point of greatest human-controlled natural power, and, according to Lotman (1990), is also the site of greatest stasis:

[I]n the centre of the cultural space, sections of the semiosphere aspiring to the level of self-description become rigidly organized and self-regulating. But at the same time, they lose dynamism and having once exhausted their reserve of indeterminacy they became inflexible and incapable of further development (134).

Self-description, here, indicates a condition in which the culture has achieved the integration of all elements (all of reality) by which it then defines itself.² In Samoan culture, the loss of dynamism at the center is apparent in a literal as well as figurative sense, particularly in the case of movement and performance (discussed in the upcoming text), and perhaps for reasons additional to Lotman's. In the center, in a figurative sense, old meanings, history, stands still.

The uncontrolled (by humans) center—the ava—is the point of greatest natural power. The ava lies at the center of the uninhabited areas of the islands and is not culturally defined: it lies in that place where cultural meanings do not exist. It is not a semiosphere because it does not engage in human semiotic (cultural) practices. It is not human; therefore

its beauty—which is disharmony to the human mind—is in asymmetry and chaos, nature growing in wild abandon. At the center, there is no stasis. Time moves differently, on a different scale: days, lunar months, seasons,³ years, geologic ages.

The human and natural spheres do not exist in opposition to each other, rather they are each different conditions of life, time, and space moving at different speeds, different time scales. In the active transition zone between the edges of mata and ava power/influence, the periphery of the cultural semiosphere, the nonhuman (natural) brushes against and creeps up on culture; in Samoa, the periphery is the locus of greatest movement and disorder.

Boundaries: I Tai, I Uta

While no human may be an island, the island of Tutuila embodies a definition of humanness. Samoan culture clearly embraces the concept expressed in John Donne's Meditation XVII, from which the now famous quote originates; yet Samoans live on an island that, perhaps for others, might represent the isolation of individualism. On the contrary, it signifies the oneness of humanity, the concept of individuals understanding and defining themselves by their harmonious connections to others, belonging to family, church, village, as if part of a body—and the dangers of slipping beyond the boundaries of the group and into isolation, or worse.

Early Moana adventurers sailed the uncharted waters of the Pacific thousands of years ago without compasses; Western sailors and adventurers used the cardinal directions to discuss their trajectory and location. Early Proto-Oceanic speakers 4,200 years ago used two sets of directions on the horizontal axis, however; one land based and one sea based (Ross, Pawley, and Osmond 2007). The land-based directions were inland/sea-ward; the sea-based directions were northwest/southeast (the direction of the trade winds). Ethnographically, Samoan spatiotemporal orientation has been characterized as a dualism between seaward, or *tai* (toward the sea/tide; from the Proto-Oceanic (PO) word **tasik*, “sea, salt water”) and inland, toward the bush, or *uta* (from **qutan*) (Shore 1982). “*I tai* suggests primarily the more populated and ordered areas of Samoan life” (49), the area of women's work, and with “the maintenance of decorous and controlled behavior under the gaze of a dense population and watchful chiefs” (49). Toward the bush, *i uta*, suggests areas populated by *aitu* (nature spirits, demons, or ghosts) rather than people. “To go *i uta* commonly suggests leaving a center of order and population, and thus leaving the area of the control of chiefs and village regulations” (49). It is the area of danger, chaos, and

lack of control. “To live in the bush is to live alone, out of reach and control of society” (49). It means leaving the cultural semiosphere and entering the realm of the wild and the natural.

If we consider the island itself as the greater encompassing semiosphere, with each village constituting smaller semiospheres within it, this apparent seaward-landward binarism may be alternatively interpreted as part of the mata-ava distinction. The word “Samoa” can be translated as “sacred center” (Mageo 1989); the shallow waters between the beach and the coral reef form a transition or boundary zone, with the reef forming the periphery, and the land as a complex center that includes multiple smaller centers. There is archaeological evidence associating the island’s geographic center (which is now wild and overgrown; the majority of villages are situated along the coast) with chiefly power. Prehistorically, inland areas deep within the forest were associated with chiefs and ceremonial activities, including pigeon catching and sacred ceremonies (Wallin and Martinsson-Wallin 2007; Herdrich 1991), a pattern that apparently changed after Western contact.

Deep sea, unpredictable and inhabited by dangerous sea creatures, lies outside, beyond the island periphery; its terrestrial counterpart, the bush—wild, uncontrollable domain of aitu—constitutes the interstices between village semiospheres and the unpopulated (by humans) mountainous areas of the island interior.

The boundary zones of island and village are, temporo-spatially and geographically, areas of greatest movement and change within the human cultural semiosphere. The natural rhythm of tides, mediated by the coral ring, mark lunar time and change the shape of the sandy and rocky beaches over geological time; wave action is constant movement. These boundary areas can be treacherous: while within the semiosphere everything has its place, those things that exist outside are beyond human control. The sea can be dangerous and unpredictable; *galu afi* (tsunamis) can invade the orderly village and island semiospheres; the 2009 tsunami killed more than one hundred people: seventy-seven in Samoa, more than twenty-five in American Samoa, and at least six in Tonga.⁴ Nature itself, powerful and dangerous, behaves unpredictably, existing outside of human laws and norms. The rainforest grows in chaotic wild abandon and, when viewed through culturally conditioned human eyes, apparent disorder; if the boundary between rainforest and village is not carefully maintained, the bush itself can also invade the village. The least controllable denizens of the wild, the spirits (aitu),⁵ invade with the village with impunity; stories of aitu crossing the *malae* (village green) at night demonstrate the willfulness of aitu and their refusal to obey human attempts to assert order. Like a *galu afi*, according to Ortner (1974) “left to



FIGURE 1. **Yin-Yang Symbol.**

its own devices, pollution [for our purposes defined as the spread of unregulated natural energies into the cultural semiosphere] spreads and overpowers all that it comes in contact with” (72). Galu afi,⁶ the Samoan term for a tsunami, also indicates waves of intense, fiery, masculine, power (O. Mahina, pers. comm.).

Like a yin-yang symbol (see Fig. 1), *tā-vā* acknowledges the beauty of the chaos in the order, and the order in the chaos. According to Mahina “The eternal relations of exchange are expressed by means of mata (eye) or ava (hole), defined as points of intersection of opposite tendencies, where ava is a copy of mata and vice versa” (this volume). The boundaries between village and bush, island and sea, are thus contested and, in the case of the former, must be maintained. One must carefully tend, *tausi vā*, the boundaries between natural and cultural space and time. Things beyond the boundary, in the bush or the deep sea, “do not exist” in the sense of being beyond the semiosphere and therefore have no cultural meanings; to venture beyond the borders of village or island is equivalent to a journey to the afterlife (Lotman 1990); to travel outside the semiosphere is to become temporarily dead (leave signifying existence). People who choose to live on the outskirts of the village, or outside the village, close to or in the bush, are considered “crazy,” according to my informants.

The boundary, according to Lotman (1990), functions as a transformative device, as individuals and cultures individuate. It is

[T]he place where what is “external” is transformed into what is “internal;” it is a filtering membrane which so transforms foreign texts that they become part of the semiosphere’s internal semiotics while still retaining their own characteristics (136).

In the legend of the origin of Samoan tattooing, the protagonists are two sisters, Tilafaiga and Taema. In some versions they are human; in others, they are *atua*,⁷ but that doesn’t matter; both sisters and *atua* are sacred. The two sisters/*atua* venture outside of the semiosphere (in at least one version, the sisters originate outside of it) and bring back a gift from beyond the boundary. The sisters leave Manu’a to visit the king of Fiji and bring a tattooing instrument and knowledge of the practice. While swimming home they carefully hold onto their precious gift while singing a chant, “tattoo the women but not the men.” Near the shore of Savai’i, they are distracted by a *pu* (trumpet shell) (in Wendt’s [1999] telling, the women find a clam) at the bottom of the sea, which they dive for—entering the *loloto* (depths) of the sea. The Samoan word for sea is *vasa: sa* (sacred) *vā* (space) (Wendt 1999). In Jungian psychology, the sea is symbolic of the unconscious,⁸ which holds much unexamined content (Jacobi 1959); we could say that this activity within the myth is related to the individuation process, where retrieval of the treasure—the *pu*—signifies integration of unconscious elements; it is a reduplication (used in Samoan language for emphasis) of the theme of the myth. This has a transformative effect on the “gift” they carry: when they surface, they have reversed the chant to “tattoo the men but not the women.” Elements from outside are often changed in their integration into a culture; it is the men in Samoan culture who must experience this painful rite of passage into adulthood, not the women (although women do receive a *tatau* called a *malu* that is less extensive and more delicate). The gift the sisters bring back from the outside, tattooing, ultimately becomes an important signifying cultural practice in Samoa.⁹ The *pu*, while used to call meetings and to announce the safe arrival of deep-sea fishermen, also represented the god Fa’amalu and was kept in the temple as a sacred object (Turner 1984 [1884]; Buck 1930). By passing through the deep sea, the *tatau* is transformed and sanctified; the *pu* is sanctified, made numinous, by its origins in the sea’s depths. Both take on a numinous quality. They then become integrated into the culture, that is, made human, beautiful, and harmonious, yet retaining their numinosity.

Throughout many cultures, the most significant and dangerous boundaries form the intersection of culture and nature, with something sacred at their centers/depths. Nature can be significantly more powerful than humans and beyond human control. Cyclones and tsunamis are extreme

examples of nature crossing the boundary and entering the cultural semiosphere. Samoans on Tutuila were still talking about Cyclone Val years later; the approach of Cyclone Heta in January 2004 caused significant psychological trauma, even though the resulting damage was minimal when compared to the devastation and loss of life left by Val. The tsunami of 2009 caused considerable damage and was still affecting people's lives more than a year later; the subsequent increase in stress accompanied a significant spike in adolescent suicide ideation, bullying on high school campuses, and a general feeling of danger and despair expressed by adolescents in an unpublished survey my colleagues and I conducted in high schools on Tutuila two years later (early 2011).¹⁰

Arguably, "boundaries" in Samoa are not nouns but verbs. Here I have been using a slightly inadequate English word to indicate the dynamic process of integration or rejection, of chaos or order, that is enacted, according to Mahina, at "the point of intersection of opposite tendencies, where energy or force is most intense" (this volume). Most important in the nature/culture mythologies of a number of cultures within and outside of the Moana culture area, we see that this point of intersection is not a physical boundary between nature and culture but a process in which that which is natural (wild, uncontrolled, chaotic, dangerous) is transformed into cultural (tame, controlled, harmonious, beautiful) (for example, Levi-Strauss 1969); that is, the process of relations of exchange, giving rise to *fepaki* (conflict) or *fenāpasi* (order). Similarly, The Western psychiatrist Carl Jung stressed individuation: the process of incorporation of those things that are outside (unconscious) into conscious awareness, whereby individuals constantly reenact the journey of Tilafaiga and Taema. For Samoa, the nature/culture schema includes elements of the sacred: there is *mana* (great power) in nature (the sea, the jungle); its impenetrable depths and fecundity demonstrate its connection to the atua. The atua, as we shall see, dwells in the center of both the mata and the ava.

New ideas and objects from outside the semiosphere, passing through the boundary, just inside the border of the periphery, are the most powerful and dangerous, becoming decreasingly dangerous/powerful the nearer to the center, until the center—the area of maximum integration—is reached. At that point, the idea/object is fully integrated and no longer poses a threat.

There can be danger if the process is reversed; to eject or project psychological elements onto external objects is a sign of neurosis. And as stated above, someone who chooses to leave the village and live in the bush is considered a social deviant who is up to no good, according to my informants. Ejection from the village was considered a terrible punishment in Samoa (Shore 1982).

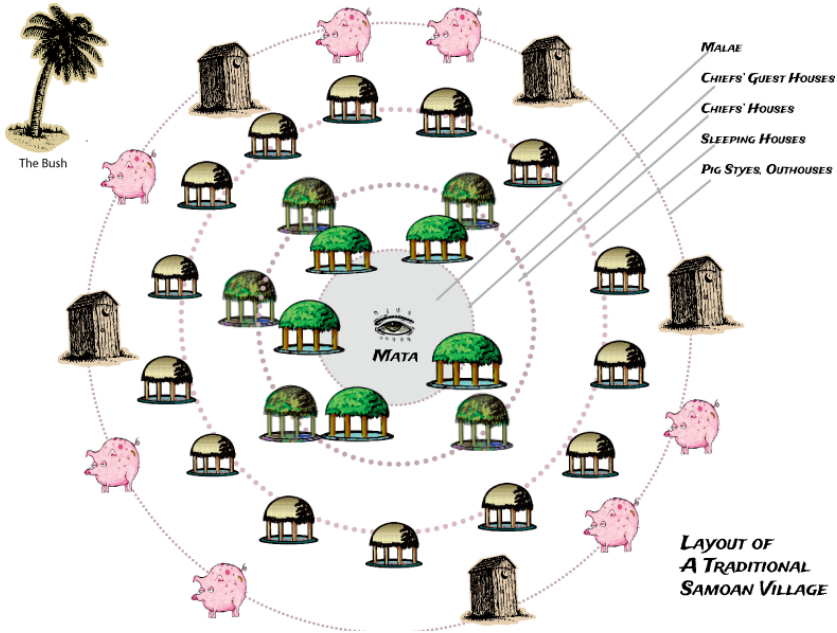


FIGURE 2. Schematic of Traditional Village Layout. Artwork by the Author.

Home Is Where the Mata Is

The center of human life in American Samoa is the village. An orderly, harmonious life is an essential goal of a village's residents. Villages traditionally were arranged in a pattern of concentric circles in which the central point is an open grassy area called the malae or village green (see Fig. 2). The center of the malae is called the mata, or eye (see Potauaine, this volume, for a discussion of mata as the line-space intersection). Nearest to the mata, around the malae, are the chiefs' guest houses. In the next ring are the chiefs' houses, then family sleeping houses, followed by the young men's sleeping houses, then the cook houses, and finally, at the farthest point from the center, are the *fale vao* (outhouses) and the pigsties (Shore 1982; Lehman and Herdrich 2002). The center of the village is the place of the most orderliness and cleanliness, and on the periphery are disorder and dirt.

Traditionally, all of the houses, including the chiefs' houses, faced the malae, as a mark of respect. At the very center of the malae lies the mata, an apparently symbolic point that is the most sacred space of the village. Why would



FIGURE 3. Samoan Temple at the Center of the Malae (Stair 1897); image used with permission from the publisher, Lutterworth Publisher).

an empty space be respected and treated as sacred? Perhaps it was not always empty. Stair (1897) reported that, in some villages, the *fale atua* (House of the Gods) was erected in the center of the malae; perhaps the mata at the center was the mata of the atua, thus locating in the center of natural power and deep-time connections to the ancestors (Fig. 3). Survivals of the belief that gods or powerful spirits dwelled in the center continued to exist after Christianization; the malae of some villages are said to have powerful aitu (perhaps a modern reference to pre-Christian atua) at their centers (Mageo 1989).

To continue our diagram of the village, then, we know that Stair locates the atua at the center of the village, with the chiefs nearest them in the human world. The mana (power) emanates from the gods and dissipates with

distance; the most powerful humans, those most able to withstand or tolerate it, live closest to its source; weaker humans must live farther away, a point we will return to later. The atua at the center of the village echo the atua in the center of the jungle and the sea; they stand in relationship to each other and to humans as mata and ava.

In the innermost ring of the village, meetings of village *matai* (chiefs) take place in the *fale fonu* (meeting house). A circle or oval of house posts holds up a thatched roof, beneath which the high chiefs sit, each to his post (both literally and figuratively). The highest chief present sits at the most important post, at one end of the fale fonu. He slowly and meticulously serves *kava* to each matai by name, and in order of importance, the kava bowl in the center. Lesser matai sit between the posts, while the young untitled men of the village skirt the periphery, busily serving food to or assisting the matai sitting inside the fale fonu. Van Der Ryn, this volume, observes that each house post forms another mata: signifying the eyes and center of the extended family of each matai. Outside the fale fonu, a disorderly crowd may gather to witness the proceedings.

The intermediate rings of the village are formed by family houses. Houses traditionally were circular and centered on a main set of posts upon which shelves were built to house family heirlooms. Houses had impermanent, movable walls in the form of shades that were rolled up during the day, forming a permeable (and movable) boundary between families. Heirlooms at the center connected the family temporally to the past and to family ancestors, who were associated with power; when families gathered under the roof (according to Refiti 2002, 10), they formed a circle facing the center, “the place of the divine,” and a “space-towards-the-ancestors.”

The shape of Samoan traditional dwellings is explained in a legend that describes a primordial chaos of house shapes, as each builder adopted his own unique, individual style. A high chief was consulted, who decided that construction would from then on be uniform and reflect the shape of the dome of the sky and the horizon. This legend semiotically depicts the Samoan de-emphasis of individuality in the service of harmony and uniformity (*tā-vā*) within the built environment.

Tā-Vā in the Psychological Semiosphere

The Self. The self can be thought of as an overall sense of being that has continuity over time; a sense of the person as a whole. Carl Jung’s description of the self will be considered here; while his theories are somewhat controversial, they provide a meaningful framework within which to discuss the features of *tā-vā*. Jung’s definition of the Self (Jung 1959) sounds very much like the mata:

. . . the centre of personality, a kind of central point within the psyche, to which everything is related, by which everything is arranged, and which itself is a source of energy. [. . .] This centre is not felt or thought of as the ego but, if one may so express it, as the Self. Although the centre is represented by an innermost point, it is surrounded by a periphery containing everything that belongs to the Self—the paired opposites that make up the total personality (357).

Jung (1959) used the term “individuation” to mean “the process by which a person becomes a psychological ‘in-dividual,’ that is, a separate, indivisible unity or ‘whole’” (275). During the individuation process, which is continual throughout a person’s life, the Self¹¹ is expressed¹² collectively and individually in recurring motifs. One of the most prominent motifs is the mandala, variously elaborated as circular, spherical, or egg-shaped patterns, with the *Imago Dei*¹³ at their center. Like all archetypes, the Self has a numinous (supernatural, sometimes uncanny) quality.

According to Jung, then, a person’s Self is an organizing principle, a numinous point at the center of the psyche. Shore (1982) argues that while the Western self is an “integrated, coherent and ‘rounded’ personality suggesting the metaphor of a sphere . . . the contrasting Samoan metaphor . . . is a many-faceted gem” (141). Both Western and Samoan selves have centers, however; rather than presence or absence, it is more a matter of attribute or emphasis.

In Samoa, the center of the psyche is deemphasized. To be whole is to be part of something larger: family, church, village, culture. The goal of individuation, then, would be to become a harmonious part of the greater whole, to create beauty and order out of (psychological and interpersonal) chaos.

What is believed to occupy the center is a person’s *loto* (depths), which, according to Mageo (1991), is the source of strong, repressed emotions, perceptions, and willfulness. It therefore is desirable that this center remain unexamined and unexpressed. One must not think, but do as one is told, without question.

Mageo (1991) connects the *loto* with *aitu*, which she describes as projections of subjective sentiments:

Because the *loto* is repressed in Samoa, it is not well integrated into conscious personality and tends to take an autonomous and projected form as a spirit. Thus, the composure that *lototele* [courageous] people exercise before *aitu* is indicative of their control over personal thoughts and feelings (409).

The *loto* (from PO, **loto*, “inner self, feelings, mind”) is not only the seat of willfulness, passion, and suppressed strong emotions (including love), but also it has meanings that connect it to the flipside of *mata*, that is, *ava*: a deep hole in the lagoon; the interior, as of a house; in the midst of; *lotoala*, the middle of the road; *lotofuatiaifo*, conscience; and *lotomaulalo*, which means both “deep holes within a lagoon” and “profound, thoughtful.” Mageo (1995) correlates the depths of the *loto* with nature: “not in the sense of constitutive being, but in the Hobbesian sense of that which is intrinsically wild and incorrigible” (417). If the *loto* is connected to *ava*, what then is the corresponding *mata* equivalent for *loto*? It is not *fai'ai* (the head), which is also the word for coconut juice, but *tu i lou tulaga* (to stand at one’s post, that is, to play one’s proper role).

Within *tā-vā*, during the transformative process of individuation, we might expect to find an Imago Dei at the center: the *atua*, not the mischievous *aitu*, who belong on the outside (or are projected there).

The Samoan word *aitu*, according to Pratt, translates as “a spirit” or “a god.” Older meanings connect it to ghosts: the Proto-Malayo-Polynesian word **qanitu* means ghost or ancestral spirit. Tracing its roots back to Proto-Austronesian, we get **qaNiCu*, meaning ghost, spirit of the dead, and owl. For Moana people, *aitu* seem to have always been earthbound things, willful, often dangerous, uncontrollable, and outside of the social hierarchy; they occupy and control the areas beyond the cultural periphery. Samoans do not wander into the woods alone for fear of being attacked or possessed by the *aitu* who live there. Stair (1897) mentions that *aitu* are thought to inhabit or frequent certain meadows, trees, bushes, or rock formations; he reports a series of unpleasant encounters that the locals attributed to mischievous spirits. An informant told me that, when he was a child, there was a specific area along the shortcut path he and his friends took to get home from school that was thought to be the special place for an *aitu*; they would run fast along this part of the path because every time they used it, the *aitu* would throw stones at them. My first night on Tutuila, in 2002, I stayed at the Rainmaker Hotel in Utulei, once a famous Polynesian architectural beauty, but by then falling into decay. The phone in my room rang several times over the course of the night, but there was never anyone on the other end, and no one knew I was staying there that night. The following day, I was told by a prominent Samoan that the hotel is haunted. “It was probably just the *aitu* saying hello,” he said.

Why, then, is the human “center” associated with *aitu*? Why not *atua*? *Atua* are “gods” (Pratt 2005 [1862]) “not known to be of human origin” (Hocart 1915), and more powerful and numinous than *aitu* (the *atua* created the *aitu*). One might argue that perhaps *atua* once occupied the center but were demoted or left out of the conversation after the adoption of Christianity.

Christianity relegated the old Samoan gods to the world of ghosts and nature spirits (Mageo 1998; Holmes 1974). According to Hamilton (1998),

The pre-Christian religion of Samoa was one of worship of and dealings with gods and spirits. There may have been a division between *atua*, the high gods, and *aitu*, the lesser—perhaps created or formerly human—spirits. *Atua* may have been somewhat remote from the general affairs of humans, but *aitu* were certainly greatly involved in them and needed to be invoked, placated or contacted frequently (164).

It is equally likely that the high gods, *atua*, were reserved for the chiefs, visible in the word *atualagi* (gods of the heavens—*lagi*), the chiefly word for gods. The lesser gods, *aitu*, were caught up in the lives of ordinary people. Pratt, writing his dictionary in 1893, has *atua* and *aitu* as synonyms.

Phenomenologically, the *aitu* might stand as objective in a relation of exchange with the inner depths, *loto*, as subjective (O. Mahina, pers. comm.). In other words, the *loto*, being subjective, involves the subjective imaginings of things as we would like them to be, rather than as they are. The *loto* is discredited as being, more often than not, in direct conflict with reality, which accounts at least in part for its vilification in Samoan culture. Both *loto* and *aitu* are associated with “wild nature,” with *ava* and those things that stand in relationships of exchange with *mata*.

Self Boundaries. Boundaries of self, a phrase borrowed from family systems theory (Kramer 1985; Satir 1972), is the experience of a flexible perimeter marking the distinction between the individual’s personality or sense of self and what exists outside that perimeter, within other people. It is the feeling of a psychological distinction between the individual and others. The self boundary is not necessarily a barrier, according to Polster (1983), but “a dialectical process of separation and inclusion that mediates a person’s complex relationship with the world” (247).

The Western metaphor for healthy self boundaries is of an enclosed container. In contrast, the Samoan self has more flexible, permeable boundaries. Individuality is important to identity in Western culture; in Samoa, relationships and interdependence are more strongly emphasized. Mageo (1998) refers to this as corporate identity, “a tendency to experience oneself as a member of a corporate body, rather than as an individual rigidly bounded by one’s own skin” (43). The Samoan self is concerned with maintenance of harmonious interfaces, which implies less the preservation of solid walls than the creation and re-creation of beautiful merged and interstitial spaces through harmonious interactions.

According to Albert Wendt (1999):

Va is the space between, of betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships and the contexts change. . . . A well-known Samoan expression is “Ia teu le va”—cherish, nurse, care for the *va*, the relationships. This is critical in communal cultures that value group unity more than individualism, that perceive the individual person, or creature, or thing in terms of group, in terms of *va*, relationships (402).

The space between people, then, is not an empty void but a tangible connective force. It is the thing that connects people, but also, in *tā-vā*, the thing that separates them. The connection and separation are both present in each other, and in a phenomenological sense, the space has a dividing power; regardless of a culture’s ontological premises, people still experience themselves as individuals, separate from others. Yet, the maintenance of harmonious boundaries and interactions, beautifying the space between individuals and families, remains of primary significance to Samoans. This space between is constantly shifting and ephemeral, occasionally contested, and marks the intersection of fields of energy or power that emanate from the center, the *ava*, of the human being, of the Self, the *Imago Dei*.

Vavau and Mana

We can define two kinds of power in Western Polynesia: natural power and political power. Natural (or godlike) power, referred to in Samoan as *mana*, emanates from the *atualagi*, the creator god, usually *Tagaloa* (Fraser 1892).¹⁴ According to *tā-vā* theory, *mana* should emanate from nature. *Mana* is held by the *ali’i* (high chiefs) and connects them to fruitfulness, fertility, and potency, a power tied to the powers of the *atua*. According to Firth (1940): “a . . . chief is . . . considered to be able through his relations with his ancestors and gods to control natural fertility, health, and economic conditions” (490); according to Shore (1989) “either directly or indirectly, *mana* is linked to generative potency, to the sources of organic creation” (138). These links are supported linguistically by the Proto-Oceanic word **mana*¹⁵ (according to Blust 2007):

Cognates meaning “thunder” and “wind” suggest that Proto-Oceanic **mana* did not refer to a detachable spiritual or supernatural power that could be possessed by humans, but rather to powerful forces of

nature such as thunder and storm winds that were conceived as the expression of an unseen supernatural agency (404).

In time, Blust (2007) concludes, many Polynesian cultures began to think of mana as a kind of supernatural force, and it became associated with hereditary rank.

Its most striking manifestation undoubtedly was the sacral aura conferred on hereditary chiefs, causing commoners to observe great caution in approaching them or coming into contact with anything they had touched (such as food scraps). It was widely believed that such contact would be dangerous or even fatal to anyone who himself lacked the *mana* to withstand the *mana* of the chief (409).

Secular power or authority is *pule*. The ali'i is the repository of *pule*, but the *tulafale* (orator) has the role of executing the commands of the ali'i (who must maintain his dignity by remaining still), that is, activating the *pule* (Shore 1982).¹⁶ While the ali'i must remain immobile, the *tulafale* are active. The *pule* of the *tulafale* is connected by this activity to *aitu*, lower supernatural beings (nature spirits, by some descriptions), who are part of creation, originating on earth, *lalolagi* (literally, "beneath the sky" (Pratt)): and the ghosts of deceased humans and the offspring or creations of the *atua*.

The word *atua* is derived from the Proto-Malayo-Polynesian (PMP) **qatuan* (deity), connecting this concept with the deep past of human as well as mythological time.¹⁷ Considered in this way, we can see the connection between *atua* and deep time, ancestors, and *fa'avavau* (eternity): "eternity, relationship with the distant past" (Milner), which connects back to the *mata*; in Samoa, *tā-vā* eternity looks backward into deep time rather than forward into the future. *Atua* time is the slow *tā* of eternal, deep time, time on a universal scale, *lagi*. *Aitu* time, on the other hand, is time on an earthly, human scale, *lalolagi*.

Dignity and chiefly power have a long association with the *atua* and stillness. Tagaloa himself, according to a Samoan creation story, did not begin to create the physical world until he became still (Fraser 1892):

The god Tagaloa dwelt in the Expanse; he made all things; he alone was [there]; not any sky, not any country; he only went to and fro in the Expanse; there was also no sea, and no earth; but, *at the place where he stood there grew up a rock*. Tangaloa-fa'a-tutupu-nu'u was his name; all things were about to be made, by him, for all things were not yet made; the sky was not made nor anything else; but there grew up a rock on which he stood (emphasis added) (176).

Tagaloa creates the first rhythm of *tā-vā* as he travels to and fro in the expanse prior to creation.

The power of *mana*, coming as it does from the *atua* and eternity (deep time), can be dangerous to humans; powerful, dangerous things must be bound or contained (Georgina unpubl. data). *Mana* is linked with the concepts of *tapu* and *noa*, which Shore (1989) defines as “alternative conditions of *mana*” (148). According to Shore, *tapu* is associated with order, containment, and perfection of form; it is the binding of supernatural power. In *tā-vā* theory, *tapu* is a form of artificial equilibrium imposed upon *mana* from the outside. *Tapu* has a binding effect on *mana*. According to Shore (1989) “To be *tapu* was to be empowered, but it was also to be immobilized—literally and figuratively tied up” (154). All people have some *mana*, but the most sacred people, the chiefs, have the most *mana*; they also exhibit the most stasis, particularly high chiefs and *taupou*.

Milner’s definition of *noa* includes the concept “to tie or bind,” in contrast to Shore, but Pratt apparently agrees (“synonym of *fua*, without fastening”): According to Shore (1989) “[*Noa*] suggests action that is unguided, without purpose or destination” (150). *Tā-vā* theory defines *noa* as the “zero-point, that is, ‘0’,” the balance point between order and conflict, a state of equilibrium that holds movement within it as a potential. *Tapu* is control, a stasis externally applied; *noa* is balance, a natural stasis.

Mana and *pule* were held primarily by *ali’i* and *tulafale*, but they were not alone. Brothers held political power (*pule*), while sisters held natural power (*mana*) (Mageo 1998, 137). Sisters were sacred (*tapu*), the exemplification of femaleness; a woman remained a sister until she married, at which time she lost her sacredness by becoming a source of fertility that needed to be externally controlled. A high-ranking sister, the village *taupou* being the most prominent, was to remain a virgin until her marriage, usually to an equally high or higher ranking chief or chief’s son, her imposed virginity (*tapu*) a means of binding and controlling her *mana*. According to Shore (1989)

The association of the honored status of woman-as-sister in western Polynesia with artificial restriction of reproduction . . . constitutes a social and cosmological redirection of her fertility and an implicit recognition of its power and potential danger (162).

The *taupou*, the most sacred sister, might be the “central house post” (Pratt: *pou*, “a post”; *taua*, “precious, valuable”; *poutu*, “central house post”); she is the future sacred ancestor of the family.

In the village center, the *mata* of the *malae* (where once the *fale atua* stood), *tapu* is strongest and *mana* is bound by it into the service of humans.

Far from the center, on the boundaries with the bush, tapu is weakest and noa (equilibrium) prevails. In the bush, mana originates from many points—wherever there are aitu or atua, and from nature itself—and is unbound, evidenced by the fertile lushness and wildness, and in human terms, the danger, lawlessness, and chaos, of the jungle.

The Tā-Vā of the Taualuga

The most important traditional Samoan dance, the taualuga, is an artistic expression of the tā-vā of time, society, and nature. The stasis in the center stands in relation to the chaotic activity of the periphery.

The village taupou, an adolescent or young adult and the most sacred sister (Mageo 1991), dances in place of the high chief during the taualuga; both taupou and chief hold mana (sacred power) and are bound by tapu, restricting their movement to near stasis.

All of the girls in high-status families are expected to be able to perform the taualuga, according to Georgina (2007).

In my family, we were expected to be able to dance and to learn the moves at an early age. I started dancing when I was three. If you don't know how to dance, you're considered stupid by the family.

The taualuga connects with deep time, with eternity, and with the ancestors, through the taupou, and through its recreation of the social and cosmic order. Young dancers talked to me about the way that dancing connects them to their ancestors, especially if their mothers and grandmothers also danced, maintaining a chain of dancers back into time. The fact that a girl no longer has to be the daughter of a chief to be a taupou but can become one by embodying the principles of taupou-ness (having the characteristics essential to a taupou: humility, dignity, gracefulness, calm, poise) allows each girl to feel this connection, and to touch a bit of mana, of the sacred. Many of the girls I spoke with experienced a sacred connection in dance (Georgina 2007):

[Samoan dance] is something, you can't take it for granted. It's something you have to be very careful with. I think it can be sacred at times, sacred.

(D.G.) How is it sacred?

The *taupou* dance? The *taualuga*? When the *taupou* is doing the *taualuga*, presenting her dance to those in the audience, for

instance, her family, you can't just do it just to do it. You're like, each and every move you do, has special meaning to it (Leslie, age 16).

Each of the choreographers I talked with also agreed that Samoan dance, and especially the *taualuga*, maintains this connection to family, ancestors, and deep time. Taloga Tupai Drabble, choreographer at Sadie Thompson's Hotel, said she preferred her troupe to dance to old Samoan songs, rather than modern music; she said she took great pride in the old ways and old Samoan dance styles.

The dance space of the *taualuga* is a semiotic, temporal performance of the cosmos, village, and person/family. It is the most important of the graceful dances and certainly the most important surviving dance, not only due to its age (it is described by Stair in 1897) but because it is the only dance that features the most powerful or highest status person in the village—the chief, his daughter, or his son (Shore 1982). The *taualuga* is described by Moyle (1988) as “a standing dance focused on an individual of high rank, which typically ended an evening's performance” (209). Today, the girl or young woman dancing the *taupou* role is frequently chosen from among the troupe of dancers based on her family's status vis-à-vis the occasion for the dance performance. The *taupou* for dances held in honor of the StarKist cannery anniversary in 2004, for example, was chosen because her father was an important manager for the cannery.

The *taupou* dances at the center of the *taualuga* and the dance space (Fig. 4). As the chief's daughter, she is the most sacred person in the performance, her location echoing the *mata* at the center of the *malae*, and expressing her connection to deep time and the ancestors. The center is the locus of control, stasis, and order, and the *taupou*'s movements are always slow, graceful, controlled, and orderly. She does not lift her feet, even when she moves horizontally across the dance plane; she shuffles across the floor. She will slowly stoop, or sit with legs outstretched, gesturing gracefully, wearing a regal smile. Music for the *taualuga*, whether performed live or recorded, is chosen for its slower tempo. The *taupou* moves slowly and gracefully even if the tempo is faster.

Behind her, usually in a semicircle, is her retinue of dancers, forming the inner ring of the dance space. They sit, in a posture of respect, sometimes singing, and sway, their hand gestures marking the flow of time and the beat of the music. Musicians, when present, stand behind or beside the seated dancers. Other persons of elevated status can dance in support of the *taupou*, as part of the circle around her, but she remains the sole occupant of the center.

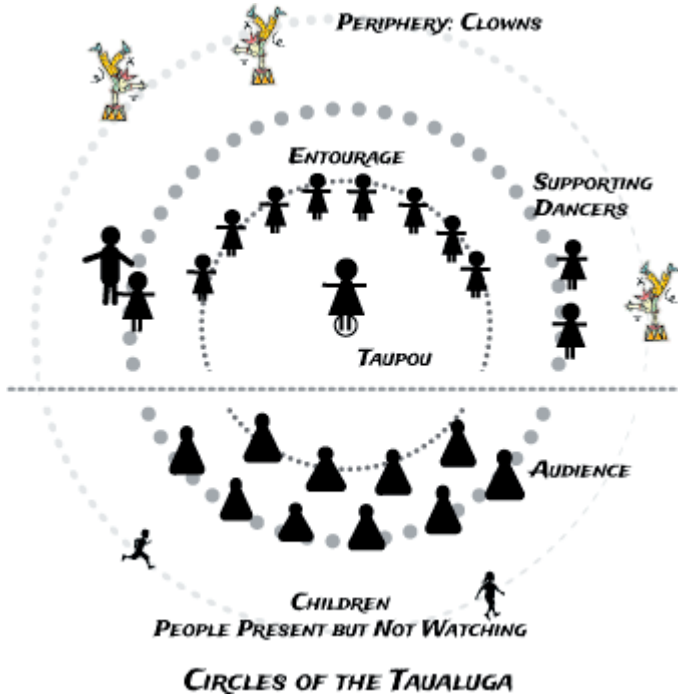


FIGURE 4. Circles of the Taualuga. Artwork by the Author.

On the very outskirts of the dance space, beyond the periphery formed by the seated dancers, clowns leap and squat, roll on the ground, slap or climb trees, and grunt.¹⁸ The *tulafale* traditionally performs in the clown role, dancing wildly in counterpoint to the *taupou*'s dignity and grace, his behavior representing disorder, chaos, lawlessness, and unseemliness. He does not keep time with the singers or musicians; on the periphery, far from the center, he moves at a different speed: the pace of lush, fertile nature, and of *aitu*. I suspect his behavior is also an analog for the *loto*, the center of the individual, whence comes willfulness and disobedience (and therefore disorder), which has its expression in the bush, where the "crazy" people live. During the *taualuga*, it is only the clown who energetically uses the vertical as well as the horizontal plane. He plays the role of an *aitu* to the *taupou*'s controlled dignity and power. During this dance, the clown is always in his place, however, either on the periphery where the wild things are, or under the foot of the *taupou*. The clown only leaves the periphery and approaches the *taupou* in order to throw himself on the ground in front of her in an expression of

subservience and respect, for her to place her foot on his back, symbolic of the triumph of order over chaos, of culture over nature, and the integration of something “outside” into the cultural semiosphere. His performance echoes the after-dark movement of *aitu* across the borders of the village and onto the *malae*.

To complete the circle begun by the *retinue*, the audience sits, sometimes quietly watching the performance, sometimes singing along and clapping time. Beyond the audience, that is, beyond the periphery of the performance space, people who are not watching the performance move about randomly. Toddlers may also move about erratically; at a performance, I witnessed one toddler approaching and entering the dance space unimpeded, reminiscent of the *tulafale*. A slightly older child, possibly a sibling, rescued him only after his presence both interrupted the dance and put him in a position in which he might fall off the stage and get hurt.

Dance, an ephemeral art form, moves through time and space. During the *taualuga*, performers mark time more slowly at the center and more swiftly at the perimeter of the dance space; beyond the periphery, it is not the slow shuffle of eternity but the busy *tatau* of daily life. Dance also connects with the ancestors and the deep past as an ancient art form with its roots in history.

The Tā-Vā of Day and Night

Daytime is the time when humans move about, but at night, people retire to their homes and close the shades. While the bush is the place of *aitu* and disorder, night is the time.

In precontact Samoa, dances were performed when visitors arrived from another village, and after ceremonies such as the marriages of chiefs. They were divided into *ao siva* (day dances) and *poula* (night dances). Day dances, which typically followed the ceremonies of the day, were synchronized, graceful, and dignified. Turner (1884) compared the day dances to “dress-balls of other countries.” Stair (1897) describes the *ao siva* as “much less objectionable than the *po-ula*. This dance was practiced exclusively by the higher ranks, and, unlike most of the other dances, consisted of a variety of graceful movements and gestures” (134).

While the night dances are now extinct, they demonstrate the *tā-vā* principle of everything in time and space existing in relation to everything else, a system of pairs of opposites that stand either in stasis or in crisis. *Poula* took place after dusk to provide entertainment for the untitled visitors from other villages. These dances, especially their finale, attracted negative attention from the missionaries, who found them too lascivious and fought to

eradicate them. Churchward (1887) wrote of the dancers during final dance of the poula, “they appear at last more like a lot of demons let loose from below” (230). Today, all that survives are the ao siva dances, and the mimetic theater form of the poula.

While ao siva reflected the grace and dignity of the day, that is, part of the cultural, human semiosphere and centered on atua, their counterpoint, the poula dances, grew wilder, the tempo faster, and the dancing more frenzied deeper into the night. The performance ended around midnight with the spirit frenzy, ‘*ale‘aleaitu* (loosely translated as “the aitu are coming!”) before which everyone but the young people departed. They would “tear the eye off the spirit,” shedding their clothes. The ‘*ale‘aleaitu* provided an occasion for elopement, as couples ran off together into the night (Mageo 1998). The mata, the eye at the center of the malae, was the locus of control; tearing the eye off the aitu is perhaps a trope for the removal of control (tapu) on mana (expressed as fecundity) and allowing not only chaos and license but the release of generative power, as the couples slipped off into the bush together.

The sequence of these dances denoted a temporal movement from the dignity of the day into the chaos of the night. Stair (1897) describes a dance sequence in which, after completion of the singing portion of the performance, a children’s dance commenced, to the amusement of the audience. Mead also describes children’s dances as being more individualistic and chaotic than the dancing of the adults. In this way, the performance begins with chaos. I have witnessed a number of performances that commenced with either the *sasa* (slap dance) or ‘*ailao* (club or knife dance), both of which are also very fast paced and energetic. The sequential center of the dances—the noa fulcrum, like the eye of the hurricane—is the tauuluga, at the culmination of the ao siva. The energetic movement of the periphery contrasts with the stasis at the center, which then moves again toward the uncontrolled dances at the temporal and social periphery, expressed in the culminating dance of the poula, the ‘*ale‘aleaitu*. Here again, the central dance connects to deep time, the ancestors, and the atua through the person of the taupou and its central location at the mata of the performance, while the peripheral dances connect to the present, children/fecundity,¹⁹ and the aitu.

Most of the poula dances are now extinct; however, modern dances, such as the ‘*ailao* (the knife or club dance) and *ma‘ulu‘ulu* (graceful dances), belong to ordinary people and reflect the pace of human life. Chiefs and taupou typically do not dance the ‘*ailao*,²⁰ for example. These dances also all have in common a faster tempo generally than the tauuluga and use of space that is based on parallel lines of dancers moving synchronously. There are no

circles and there is no center, a fact emphasized by all of the choreographers with whom I spoke. Only the tualuga has a center.

Tā-Vā of the Temporal Semiosphere

Even time was experienced as a tā-vā circle. We have seen that the most powerful beings, the atua, reside in the loa and are represented on earth by the chiefs of the family (Hocart 1915; Shore 1989; Firth 1940). Earthbound supernatural beings, the aitu, are associated with tulafale (orators), a connection we observe primarily during the tualuga. The atua are associated with the slow beat, tā, of deep time, with eternity, while the aitu are associated with the faster tā of the present, of daily life. The association between aitu, who are earthly but outside of the semiosphere, and the tā of the present, can also be observed in concepts of day and night.

Temporal boundaries characterize the semiosphere. It must be noted that concepts of time in Samoa have changed dramatically with the introduction of clocks. According to Ross, Pawley, and Osmond (2007), in most Proto-Oceanic languages, the times of the day were

1. Night (PO **boŋi* “night”; Samoan *pō*).
2. Daytime (PO **qaco* “sun, daytime”; Samoan *aso*, “day”).
 - (a) Early morning, from dawn to 9 or 10 a.m. (PO **boŋi-boŋi*; Samoan *poŋi-poŋi* “be dusky, twilight” (Pratt and Milner give *segisegi* for early morning and *pogi-pogi* for evening)).
 - (b) Middle of the day, from 9 or 10 a.m. to about 3 p.m. (Proto-Malayo-Polynesian **qaho-atea*; Samoan *aoatea* “midday”).
 - (c) Late afternoon and evening, from 3 p.m. to sunset (PO **Rapi*, **Rapi-Rapi*; Samoan *afi-afi* “evening”).

Day, during the light, is the time for people to move about; night time, during the dark, people stay indoors. Nighttime lies outside the borders of the temporal semiosphere; it is the time of the aitu and of disorder, of dangerous encounters with spirits and of nefarious deeds (and lascivious dances) performed under cover of darkness. Noon is the mata of day; midnight is the ava of the night. Mortals who move about the village at night step across the boundary into dangerous space and risk getting “hit” by an aitu, causing illness or spirit possession. Afi-afi (twilight), the boundary, temporal space, between darkness and light, especially the period of the day as it merges with the night, is the moment of greatest ambiguity; it is sa, things rendered sacred, when human movement ceases (under pain of a beating) and prayers and religious songs emanate from homes within the village.

Conclusions

The *tā-vā* of Samoan cultural reality is expressed as intersecting semiospheres of person, village, and island and is performed in dance. At the center of these semiospheres is the Self, a numinous archetype representing the totality of the psyche, often represented as the *Imago Dei*. The Samoan psyche is decentralized; a person's center is vilified as the seat of willfulness and strong, uncontrollable emotion—disruptive factors in a collective society—and projected outward as *aitu*. The exception to this are the *ali'i* and other chiefly persons, whose centers are controlled by the *tapu* that controls the rest of their behavior. What is emphasized in all cases is the boundaries between individuals; observing the proper behaviors for one's station, an outward rather than inward focus, contributes to harmonious interactions. This creates not an individual but a “composite person” who is really the family or the village, with the *ali'i* at the center.

Tā-vā is also represented in village layout and the movement of power and energy within and outside of the village. Traditional Samoan villages were circular, with the *malae* at the center, and the *mata*, the greatest point of *mana* and *tapu*, at the center; power and control weakens with distance from the center.

The island is a similar semiosphere, where it is likely that in the distant past, the *Imago Dei* was the center of Samoan culture; here the chiefs conducted rituals including pigeon catching. This changed with contact, and the island itself lost its *Sa Moa* (sacred center). Forming the periphery are the beach and shallow waters within the reef; outside lies the dangerous and unpredictable deep sea.

Villages were arranged similarly, expressing this idea. The space between villages, like the space between individuals, is far from empty; the bush is a wild place occupied by *aitu*. On the boundary are things that people thrust away from themselves: disorder, dirt, outhouses, pigsties. The boundary zones between things and periods of time can be contested or dangerous. At its boundaries, the village's semiosphere interconnects with the semiospheres of adjacent villages or with the wild, natural regions claimed by *aitu*. The uncontrolled *mana* in the bush is dangerous to people; however, the jungle is a dangerous place to walk, especially alone, and people avoid the boundaries between village and bush. While villages can negotiate boundaries with each other, it is impossible to negotiate with *aitu*; such boundaries remain hazardous. The interplay of time and space in time-space, linking things in nature, mind, and society, is always conflicting and unpredictable, especially when the errors in thinking are a problem of mind but not of reality.

The heart of the village is the mata at the center of the malae, where once stood the fale atua: the literal Imago Dei at the center of the village. Christianity demoted this atua to mischievous aitu, but during Stair's visit in the nineteenth century, the atua still held their original place at the center.

Indeed, the atua Tagaloalogi stood at the center of eternity, according to legend, and came to rest before creating the universe. Tagaloalogi stands still at the origin point and center of eternity, like the hub of a wheel, and the universe rotates slowly around him. Similarly, the human world moves more quickly with distance from the center. Through the ancestors and through mana, spiritual power that emanates from the atua, ali'i are connected with the atua. Nonchiefly persons are not similarly connected; the ali'i function as the center of the corporate psyche. Sisters are sacred and have mana (brothers have pule, political power), and the most sacred sister, the taupou, usually the daughter of the ali'i, is the precious central pillar, connecting the family to the ancestors and deep time. She is the most fitting person to dance the central role in the taualuga, the ritual performance of this connection.

The pre-Christian performance sequence, with ao siva and poula, also expressed this tā-vā. The day dances were stielier, while the night dances were more uncontrolled and raucous. The beginning of the dance sequence, during the day, began with children's dances, which were individualistic and chaotic, culminating in the central dance, the stately taualuga. Afterward, the night dances became increasingly wild, culminating in the 'ale'aleaitu, the virtual opposite of the taualuga, late into the night, the time of the aitu. Like a gyroscope, at the center of the entire performance dances the taupou, the pivot point of the wheel of horizontal human time, who vertically connects the present with the ancestors and deep time.

The taualuga performance space reflects the ideal psychological and political semiosphere. The taupou, who holds natural power (mana), stands at the central point. Her movements are slow and graceful, controlled by tapu. Clowns, at the periphery, display intense horizontal and vertical movement, reflecting the uncontrolled mana of the aitu.

Time moves differently at the center than at the periphery; time at the center moves more slowly, as the stasis of tapu effectively controls mana. Dancers mark time by clapping and swaying while they sing or hum, and musicians mark time with drumbeats.

Time at the periphery moves at a different pace, with nothing to mark it or control it. Clowns behave chaotically, leaping into the air one minute and throwing themselves on the ground the next; slapping tree trunks or pounding the earth with their fists, in a performance that resides beyond the limits of the music's timing and beat.

In the Samoan universe, living people must exist and move in present time with its bustle of daily activity but can maintain a connection to deep time, the *atua*, and the ancestors not by behaving as willful and chaotic individuals, but by understanding their place as harmonious parts of a whole centered on eternity. It is the harmony and beauty of eternity that is recreated in *tā-vā*.

NOTES

1. According to Ross, Pawley, and Osmond (2007), “The original and basic meanings of °mata[-] and °nako[-] were ‘eye’ and ‘face’ respectively. Nonetheless, reflexes of these terms occur with great frequency in the meaning ‘front’. Scattered reflexes below suggest that °i mata was a PO expression meaning ‘in front’, and other modern uses suggest that it has long been used for the front of an inanimate object” (259).

2. Because cultures are always in a state of change, they never reach the level of total stasis, much as Jung described for the individual; individuation is a process, but a person is never completely individuated. I suppose a point of total individuation would be a form of enlightenment; for a culture, it might mean death. Even Medieval Japanese culture, which strove to isolate itself from the outside world and remain unchanged, couldn’t do so. The inevitable death of its citizens and birth of new generations themselves create culture change.

3. There are only two seasons on American Samoa: hurricane season and the rest of the year.

4. See http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/30/world/asia/30tsunami.html?_r=0.

5. Probably from Proto-Oceanic °*qanitu* “ghost, spirit of the dead” (Blust 2007). This origin would contradict Pratt’s and Milner’s assertions that *aitu* is a synonym of *atua*. I have heard the word *aitu* being used for human ghosts as well as nature spirits and those who were once local gods but were demoted into semidemonic figures by Christianity. Throughout this chapter I will use *aitu* to mean nature spirits and/or ghosts and *atua* for gods.

6. *Galū*, wave, breaker. *Afi*, PO °*api*, fire.

7. *Atua*, from Proto-Malayo-Polynesian °*qatuan*, deity.

8. Unconscious and conscious are not considered “places” in the mind but processes of the mind, just as *fuo* and *uho* (form and content) are processes of reality.

9. The tattooing (*tatau*) process is a perfect example of *tā-vā*; see Mahina, Ka’ili, and Van Der Ryn, this volume.

10. Samoan adolescents, who are powerless and are themselves living on the temporal and social boundary between childhood and adulthood, are barometers of the unexpressed emotions of their families (Kramer 1985).

11. Following Jungian tradition, words referring to archetypes are capitalized to distinguish them from ordinary usage.

12. Here we mean the psychological expression of the archetype, or collective representation, of the self as a unifying center of the psyche, rather than “self expression” as that term is popularly used.

13. The term *Imago Dei* refers to God’s own self-actualization through humankind, the God within; this is part of what Jung meant when he used the term.

14. Pratt defines *mana* as “supernatural power,” but given Firth’s and Shore’s descriptions of chiefly *mana*, “natural power” seems more fitting, particularly as the other side of *pule*, political power.

15. The asterisk indicates that this is a reconstructed word.

16. See Shore (1982) for an in-depth analysis of the relationship between orators and high chiefs.

17. PMP speakers lived approximately 4,200 years ago.

18. If this dance has its roots in antiquity, as Samoans assert, this behavior could be in imitation of southeast Asian monkeys.

19. This focus on fecundity may have originally connected this dance to the *atua* rather than *aitu*. Because none of the early descriptions of the ‘*ale’aleaitu* mention *atua* or the presence of a *taupou* or *ali’i*, I have been unable to find evidence to support that assertion other than the *atua/ali’i/fecundity* connection discussed earlier.

20. A frequent criticism of one of the dance groups I worked with—“The *taupou* only dances the *tauluga!*”—was in response to one choreographer who created a knife dance called “*Nafanua*” after the war goddess; dancers were dressed in the headdress and skirts of a *taupou*.

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