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TALI I LAGI SE AO O LOU MALO:
IS SAMOA BEING FAITHFUL TO THE
NAFANUA PROPHECY?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a critical study on the social changes that took place in Samoa and its affect on the spiritual life of the people. For argument's sake, I focus my research on the conflict between the Church and the State on a number of contemporary issues and seek to explain its foundational relevance to the Samoan context before and after the arrival of Christianity. As such, the question remains that in both its social and spiritual context, has Samoa remained faithful to the *Nafanua* saying "*Tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*"? Or is Samoa headed for spiritual oblivion?

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INTRODUCTION

'Tali i lagi se ao o lou malo' ('Wait for a title of your kingdom from heaven') is considered to be one of Nafanua's most prominent sayings in the development of Samoan history. It is an authoritative saying, being used extensively by Samoan orators in traditional speech implying the social significance of the Christianization of Samoa. It has become a common consensus in Samoan society that these words have brought in changes in the history of Samoa as a nation; changes that have opened a new chapter in the religious, political, and cultural context of Samoa. The arrival of the London Missionary Society (LMS) with a new 'God' formed a *new* Samoa in both the religious and cultural spheres. Changes arose in different aspects of Samoan culture and the new movement challenged the culture and the religious life of the people. Samoa had become the follower of the new movement called 'Christianity', and the holders of the high titles at the time became the pioneers in accepting the new God from the foreign people. What ensued was the 'enlightenment' of Samoa's traditional way of life, a factor which led to shaping the *new* Samoa. This was marked by the motto of the independent state of Samoa: "*E faavae i le Atua Samoa - Samoa is founded on God*".

When Samoa became independent in 1962 from foreign rule, laws made to run the country were all based on Christian principles and practices. The church and the government enjoyed a good relationship which saw the government considered and recognized what the church had to say about the future and development of the new Samoa. The rise of many issues in the country affecting the church in its relation to the state attracted my attention in the study of the *Nafanua* saying "*Ia tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*". Samoan tradition holds that this saying prophesied the arrival of Christianity in the country. Accordingly, I shall focus my attention on the ministry of the church and how it was affected by changes caused by the

government. Thus, the question comes to mind: **"Is Samoa still observing and following the foundations laid down by her ancestors in the past?"**

I seek to answer this research question through my research and to reflect on the topic theologically. The research done was basically of two fold nature. The literature research and a field work carried out based on the qualitative approach in order to obtain the required information and details. Part of the field work research involved interviews with certain Samoan *matai* and important personnel. General observations of the Samoan context and personal conversations with relevant people also formed the core data of this investigation. All this field work was carried out within the period of twelve weeks.

To answer the research question this piece of work follows the outline below which discusses the findings of my research: Chapter one will look at '*Nafamua and the Christian period*'. I will be looking at the background of *Nafamua* by exploring the story and the event that caused her to prophesy what is known as the *Nafamua* Prophecy: "*Tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*". I will also look at how the Biblical prophecies parallel that of *Nafamua*, and then briefly explore the arrival of Christianity and the influence of *Malietao* in the arrival of Christianity.

Chapter Two will attempt to explain the term Christianity as the new movement that influenced Samoa in the 19th century, and its relation to the *Nafamua* prophecy, and authority focusing on the political structure (*Pule* in the *matai* system) and also the government in the 20th century.

Chapter three will focus on the discussion of Samoa's political and religious face by looking at Christianity as the fulfillment of the *Nafamua* prophecy. I will mention some marked changes in the context of Samoa from the time Christianity and Europeans arrived especially those most recent and the current ones; and to see whether or not Samoa has

fulfilled the prophecy of *Nafanua* focusing on the Samoa motto "*E faavae i le Atua Samoa*". Moreover, it will include my discussion of a relevant biblical reference which illuminates my concern about the looming decay of Christian ethics and values in the Samoan context.

I will then conclude my findings, highlighting my concern about the changes in the Samoan context as a theological student and thus propose ways the Christian ministry in Samoa could sustain its existence now and in the future.

Nafanua And The Search By Mafafaga For His Share Of The Male (Continued)

Many Samoans believe that Mafafaga was a prophet, and a war warrior. This was the general understanding of the Samoan people from the past to present about Mafafaga. His name is well known wherever Samoans talk about changes in the history of Samoa and the history of a people. Some of the individuals I interviewed agreed with this, stating that it is a story that was written about the war warrior named Mafafaga. The story goes like this:

Mafafaga was a hero in the Third Samoan War, one of the wars between Samoa and the United Kingdom. He was a high-ranking warrior named Mafafaga who was the nephew of Tuiatua. Mafafaga was Tuiatua's uncle. Tuiatua gave birth to his daughter, the woman who Mafafaga loved and was very close to. Mafafaga was a warrior and a hero in the Third Samoan War, one of the wars between Samoa and the United Kingdom. He was a high-ranking warrior named Mafafaga who was the nephew of Tuiatua. Mafafaga was Tuiatua's uncle. Tuiatua gave birth to his daughter, the woman who Mafafaga loved and was very close to.

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CHAPTER ONE

NAFANUA AND THE CHRISTIAN PERIOD

Firstly, this chapter investigates the background of *Nafanua*¹ and where the phrase *Tali i Lagi se Ao o lou Malo* ('wait for a title of your kingdom from heaven') originated from. Secondly it will then briefly explore the story of *Malietoa*'s visit to the goddess or prophetess *Nafanua* in search of his share of the *Malo* or kingdom. Thirdly, I will look at prophets and prophetesses in the Bible, and their roles and functions in their respective contexts in order to draw comparisons with *Nafanua*. Fourthly, I will look into the historical event of the 1830s that saw the arrival of John Williams and the beginning of the Christian era in the history of Samoa corresponding to the rise in power of the *Malietoa* family.

1.1 Nafanua And The Search By Malietoa For His Share Of The *Malo* (Government)

Most Samoans believe that *Nafanua* was a prophetess and a war warrior². This was the general understanding of the Samoan people from the past to present about *Nafanua*. Her name is mentioned whenever Samoans talk about changes in the history of Samoa and the lifestyle of its people. Most of the individuals I interviewed agreed to the following portrayal of the story that was written about the war warrior named *Nafanua*. The story goes like this:

Nafanua was a tama'ita'i³ or a Samoan lady born of an incestuous relationship. Her father was a half-human warrior named Saveasi'u'leo and her mother was Tilafaiga. Saveasi'u'leo was Tilafaiga's uncle. Tilafaiga gave birth to her daughter. She named her Nafanua, and she was only an 'alu'alu-toto or 'blood clot'. Because of the incestuous nature of Nafanua's origin, Tilafaiga was ashamed and hid her baby in the land, hence the name Nafanua i.e. 'the one hid in

¹ *Nafanua* or *Na-i le fanua*, literally means "hidden in the land" *Na* literally means to hide or to cover, *i le* is a preposition which in this context means 'in', and *Fanua* literally means land.

² Interview with Malotau Lafolafoga's at the Malua Theological College. (19/04/2011)

³ *Tama'ita'i* is an unmarried Samoan lady or it sometimes refers to an untitled married woman living with her family in her village.

the land'. The 'blood-clot' that was hid in the land or the bush for some time, until such time when she grew up to become a strong healthy little girl blessed with supernatural capabilities and power, which were later shown in her life as a *tama'ita'i*, a warrior goddess and a prophetess".

There were civil wars in Samoa at the time. The war's between families of high stature and villages in the island. The oral traditions suggest that, that was the time Nafanua became a female warrior. At the time, Samoa was overwhelmed by much traditions of warfare. She was a warrior for her people at Falealupo⁴. She became victorious in the war called *Taua o Pāpā*⁵ or the war of the four highest titles. She became the holder of the four highest titles in Samoa and other chiefly titles when she defeated the owners of them.

In fact she held the four paramount titles for not long. She agreed to give them back to the original owners of these paramount titles. The redistribution of these paramount titles or power or leadership motivated Malietoa Fitiseanu to ask Nafanua for his share of government.

This was a traditional nature of any Samoan *matai*⁶ was to look for more power and authority so that he and his family is respected in the community and have the support for him. Unfortunately, he came late to the prophetess and Nafanua apologized that the 'head'⁷ of the government had been given out and only a 'tail'⁸ was left. She persuaded him to accept it in the form which is what is now called the Nafanua prophecy,

"Malietoa, ia tali i lagi se ao o lou malo"^{9, 10} In my own understanding about the

answer of Nafanua, she didn't fully understand what kind of *ao* she meant when she gave her

⁴Falealupo is the village in the far end in the west of the island of Savaii in Samoa. It is believe that this is Nafanua's village. Falealupo is one of the villages where many traditions myths of Samoa originated and where Samoans believe that where the sun rests.

⁵Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Laveai: O le Tala faasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2005), 16.

⁶'Matai' according to Ulu Vaomalo Ulu Kini and Maulolo Tavita, is the one look after the extended family and control family assets such as land and others properties.

⁷'Head or Ao title is one which stands at the top of a large family tree or genealogy as the senior title. Such titles often link many villages in many parts of Samoa together historically because of the many titles and branches of families which are descended from them.- for further reading see Malama Meleisca, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 32.

⁸Nafanua use tail or *i'u* to refer to the non ruling titles or those that serve the paramount titles or the *ao*.

⁹"Malietoa, wait in heaven for a head for your government." I add the name Malietoa for the smooth reading of the Nafanua answer.

¹⁰Fa'alepo Tuisuga, ed Ruwan Palapathwala, Abraham Karickman, *The Nafanua Prophecy: An earlier version of the One world for "Setting the Scene" of Samoa's Religious and Political Formation*, (India: Alexander Marthoma Center for Dialogue, 2007), 110-114.

response to *Malietao* when she mentioned the '*lagi*' or heaven. On the other hand, *Malietao* didn't look for that kind of *ao* (head). The concern was not about gods, but ruling powers. *Malotau Lafolafoga* agreed with *Ulu Kini*¹¹ about the meaning of Nafanua's prophecy disclosed to *Malietao*. The concept that the Samoans believed in was that the mighty god *Tagaloaalagi* was in the heavens. They knew that their god *Tagaloa* responded to their demands.¹² That was why *Nafanua* referred to the heaven or the *lagi*. She literally meant to let the god *Tagaloa* decide the head for *Malietao*'s kingdom. But what we need to know is that at the time of this prediction, there were many wars between districts attempting to unite the whole country under one ruler. Holders of the royal titles tried hard to defeat other paramount title holders, so that they could rule the whole country and gain support for him. From my research, it was agreed that this was also what *Malietao* was seeking during his visit to *Nafanua*. He was looking for power to rule the whole country; a search for political power. In my own understanding, the prophecy did not state exactly what *Nafanua* was referring to, nor was it mentioned in the whole story that the prophecy was for any specific goal.

1.2 Nafanua And The Prophets In The Bible

Prophets and prophetesses in the Bible play very important roles in the community of the people of God. The Prophet is one who is divinely inspired to communicate God's will to His people and to disclose what the future holds for them.¹³ The Hebrew word for prophet is *nabi*¹⁴. In the Bible, the prophet is also called a 'seer' or those who can see the future.

¹¹ High Chief from Toamua

¹² Derek Freeman, *Margret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*, (Canberra: Australia National University Press, 1984), 182.

¹³ Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 1040.

¹⁴ "*Nabi* is from the verb *naba* 'to announce', call a declarer or announcer. The primary idea of a prophet therefore, is one (male) who utters a communication". Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 1040.

Women on the other hand who had this gift or responsibility were known as a 'prophetess'¹⁵ or *nabiā*.¹⁶ They were people with diverse associations because they claimed themselves as those who communicated a divine message. They acted as mediators between God and the people (Israel) delivering God's message to His people. They foretell what will happen in the future for not only Israel but for all nations. They could interpret dreams which corresponded with some divine power¹⁷. Prophets in the Bible were also king makers. They anointed kings and consequently notified the appointed kings about the will of God¹⁸.

Nafanua on the other hand as we have learned from her story, had some corresponding characteristics with those of *nabiā* or prophetesses in the Bible. Firstly, she was a Samoan female warrior and the traditional understanding of the Samoan is that anyone who had power and claimed high titles of the country he or she was then considered to be favoured by gods.¹⁹ In that sense, we can say that she was called by a divine being to become a prophetess. As we have realized now in the rise in power of the *Malietao* family, it is an undeniable fact that *Nafanua* was a king maker if we think deeply about her prophecy. *Malietao* was not given an 'ao' or head from the distribution of the *pāpā*, however Christianity arrived at a time when *Malietao* was considered to be the king because he was

¹⁵ Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 1040 -1043.

¹⁶ *Nabiā* is the Hebrew word for the prophetess.

¹⁷ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, 1986), 986.

¹⁸ Merrill F. Unger, pg 1043.

¹⁹ Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi Tamasese, "Tamafaiga: Shaman King or Maniac" *Journal of Pacific History*, 30 no. 1, 1995, p17.

the holder of the *Tafaifa*²⁰ at the time.²¹ Although the *Malietao* that searched for the *Ao* was not the same *Malietao* that received Christianity, the title *Malietao* became the recipient nonetheless. *Malietao* became an *Ao* i.e. a political leader, and significantly he was also the first person to accept another new religion in the history of Samoa, the heavenly kingdom or the kingdom of God through Christianity.²² The *Malietao* family believed that *Nafamua*'s words were fulfilled when the *Malietao* became the head of the government of Samoa.²³

1.3 The Arrival Of Christianity And The Rise Of The Malietao Title In Power.

There was no centralized government in Samoa when Christianity reached the shores of Samoa. Many attempts to do so failed because of the equal power of the holders of the four royal titles in the country at the time.²⁴ There were many wars for political control going on at the time in the country²⁵. According to *Amaama Tofaeono*:

The warfare of Samoans has been viewed by foreigners as a barbarous activity with great bloodshed. The destruction of settlements and localities was an unpreventable form of conferring pain and suffering on humanity. Nevertheless, Samoans understood warfare as a religio-cultural engagement that operated upon the idea of sacrifice and the reestablishment of new forms and orders of relationships. The necessity for honorary recognition, loyalty and pride in one's own divine-relational roots, which depend on association with the gods, ancestral spirits, chiefly titles and settlements (including the land, sea, and the atmospheric

²⁰ "The four titles that made up the Tafaifa are Tuiatua, Tuiaana, Gatoaitale, and Tamasoalii." Featunai Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tulai: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Independence 1900-1962*, (Cambera: Australian National University, 2001), 1. For further reading see Malama Meleisea, (Lagaga), 32.

²¹ Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi Tamasese, "Tamafaiga: Shaman King or Maniac" *Journal of Pacific History*, 30 no. 1, 1995, 42-43.

²² Malama Meleisea, (1987), 54.

²³ K. R. Howe, *Where The Waves Fall: A new South Sea Islands history from first settlement to colonial rule*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 236.

²⁴ Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi Tamasese, "Tamafaiga: Shaman King or Maniac" *Journal of Pacific History*, 30 no. 1, 1995.

²⁵ Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, Tamasailau Suaalii Sauni et al., *Pacific Indigenous Dialogue, on Faith, Peace, Reconciliation and Good Governance*, (Alafua, Samoa: USP, 2007), p17.

space) were the foremost characteristics of traditional Samoan hostilities in the past.²⁶

In spite of its negative influence, wars were seen as part of the life of the Samoan people. It was something that grew inside the heart of every Samoan in the past.

John Williams and the London Missionary Society (LMS) arrived in Savaii while *Malietao Vainuupo*²⁷ (the most powerful paramount chief at the time) was in *Tumua* or the island of *Upolu* at war enforce the death of *Tamafaiga*²⁸ in the District of *Aana* in *Upolu*. The war became apparent from the seashore as Williams wrote that when their ship docked, he could see smoke rising to the sky.²⁹ The white missionaries were accompanied by a Samoan couple *Fauea* and his wife *Puaseisei* and they knew well about the great obstacle that lay ahead because of the war warrior at the time *Tamafaiga* an opponent to *Malietao*. But those fearless feelings were immediately erased when they heard that *Tamafaiga*, the most feared Chief in Samoa at the time, was dead.³⁰

The death of *Tamafaiga* obviously had a positive bearing on the arrival of Christianity. A message of the arrival of the missionaries in *Sapapalii* came to *Malietao* and in receiving it; he went straight away, welcomed John Williams and his crew and escorted

²⁶ Amaamalele Tofaono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga-The Household of Life, a perspective from living myths and traditions of Samoa*, (Erlangen: Erlangen Verl. Für Mission and Ökumene, 2000), 72.

²⁷ Malietao Vainuupo was the son of Malietao Fitiseanu who went to Nafanua in search of a home for his family. His name was later changed to Malietao Tavita by the missionaries.

²⁸ Tamafaiga was one of Malietao's warriors and he was the leader of the Manono confederation. The title Tamafaiga held was *Leiataua*, and was a relative of Malietao-Malama Meleisea, (1987), 56. The genealogy of Tamafaiga stated that he was from the family of Saveasiuleo, the father of Nafanua. His parents were Lelologa the Manono leader and Laolao daughter of Safune/Safotu malo. His birth was difficult, and according to tradition his mother called out in delirium 'le aitu, le aitu'- its an aitu- before giving birth- thus the name Tamafaiga means that the "the man whose birth was difficult". From the beginning he was regarded with awe as someone having close to deity status or greatly favoured by gods. His adulthood was aided by good looks and a majestic bearing. Everything he touched was *tapu*. "Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Taisi, *Su'esu'e Manogi: In search of Fragrance*, ed. Tamasailau M. Suaalii Sauni (Samoa: NUS Lepapaigalagala, 2008), 43.

²⁹ John Williams, *Missionary Enterprises*, (London: John Snow, 1840), 85.

³⁰ John Williams, *Missionary Enterprises*, (London: John Snow, 1840), 85.

them to land. There was no problem encountered by the missionary when they were received by Malietoa during their first encounter and as it seemed, everything looked as if things were already planned before they had occurred.

The 24th August, 1830 was the day Malietoa and the Missionaries made an agreement about the future of the mission in Samoa. Things went well on first contact between the missionaries and the locals and they were thankful to God for the wonderful things he had done.³¹ As compared to other Pacific Islands at the time, the task of the missionaries in spreading the Christian faith in Samoa was made easier. By this we mean that the missionary enterprises were assisted by earlier pre-Christian prophecies, the spreading of the gospel by natives which were considered as cults and the integration of the gospel with the Samoan culture.³²

Before the arrival of the new religion, there were local prophecies about a new kingdom from heaven, which was soon to arrive in Samoa. As mentioned earlier, there was the *Nafanua* prophecy to Malietoa '*Tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*'. Another prophecy was made by another Samoan deity '*Ave i le Tala*'³³ who also prophesied the arrival of a new religion. This deity is specially noted as having predicted the arrival of the powerful foreign god, who was to eat up all the gods of Samoa except one, and that was himself. So when Christianity arrived, it was believed said that the predictions of *Ave i le Tala* had been fulfilled.³⁴ Turner

³¹ Oka Fauolo, (2005), 28.

³² K. R. Howe, *Where the waves falls*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 238.

³³ "Take to the end of the house" Ave i le Tala was a healer whom many consulted in times of sickness.

³⁴ George Turner, *Samoa: A hundred Years ago and Long Before*, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1884), 24.

had further affirmed that Christianity was not only predicted, but was long expected by the Samoans and his view was based upon the willingness of Malietoa to accept the *lotu*.³⁵

Furthermore, an individual known as *Taufaaiva of Fasitoo Uta* – a relative of the Malietoa family – was also renowned as having the power of prophecy. He also had foreseen the arrival of Christianity.³⁶ He predicted the arrival of two kingdoms, “*O le a o’o mai le malo o le filemu, ona o’o mai lea o malo o mea tagitagi po o mea fetagisi*”³⁷ Oka Fauolo interpreted the peaceful kingdom as the arrival of Christianity while the kingdom of clanging things refers to money and its perceived evil.³⁸ In general, these predictions and prophecies of the local people created some level of anticipation and raised expectations among the Samoans before the arrival of Christianity.

The impact of Native cults was another factor that contributed to the rapid acceptance of Christianity in Samoa. There were some Samoans who travelled abroad and became exposed to Christianity. Their knowledge of Christianity was limited however and thus they had a little understanding about the new God. When they returned to Samoa they began to exercise this new form of worship before the missionaries arrived. The example of this was the Sio Vili cult.³⁹

The culture was another factor which helped in the easy acceptance of Christianity in Samoa. One particular aspect of the Samoan culture that helped a lot was the pre-Christian religion. Before the Christianity arrived in Samoa, Samoan people believed in gods. They

³⁵ George Turner, (1884), 24.

³⁶ Oka Fauolo, (2005), 18.

³⁷ “The peaceful kingdom will soon arrived, and it will followed by the kingdom of clanging things” Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Laveai*, (2005)18

³⁸ Oka Fauolo, (2005), 18.

³⁹ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 52.

worshipped these gods and also believed in deities and in a superior god who dwelled in heaven whom they called 'Tagaloalagi'.⁴⁰ For example, in their worship, Samoans worshipped their gods in the evening. That time they believed that their god will come in a form of a Spirit or *aitu* and dwell inside a member of a family especially the matai who took the priestly responsibility, and through him the god gave the command to the whole family for what it needed to do for the family.⁴¹ This cultural ritual was easily modified by Christianity when it was introduced in 1830.

There was hope and belief by the Samoan people that there would be changes to their lives and so they were ready for Christianity before it arrived. The arrival of the missionaries with the good news about Jesus Christ was believed as the fulfilment of prophecies from Samoa's own prophets and prophetesses. A new page in the history of Samoa had been turned in 1830 when the gospel of Jesus Christ reached the shore of Sapapalii (Savaii). This is recorded in the Samoan honorific place named "*Mataniu Feagai ma le Ata*"⁴²

The prophecy of Nafanua as we saw its fulfilment could be interpreted from a different perspective. We could say that it was about power and authority or it could also be about Christianity as was widely accepted. This leads me to the next chapter in which I will discuss both authority and Christianity in their meaning based in the context of Samoa.

⁴⁰ Derek Freeman, *Margret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*, (Canberra: Australia National University Press, 1984), 182.

⁴¹ Siaosi Tana, F. Davies, *O Samoa Anamua*, (Wellington: Island Education Division of Dept. of Education, 1962), 22.

⁴² Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, Tamasailau Suaalii Sauni ed, *Pacific Indigenous Dialogue, -on faith, peace, reconciliation and good governance*, (Alafua, Samoa: USP, 2007). Mataniufeagimaleata is the name of the place or piece of land in Sapapalii Savaii where the white missionaries arrived- Fuimaono Naoia Fereti Tupua, *O le suaga a le vaatele: The findings of the Big Canoes*, (Samoa: Malua Printing Press, 2002), 108.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROPHECY OF NAFANUA: AUTHORITY OR CHRISTIANITY

This chapter will discuss 'Authority' and Christianity in their relation to the fulfilment of the Nafanua prophecy. First I will explore the meaning of 'Authority'. In doing so, I will look into the concept of "*Pule*" in the *faa-matai* system, the authority within the family system and in the government in relation to the prophecy. Secondly, the definition of Christianity as the gospel and Christianity as a governing body that can rule and control people or control any society.

2.1 Authority: The Concept Of *Pule* In The *Matai* System

'Authority' according to the Oxford Dictionary, is "the power or right to give orders and make decisions". The authority in the Samoa traditions had the same meaning and "it was a gift of people's agreements"⁴³ given to someone to have the responsibility of looking after the community through controlled decision-making. This power or authority in the Samoan traditions was mainly held by the *matai* or chief of a family and village. This authority in Samoa is called "*Pule*". According to *Ulu Kini*:

*A matai is someone who has been entitled with a chiefly or oratory title and normally, he is the head of the Samoan family*⁴⁴

Hence the *matai* system refers to a chiefly system which traditionally serves as a governing and administrative body within a village.⁴⁵ Before any foreign power took any interest in the country, Samoa administered her own affairs, though not in the sense of modern government. Samoan society had no centralized political authority or government

⁴³ Interview with Ulu Kini, (20th of May 2011)

⁴⁴ Interview with Ulu Kini, (20th of May 2011).

⁴⁵ Mose Taua'i Fulu, unpublished BD Thesis, *Power and Authority in the Churches of the Pastoral Epistles*, (Samoa: Malua, 1982), 86.

exercising control over all its members. Rather, political organization rested largely upon the ramified lineage and the local extended family, and also upon the village where members of several families would join forces in dealing with common local matters.⁴⁶ The system is primarily aimed to control its members and to see that each member maintain the *faa-Samoa*⁴⁷ and the Samoan custom.⁴⁸ It is the totality of life to which the Samoan people are accustomed.

The *matai* system is the structure of authority which serves to control and govern the village affairs, mainly for the purpose of upholding the *faa-Samoa*. Thus, this structure, comprising of *matai* only, is the governing body in which the welfare of each of its members are to be considered including determining punishment for those who disobey the law of the community.⁴⁹ Although they form themselves up into a governing body, they are not of equal status. In other words, those of higher status seem to have more power than those in the lower strata. The differences in status according to the structure of authority, was originated from two main aspects of the Samoan early history, and that is (1) the belief in many gods⁵⁰, (2) bravery in warfare and other adventures.⁵¹ In the earlier history, there was an existence of departmentalized system of family gods and totems.⁵² In each family, members performed rites pertaining to their own deity.⁵³ Religious observance was a public affair in each family,

⁴⁶ Malama Melsisea, (1987), 27-28.

⁴⁷ Faa-Samoa.... It's the traditional Samoan way of life.

⁴⁸ Mose Taua'i Fulu, unpublished BD Thesis, *Power and Authority in the Churches of the Pastoral Epistles*, (Samoa: Malua, 1982), 86.

⁴⁹ Derek Freeman, (1984), 192-199.

⁵⁰ Kirisimasi Salaa, unpublished BD Thesis, *The impact of Christianity on Samoan Oratory*, (Samoa: 2006), 90.

⁵¹ Mose (1982), 86.

⁵² Mose Taua'i Fulu (1982), 87.

⁵³ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga- A Short History of Samoa*, (Suva: University of the South Pacific Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 83.

entailing ceremonies that tested the solidarity of each member. They firmly held that their god was much stronger than the god of the other family. The proof of which god was stronger was adjudged when the two families would fight against each other. Normally, the leader of the family, selected among the strongest member of the family, must prove he is capable. He will be the one to lead the family in the fight against another family, or in other cases, in traditional Samoan sports. The defeat of one side would gain the other side a chance to take the matai title or a piece of land to mark their victory. Other matai titles were gained from a reward for a great event that marked a significant moment in the history of that community.⁵⁴

The example of this method was the event in which the name *Malietao*⁵⁵ originated. "*Malie toa*" were the first words of Tongan king *Talaifei'i's*⁵⁶ farewell message to Samoan leaders Tuna and Fata and consequently the two leaders who were also brothers, used the name *Malietao* as a title for their family to remind them of this event. But events as such are always associated with "family gods" and thus, the event determined how powerful the family god was.⁵⁷ The title now forms an important part of the identity of such a family, and is handed down in succession from one to the other provided that the person is entitled to be a *Matai*, has obtained the blessing of all family members to obtain the title.

⁵⁴ Brother Fred Henry, *Samoa: An Early History*, (American Samoa: A. Samoa Department of Education, 1980), 35-37.

⁵⁵ The name "*Malietao*" was originated from the time when Samoa was slavery under the Tongan empire. Despite the long period of slavery, the Samoans under the leadership of the two brothers Tuna and Fata, were able to drive the Tongans out of the islands. The story stated that when Talaifei'i the king of Tonga ready to go back escaping from the two brothers, he spoke these memorable words, "*Ua Malie Toa ua Malo Tau, Afai e toe omai Toga, e omai i le aouliuli folau, ae le sau i le aouliuli tau*" (Brave warriors, bravely as you fought, if the Tongans ever come back, it will be for a friendly visit, but never again to fight you). That was where the name *Malietao* was originated. (Ulu Kini interview with the author in his resident at Puipaa on the 20th May 2011).

⁵⁶ Talaifei'i was the last Tongan King to rule over Samoa.

⁵⁷ Derek Freeman, (1983), 177-179.

Traditionally, Samoan believed that the title was not conferred by any human being but it was totally a deistic blessing.⁵⁸ Because of this, the person therefore has the authority to organize and control his household in all matters concerning their security. The belief in this god-given power and the bravery of the title holder have assented the family and the people of the village to obey him.⁵⁹ Only the brave became heads (high chief) of a family or the district.

Henceforth, to have the power or the authority under the *matai* system was to open the door to many responsibilities.⁶⁰ This was why *Malietao* went to *Nafamua* asking for his share of power (government). It was not a visit for his own personal gain but his responsibility as a *matai* for the betterment of his family. He needed more power and authority so that his family gain respect among the Samoan community. But in return he faced an unknown destiny.

The differences of status in the structure of *matais* are based on the fact that the braves, who hold the superior authority, have delegated their power to those who are faithful to them and had assisted them during times of war. As a reward, they are given *matai* titles as a guarantee of their *tautua* or services and also to have authority superior to ordinary members of the society they belong.⁶¹ This gives them the right to serve in the governing of any village. Significantly enough, the holder of the superior title is the head whilst the rest have less authority. In most cases the lesser authoritative *matai* are the talking chief. They are the ones who communicate the wills of the high chiefs to his/her family members. On the village level the same principle is also applied, where there are *matai*'s entitled to be oratory

⁵⁸ Mose Taua'i, 89.

⁵⁹ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 27.

⁶⁰ Siaosi Tana, F. Davies, (1884), 136-137.

⁶¹ Mose Taua'i, 31.

chief.⁶² The *matai* system structure explains clearly the differences between the status and the authority or the type of "*Pule*" they have according to their place in the structure;

I. ***Aliisili (the highest chief)*** - He is considered as the sovereign lord. He holds all traditional knowledge and is normally addressed *Afioga* or *Susuga* (honorific titles).

II. ***Alii (higher chief)*** - The second in honour are the *Alii*. They take the role of the *Aliisili* when he is absent. If there is no *Aliisili* in the structure of the village, the *Alii* will be conferred with the highest honorific dignity.

III. ***Tulafalesili (the highest orator)*** - it is worth noted that in speaking about an orator, it is always understood that orators are those whose roles are to speak on behalf of the *Alii*. The *Tulafalesili* is sometime referred to as *Tu'ua*. He is addressed *Tofa a le Tu'ua*. The term *Tofa* denotes someone who possesses the traditional knowledge and also a competent and well-versed person in the typical Samoan style of speech. Thus, *Tofa a le Tuua* means an old and experienced possessor of knowledge and speaker.

IV. ***Tulafale (orator)*** - they are the lowest rank of talking chiefs. The *Tulafale* can take the role of a speaker in minor occasions, especially when such occasions are concerned with village matters. But in major gatherings both in district and national levels, they remain silent.⁶³

In the government of Samoa, the majority of those who are in the government were *matai* appointed by the various districts in Samoa. That is how the *matai* is respected in Samoa. They are the ones who make laws and legislations for the betterment of the community. After Samoa became independent in 1962, one of the issues discussed in parliament was that only *matai* may vote and these led to the split of *matai* titles. In bizarre fashion, the *matai* titles had been conferred upon children to increase the number of supporters for candidates.⁶⁴

To analyze the whole discussion, the concept of power and authority is rested on the hierarchical form. Yet, on the functional level its aim is to promote the security and the

⁶² Kirisimasi Salaa, *The impact of Christianity on Samoan Oratory*, (BD Thesis, Samoa: 2006), 92.

⁶³ Kirisimasi Salaa, (2006), 93.

⁶⁴ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 159.

freedom of the people, both on the family and village levels. The real source of authority is traced back to the powers of the deities. This traditional belief is still associated with the inauguration of *matai*, except that the attributions of these powers are no longer traced to the traditional gods, but to the Christian God as prophesied by Nafanua.

2.2 Christianity

The arrival of Christianity in Samoa marked a new era in the religion and cultural heritage of Samoa. Its arrival and welcoming is denoted by the traditional concept *taeao*.⁶⁵ Christianity in the context of *taeao*, as a religious and cultural occasion was embraced by the whole system of life, ranging from time, place, humans, land and sea and all inhabitants therein, as they were affected and involved in the arrival and the celebration of the acceptance of the *Lotu*⁶⁶ into the Samoan society. The welcoming of the *Lotu* in Samoa, its approval by the chiefly system and its accommodation into the way of life were made possible by a process of spiritual coordination as well as the interrelations of parts of the divine creation in the spirit of celebration. This process was and still is seen as a vital force in the making of Modern Samoa.⁶⁷

The new religion arrived in Samoa in the early 19th Century whereby John Williams was and still is heralded as the pioneer and founder of the Christian religious era in Samoa.⁶⁸

The arrival of Christianity can be interpreted in different ways. We can say that it is the

⁶⁵ *Taeao* can literally be translated as morning or tomorrow. The concept significantly refers to not only the opportune time but also the occasion and its religio-cultural officiation. *Taeao* not only refers to *aso* (day/s or time), but it also includes *le mea na tupu ai* (eventual happening), the *malae*, an affirmation by the decision of the *fono a matai*, and is sealed by the religious ceremony of *ava* drinking, as well as celebration through feasting. - Amaamalele Tofaeono, Amaamalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga-The Household of Life, a perspective from living myths and traditions of Samoa*, (Erlangen: Erlangen Verl. Für Mission and Ökumene, 2000), 81.

⁶⁶ *Lotu* referred to the church or religion.

⁶⁷ John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1992), 406.

⁶⁸ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 55.

religious movement that replaced Samoan pagan religion and the worshiping of ancient gods with the new religion i.e. the worshiping of the Christian God (Yahweh).⁶⁹ According to Tofaeono, "We can also interpret Christianity in Samoa as colonization or a most influential power over the Samoan social and culture life."⁷⁰

Christianity, as we have seen, was introduced and quickly included into the Samoan religious and cultural life.⁷¹ The power of the white man and his/her God found gratitude in almost every aspect of Samoan life. The intercessions to and reliance on the ancestral gods were replaced by assurance in the power of the newly arrived God. The traditional understanding of the power of fruitfulness and dependence on a satisfactory supply of local products was regularly replaced by the supply of foreign material goods.⁷² Further, as a means of consolidating control, security, and maintaining the rank of reigning paramount chiefs, villagers, and settlements, primary interests were radically shifted to an assurance in the mighty power of foreign weapons.⁷³ Tofaeono also stated that:

Christianity also offered new ideologies and understandings of the world. Samoans became convinced that the God from the other-world, the heaven or the faraway place, was majestic, rich and powerful. From the preaching of the, people became convinced that the traditional Samoan divinities should be abolished and be replaced by Jehovah, the transcendent and powerful God who was expected to come in the future. This was believed to be fulfilled and consolidated by the arrival of the Christian Missions.⁷⁴

The similarity between the LMS organisational structure and that of the Samoan societal and political structure contributed greatly to the surprising and speedy conversion to

⁶⁹ Derek Freeman, (1984), 175.

⁷⁰ Amaamalele Tofaeono, (2000), 86.

⁷¹ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 58.

⁷² Amaamalele Tofaeono, (2000), 90.

⁷³ Amaamalele Tofaeono, (2000), 90-91.

⁷⁴ Amaamalele Tofaeono, (2000), 90.

the new religion.⁷⁵ When Malietoa gave his support to the mission, his family gradually joined in. Other chiefs followed suit.

Tofaeono states that:

*While the chiefly system authorizes and appropriates the ceremonial affairs of each family and village community, it was natural that when a matai accepted Christianity, all his/her family members would join in, willingly or unwillingly. In addition, the matai and their families soon "saw the advantage in accepting the new beliefs and the attendant material benefits."*⁷⁶

The conversion process created religious and social changes whereby traditional beliefs, customary values and certain cultural practices were to be reshaped to meet Christian moral standards, while others were dismantled, rejected and abolished. New religious doctrines and practices were absorbed, and the Samoans created for themselves a synthesis of the Gospel and Culture which distinguished them in certain respects from other Polynesian islands.⁷⁷

In summary, Christianity, then, meant both an adaptation to theological concepts, norms and values, and also new practices considered to reach human freedom, secret salvation, and as a means of obtaining wealth. Christianity urged another form of moral and spiritual order that was shaped by the forceful power of the Holy Spirit to convert minds and save souls.

The new religion arrived along with ideologies that were partial European political and social ideas. In the midst of these changes, Samoans threw themselves into both the religious and social control of the missionaries.

⁷⁵ John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1992), 121.

⁷⁶ Amamalele, (2000), 86.

⁷⁷ John Garrett, (1992), 187.

CHAPTER THREE

IS SAMOA BEING FAITHFUL TO THE NAFANUA PROPHECY?

This chapter will firstly look into the prospect of Christianity being the fulfilment of the *Nafanua* prophecy. Secondly, this chapter will highlight some of the changes in the context from the time Christianity arrived in Samoa towards this present time and thus revealing some of the changes to the country's religious and political make-up. Thirdly, we will also look into theological issues arising within the country at this time and to find out whether Samoa is still considered the fulfilment of the prophecy of Nafanua.

3.1 Christianity As The Fulfilment Of The Nafanua Prophecy.

Christianity became a new '*ao*' in the heart of the Samoan people. It was the turning point in the history of the country. It was a new *taeao* (beginning) for Samoa. Referring to these *taeao*, Samoans continuously recall the turning away from the time of *pouliuli* (age of darkness) to the new epoch in history i.e. *aso malamalama* (age of enlightenment).⁷⁸ It was the moving away from worshipping idols and traditional gods to the worshipping of the one holy and powerful God in heaven that was introduced by John Williams and the LMS missionaries.⁷⁹ In 1832, after Malietoa won the war⁸⁰, there was peace and more amazingly:

*Malietoa, his brother, the principal chiefs, and nearly all the inhabitants of their settlements, had embraced Christianity; that their chapel would accommodate six or seven hundred people, and that it was always full; and that in the two large islands of Savaii and Upolu the Gospel had been introduced into more than thirty villages.*⁸¹

⁷⁸ Filemoni Tuigamala Unpublished Writings on Samoan Proverbial Sayings.

⁷⁹ K R Howe, *Where The Waves Fall: A new South Sea Island History from first settlement to colonial rule*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1984), 236.

⁸⁰ The war against Aana for the assassination of Tamafaiga. Brother Fred Henry stated that in this war, many innocent lives were taken. People of Aana were burned alive and those who try to escape were caught and taken to Fasitootai and burned there alive. All the houses were burned, the trees were ruined and the plantation were laid waste. - Brother Fred Henry, *Samoa; An early History*, (American Samoa: A. Samoa Department of Education, 1980), 160.

⁸¹ K R Howe, 237, (Cited from Bligh, *A Voyage to the South Sea 1*: 35).

The acceptance of the church by Malietoa was seen as the arrival of the 'Ao' of his 'Malo' as foretold by Nafanua. This was evident by the reaction of Malietoa when he heard the arrival of the white missionaries. He thought to himself that no doubt this is the kingdom Nafanua referred to when she said "the Ao of your kingdom will come from heaven, therefore it must be received."⁸² This accordingly led to him accepting John Williams and the LMS missionaries where he greeted them in gratitude and said: "*This is the happiest day of my life and I rejoice that I have lived to see it.*"⁸³

His actions and words revealed his willingness to receive the new Ao for the Samoan people. By the time Malietoa converted to Christianity, he did not want any more wars over the titles or the four ruling post (Tafaifa).⁸⁴ The 'Ao' of his government as promised by Nafanua that would come from heaven now became realized when the God of heaven introduced by the white missionaries showed His mysterious ways to Malietoa. It was the Malietoa families that set a new beginning for the rest of the Samoans and Christianity had now been integrated into the Samoan culture.⁸⁵ This was well defined by the somewhat amazing action of Malietoa Vainuupo before he died. He redistributed the Tafaifa⁸⁶ to appropriate traditional authorities instead of passing them to his brother Taimalelagi.⁸⁷ Christianity became the substitute for Tafaifa. The distributing back of the Tafaifa titles symbolized change in the ruling power. The authority held by the matai system needed to be

⁸² Brother Fred Henry, (1980), 150.

⁸³ Brother Fred Henry, *Samoa: An Early History*, (American Samoa: A. Samoa Department of Education, 1980), 150-151, cited from John Williams book, *Missionary Enterprises*.

⁸⁴ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 74.

⁸⁵ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 69-70.

⁸⁶ The Tafa'ifa titles were distributed back to their respective districts. The Tuia'ana title returned to the A'ana district which was also a stronghold of the Tuimalcaili'ifano family. The Tuiatua title returned to the Atua District, which was the stronghold of the Tupua family, while the Gatoaitale and Tamasaali'i titles returned to Tuamasaga which was the stronghold of the Malietoa family.- see Featunai Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tulai*, (Australia: Australian National University, 2001), 14 for further reading.

⁸⁷ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 74.

Christianized so that everything done in the community was to reflect the new teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁸⁸ This was also explained by the name given to the pastor or the *faiifeau*.⁸⁹ Samoans adopted the concept *faiifeau* as a servant of God, and granted him higher traditional titles such as *ao fa'alupega*⁹⁰ and *fa'afeagaiga*.⁹¹ This had shifted the status of the *faiifeau* from the literal meaning of the word *faiifeau* and its responsibility as the one who *tautua*⁹² (serve) to a higher level, where he is ranked the same as the paramount chiefs. To a certain extent, the pastor is sometimes higher because he is entitled to claim both divine and secular power. Granted with these honorary titles, a *faiifeau*, the one who is supposed to serve, becomes the one being served in the Samoan culture.⁹³

There is a shift in emphasis of pastoral roles 'service' and 'responsibility' to those which are shaped by domineering, authoritarian and dictating attitudes. In the past, the pastor never interfered with the village matters or things concerned with the *matai*. He only appeared when the village *matai* needed spiritual advice in things that affected the spiritual

⁸⁸ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 68-69.

⁸⁹ *Faiifeau* is the name given to those who do a work for the family or the community. The Samoan people called the pastors a *faiifeau*. It not refers to work such as everyday tasks but the *feau* or the work of God. Different titles given to a *faiifeau* presuppose a variety of roles he plays in the *lotu* and for the society. In a village setting, a *faiifeau* is regarded as *auauna a Iesu* (servant of Jesus), *osi taulaga* (priest – sometimes called a *perofeta* – prophet), *suli vaaia o le Atua* (a representative or heir of God), *o le ua faapaiaina* (the one who is anointed – or saint), *o le na te tauasuina le vai o le ola* (one who fetches the water of life), etc. These titles are associated with the religious or ecclesiastical function of the *faiifeau*.

⁹⁰ *Faalupega* refers to the traditional polity of Samoa where every village, district and main island has its own form of formal address. Hence, the word 'ao' which simply means *head, above, clouds – heavenly*, etc. – connotes the sense that he is a man of a higher rank, and more so, his status is above the religio-cultural status of Samoan chiefs.

⁹¹ *Feagaiga* refers to the brother-sister relationship, where the brothers would protect and take care of their sisters. The concept also includes chiefly titles and extends to both human and nature relationships. This concept will be explored in detail later. The concept *fa'afeagaiga* (like *feagaiga/covenant*), as has already been discussed, was given by Malietoa as an honorary address to the white missionaries. It means that the missionaries were accepted in the community and would be treated with much care and respect, in the same way the sisters.

⁹² *Tautua* in Samoa is a servant, the one who serve those of the higher status in the community. *Tautua* is also a verb meaning to serve.

⁹³ Amaamalele Tofaono, Amaamalele Tofaono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga-The Household of Life, a perspective from living myths and traditions of Samoa*, (Erlangen: Erlangen Verl. Für Mission and Ökumene, 2000), 136.

life of people, for example punishment, *ati ma le lau*⁹⁴, *mu le foaga*⁹⁵ etc. But a disturbing trend had eventuated, that when a pastor received plaudits by the *matai* and the village by being referred to as *aofaalupega* and *faafeagaiga*, his mentality changed in his work. He acts as the one having the authority over the village people and demands that all the people listen and obey his every word.

The *ao* from heaven promised by Nafanua – now known as ‘Christianity’ or ‘the church’ – spread easily throughout the whole country. Other parts of Samoa heard and they also wanted to be a part of the new *malo*. Some people travelled to Savaii so that they could learn from the missionaries and they returned to teach their families, villages and districts which aided the spreading of the new teaching.⁹⁶ People discarded their idols and neglected their traditional gods to worship the God of the missionaries.⁹⁷ In additions, some of the village exemplified their conversion with passion by cooking the creatures which were sacred to them and ate them. The idea was that by eating the creature, it would never be worshipped again.⁹⁸

In additions, the words of *Nafanua* are also open to interpretation and we can question its authenticity. Christianity now became the new force over the Samoan people both socially and politically. Since the arrival of Christianity in Samoa the *Malietao* family later

⁹⁴ *Ati ma le lau* can be translated as uprooted with leaves. This was the punishment for the whole family for not obeying the village rules or something bad done by someone of that family that disturbs peace within the community. This punishment is the destroying of any plantation especially taro, taamu and banana plantation it will uprooted and used for preparing the food for the village fono (council) and everything that is not good for use will be destroyed and leave nothing stand in the land. (author translation of the interview with Malotau)

⁹⁵ *Mu* means burn and *Foaga* means place or properties. This is the punishment always given to someone that commits any high crime like killing someone of the same village or fighting with a high *matai* then that family will be punished by burning down the house and burn all things in the land.

⁹⁶ John Williams, *Missionary Enterprises*, (London: John Snow, 1840), 117.

⁹⁷ Fred Henry, (1980), 162.

⁹⁸ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga-A Short History of Samoa*, (Suva: University of the South Pacific Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 53.

established themselves as one of the more powerful families in Samoa although they also went through many difficulties in life trying to gain independence from foreign rule.⁹⁹

In 1962, after the country journeyed through the hard road to independence, the dream of the Samoan people for an independent nation finally became realized.¹⁰⁰

The Malietoa family believed that the prophecy of *Nafanua* was fulfilled the moment Samoa became independent. Not only had they received the heavenly kingdom by receiving Christianity, but they together with the *Sā Tupuā* family became the head of the independent state of Samoa. *Malietoa Tanumafili II* and *Tupua Tamasese Meaole* assumed jointly the office of head of State, and when *Meaole* died in 1963, *Malietoa Tanumafili II* continued to be the sole holder of the office of the head of state for Western Samoa until his death.¹⁰¹

The motto for the independent State of Samoa is "*E faavae i le Atua Samoa*" (Samoa is Founded in God). This motto explains the kind of *Malo* that Samoa have. The *malo* is controlled by the power that was shaped by Christianity. The *malo* looks to God for His guidance and its foundation was formed upon Christian principles.

⁹⁹ Local wars were ended when Christianity arrived on the Island, but this period was the beginning of wars caused by the Europeans who travel and settle in the country. The used of weapons such as fire arms and knife and other weapon like that provides by the Europeans resulted in the lost of many lives. Foreign powers that try to take over the ruling of the Samoa were always behind every war between the paramount families of Samoa. These wars were over the country for a long period of time and the Malietoa families were among the rivalry and they struggle and struggle until they succeed. – see Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, (Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 89-101 and Featunai Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tulai*. for further reading.

¹⁰⁰ There was no formal government in Samoa because of some reasons and the rise and fall of many high ranking families was because of the involvement of the Europeans. The Europeans took over the ruling power in the 1880s, the three powers (German, British and America) then passed a Berlin Act that confirmed Malietoa as king. 1900-1914, the Germans took over the ruling of Samoa and they only wanted to rule Samoa so that they used the land for their plantation need. It was worse when New Zealand took over in 1914-1944. This is the period where the Mau movement was very active. In 1961, the United Nations Commissioner supervised a plebiscite to ensure due regard for the fundamental rights of the Samoan people. In 1962, Samoa becomes an independent state. –Malama Meleisea, (1987), 90-158.

¹⁰¹ Falefatu M. Sapolu, Tamasailau Suaalii Sauni ed, "The composition of the parliament of Western Samoa", in *Pacific Perspective: Rethinking Pacific Constitutions*, (Fiji: South Pacific Social Sciences Association, 1972), No1. Volume 13. Pg71.

3.2 Significant Changes In The Context Of Samoa (From The Time

Europeans And Christianity Arrived In Samoa) Towards This Present Time

The various changes from the adaptation and formation of the new religion and transformations in the cultural heritage had formed a new Samoan society. The arrival of the Europeans (*papalagi*)¹⁰² with foreign ideas changed the original way of life which was ordered, shaped and sanctioned by a religious system. Firstly, in the past, the Samoan families lived in a system that was called a community based society. People lived under the umbrella of the extended family. Things were to be shared equally among all the family members. The good example of this type of society is how people work the land for their own food. They also had one *umukuka* (kitchen) where all food for the family was being cooked. But when the Europeans arrived with their style of living, the Samoan people became attracted to their lifestyle. The Europeans worked for money; they lived in small families consisting of the parents and their own children, which meant they could easily control their own family by way of decision making and resources.

The idea was also implemented by the missionaries into the Samoan context was based upon the ideals of the middle classes of England where households consisted of the married couples and their children.¹⁰³ Then the Samoan people adopted that Europeans style of living in what is called market based society, where they gave their lands for use to the Europeans for commercial business. The Samoan people could then find jobs in that business, but sadly the land was their own property.¹⁰⁴

Secondly, Samoa became less dependent on its oral traditions. In prehistory Samoa, the oral tradition was the main source for recording things of the past. Myths were passed

¹⁰² *Papalagi* or *pa le lagi* meaning burst sky. The Samoans believed that the sky burst and the white people came from the sky.

¹⁰³ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 67.

¹⁰⁴ Class discussion CH 406, 19/07/2011-(Lecture: Visiesio Saga)

down from one generation to another by way of story-telling and singing songs. Samoa had no written language in the beginning and everything that needed to be passed down was done so in the form of oral traditions.¹⁰⁵

The introduction of literature by the missionaries reduced the dependency of the Samoan people on oral traditions. They learnt and used the new ways brought by the missionaries. The willingness of the Samoan people to learn how to conduct services and take part in worship promoted literature and as a result, the oral traditions were no longer the most important way to record significant events. The missionaries saw the need to read and write and as such it led to the establishment of the printing press. Education was next on the agenda and consequently, it led to the establishment of *Malua Theological College* in 1844 then *Papauta Girls College* in 1891, and many schools since.

A third change came about in medicine as Samoans had their own traditional treatments and medicine for curing sickness. The use of the natural medicines such as plant leaves and roots of trees were the main sources of medicine found in Samoa. There was no physician as such, but anyone who needed treatment was to seek the *taulasea*.¹⁰⁶

As recorded by Tana in his book:

Na faateleina le poto i palu vai i Samoa talu mai ona gasolo ina mautū ia le faiā ma tagata Toga, Fiti, Tahiti ma isi lava atumotu. E tofu lava le faama'i ma lona taulasea. E taatele le fofo i le suauu ma fusiga e faia i laulaau" (there was an improvement in the knowledge of making traditional medicine by the strong connection of the Samoan people with neighboring Island such as Tonga, Fiji, Tahiti and others . There were

¹⁰⁵ Oral traditions of Samoa include telling the event using dialogue or conversation, composing a songs or poems to remember the events of the past.

¹⁰⁶ The *taulasea* is the call of the Samoan traditional doctor. He or she is the one that perform the job of curing the sick's using the traditional medicine. Sometimes they are called *fai vai* or the medicine makers. They have the experience of knowing what leaves, fruits, flowers or roots of different trees that suit different sickness. *Taulasea* play a very important role in the community before the establishment of hospitals. The Samoans see the job of the *Taulasea* as a divine gift because not everyone had the experience. The passing of the job to another person was a ritual. It called *ua fafano atu le fofo* the "curing of the sick is wash away by the holder to another person". The passing of the job was done by washing together of the hands of the holder and the one that receive the job in one bowl of water.

*different healer for every sick and they used oil and wrapping using leaves and ties with the tapa in their healing)*¹⁰⁷

When the Europeans arrived, they brought with them scientifically-produced medicines and later on established hospitals. The work of the *taulasea* was still carried on by some but the availability of new equipments technology, coupled with the increased medical knowledge lessened the preference for traditional medicines. Doctors and nurses became the substitutes for the Samoan *taulasea*.

These are some of the many changes which highlight the rapid change to Samoan society when the Europeans and missionaries arrived. Much of the Samoan culture was condemned by the missionaries because they seemed to contradict the teaching of the Gospel. Even the political face of Samoa changed.

As mentioned earlier, Samoa was ruled by the *matai*. There was no formal Samoan-run government until 1962 when Samoa became independent. Before the missionaries arrived, the Samoan form of government was based in a village setting formed from the two categories of chief in the village namely the *ali'i* and *tulafale*. The *ali'i* titles were sacred because they possessed links in the historical genealogies of Samoa which go back to *Tagaloa-a-lagi*.

Alii and *tulafale* had different roles in the government of villages. The role of the *alii* was to make the final decisions considering the advice of the *tulafale* who spoke for and issued orders from the *ali'i*.¹⁰⁸ There are different groups, to which all members of the village belong, according to their age, their sex, marital status and even family rank such as the

¹⁰⁷ Siaosi Tana, (1884), 113 (translation by the author).

¹⁰⁸ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 27.

*aoaluma*¹⁰⁹, and *aumaga*.¹¹⁰ This was the political structure of Samoa before the missionaries and the Europeans arrived. What ensued were the following changes in the political setting as Samoa engaged the ideas brought in by the foreigners.

Firstly, the establishment of churches in villages brought about a new-found respect for God and thus led to a re-structure in the village sphere. The pastor ultimately took the place of the *ali'i* as the most respected person in the community.¹¹¹ According to Meleisea:

*The sacred power of the old chiefs was transferred to the pastor who was given the chiefly address 'susuga'*¹¹²

The forming of the political government to rule Samoa on the other hand caused the Samoans to adopt the Western style electing leaders for the whole country. In the past the most important criterion for selection was the *tautua* or service rendered to the higher chief or title holders. The matai title was earned by services rendered by an untitled man to a high chief. If the chief is satisfied, the *tautua* will be rewarded by giving a matai title for him, however, this soon changed when the missionaries and Europeans introduced the democratic form of government. The voting system harnessed many problems for the Samoan people.

There emerged favouritism and propaganda in the selection of *matai*. Specifically, the matai was not elected from those who practiced *tautua*, but from those who possessed material wealth. Even now, Samoa has realized that changes are still taking place in the context concerning Christianity and politics.

¹⁰⁹ *Aoaluma* was the group to which all female members of the village were belonged. Women marrying into the village were excluded. Their responsibility was to look after the reception of guest in the village, and to be responsible for the beautification and cleanliness of the village. They were also to be responsible for the looking after of things of any malaga or visiting guest. - Malama Meleisea, (1987), 28.

¹¹⁰ *Aumaga* was the group where village men belonged, and they were always addressing as the *malosi o le nuu* (the strength of the village). They were the work force and the defense force of the village along with their wives. - Malama Meleisea, (1987), 28.

¹¹¹ Malama Meleisea, (1987), 68-69.

¹¹² Malama Meleisea, (1987), 69.

3.3 Is Samoa Still Faithful To The Malo Nafanua Prophesied

'Samoa is founded on God' (*Faavae i le Atua Samoa*) is the motto for the independent state of Samoa. It simply interprets that everything done in the country must be based on the respect for God. The motto reflects the respect of the Samoan to the deities and their dependency on a divine power and Samoans believed life to be controlled by the divine power.

When *Nafanua* prophesied the *Ao* of the *Malo* for *Malietoa* from heaven, *Malietoa* depended on the gods of the Samoans to give what he was told by the goddess. The *malo* for *Malietoa* and *Samoa* was not a *malo* dependent on military powers but a *malo* that ruled under Christian principles. Its foundation was placed inside the religious sphere with a new understanding of the God in heaven as the creator and sustainer of life. That is why *tapuaiga* or religion has become a part of life for *Samoans* in everyday life. *Tuisuga* affirms this by his argument about *Atua* who is honoured, worshipped, and respected in *Tapuaiga* as the fourth pillar for the Samoans social system. He writes:

... it is imprudent to ignore the role of *tapuaiga* in the life worlds of Samoans today. All Samoans are religious people in one way or another and they do have some sort of religious affiliation where they worship and gather in fellowship under the banners of spiritual nurture, formation and transformation. *Tapuaiga* was fundamental to the life of the Samoans in the past. It played an integral part in shaping and conditioning people behavioural patterns, attitudes, values, ethics, aspirations, visions and future life expectation... *Atua* and *tapuaiga* played the significant roles in the lives of the people, and its contributions towards the development of a nation strongly built on solid foundations of Christianity and the gospels.¹¹³

The *tapuaiga* or *tapuai* becomes the connection between the different levels of status in the structure of Samoa which never existed before. For example, in the past, only the chiefs would be sitting inside the house in every gathering of the village, but when the missionaries arrived with the new democratic form of worship and teaching, the other group of people in the village structure had a chance to worship and participate equally with the

¹¹³ Fa'alepo Aveau Tuisuga-le-taua, A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor Of Philosophy, *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa: A Hermeneutical Critical Analysis Of the Cultural-Theological Praxis of the Samoan Context*, (Melbourne: Melbourne College of Divinity, 2009), 95.

chiefs in the new *tapuaiga*.¹¹⁴ The new structuring of Samoa had now found consistency with what the Bible teaches.

The culture and the Gospel soon became reciprocal as there was a high respect for the culture by the church and vice versa because the Samoans believed that this was a *malo* that was given from the Divine deities for them.

Such changes imply one thing, and that is things do not remain the same. As the arrival of Christianity brought in many changes to the cultural nucleus and the way the Samoan people lived. Similarly, the use of modern technology and the impact of money became apparent. As Taufa'aiva predicted saying, "The peaceful kingdom will soon arrive, and it will be followed by the kingdom of clanging thing."¹¹⁵

Fauolo¹¹⁶ in the essence of Samoan spirituality interprets the peaceful kingdom as Christianity while he interprets the 'clanging things' as money. In this interpretation by Fauolo, we have realized that Taufa'aiva's prophecies have been fulfilled in the present-day context. We have seen a parallel in this transition from the peaceful kingdom to the clanging things, in the way the government of Samoa has seen changes in how it undertakes its roles and responsibilities. The peaceful kingdom has already been established but now the hour cometh for the kingdom of clanging things. Money and material wealth are now the most important things in the life of the people. The attraction of material wealth from foreigners and the access of people to the present technology was now a serious threat to the church. Church rules were not observed as before. A classic example is the observance of the Sabbath. Most villages throughout Samoa enforced compulsory church attendance on

¹¹⁴ Ronald James Crawford, thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, *The Lotu and the Faasamoa*, (New Zealand: University of Otago, Dunedin, 1977), 341-342.

¹¹⁵ Oka Fauolo, (2005), 18.

¹¹⁶ Oka Fauolo, (2005), 18.

Sunday. Violation of this rule resulted in punishment, because not only was it a violation of Samoan traditional rules but it was also a form of rejection of Gods sovereignty.¹¹⁷

The government always considered the advice from the church in the past, but nowadays the government seeks to prioritize the improvement in the life of the people in terms of wealth and money while paying little to no attention in the spiritual living of the country. The government considers good living and prosperity but cares less for the concerns of the church.

The debate over the establishment of a casino in Samoa in recent times was thought to see the government submit to the strong stance by the church over its condemnation of the casino. It was the idea of the Prime Minister Tuilaepa Malielegaoi to establish a Casino with his selling point to support the economy of the country.¹¹⁸ But the government side-stepped the issue by allowing only foreign passport holders to use the casino..

It is something totally against Christian ethics. The chairman of the Samoa Council of Churches (SCC) Reverend Elder Oka Fauolo did not support the Bill from the outset. He claimed that they expressed their views clearly in a meeting with the Prime Minister but it seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. To make matter worse for the SCC, the bill has now passed through the Parliament.¹¹⁹ The government is now making moves to begin the building of the casino. The government had thus failed to listen to the advice of the church.

According to some of the hotel owners in Samoa, they also stand together with the church in rejecting the building of a casino in the country. They believe that any benefits the casino may bring would be far outweighed by the harm to society they would surely cause.

¹¹⁷ Ronald James Crawford, thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, *The Lotu and the Faasamoa*, (New Zealand: University of Otago, Dunedin, 1977), 270.

¹¹⁸ Keni Lesa, "The Church Say No to the Casino", *Samoa Observer*, 16 September 2010, 1.

¹¹⁹ Keni Lesa, 2010, 1.

Prominent in this argument was Ms Mara Hunter¹²⁰. She said in her interview with the *Samoa Observer*, "I do not support the bill at all. In my experience this type of business will bring all sorts of social problems such as prostitution."¹²¹

Some of the Samoan residents also showed their rejection of the Casino. Shanna Sinei a resident of Vaitele told the *Samoa Observer*,

*The bill is not a good idea and I do not agree with it. It will ruin the lives of our people and especially the younger generations. Having casino here will introduce evil into our Christian lives.*¹²²

It is clear that we can see the concern of the Samoan people about the culture and the Christian lifestyle. The implications for having a casino seem to dwell more on the side of having a negative outcome. Bringing in other social issues such as prostitution would lead to further ramifications, and one can only see how disastrous this would be for a small island nation such as Samoa.

As such, my observations point to how blatant the Samoa Parliament was in not considering the effects and consequences of establishing a casino to the lives of its people. Prostitution and other sins like stealing and murder which are prohibited in the Bible will be seen as a common threat to the church. So, is Samoa still being faithful to Christianity as prophesied by Nafanua?

The government set out to find avenues to improve the economy of the country based on its current context; a context highly dependent on money for survival and better living. But the problem is the government must consider the advice of the church. With all the brains behind the running of the country, there are sure to be other kinds of business that may not be detrimental to the lives of its people. The government must remember its nation's motto: 'E

¹²⁰Owner of the Apia's Alaimoana Hotel

¹²¹Charlina Tone, "Hoteliers Differ on Casino Law", *Samoa Observer*, 25 October 2010, 1&3.

¹²²Rosalia Setefano, "Street Talk", *Samoa Observer*, 25 October 2010, 6.

faavae i le Atua Samoa'. The word *faavae* is very important. Not only must we do things based on Gods commands stipulated in the Bible, but we must also build upon His will. Anything that seeks to oppose the Lord should not be a part of Samoa.

3.4 Biblical Perspective

*"If you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments that I have set before you then I will cut Israel out of my sight"*¹²³

These are the direct words of the Lord to his servant King Solomon. It is a covenant between God and mankind. Israel is required to keep the covenant in order that they avoid punishment. When applied to our current context in Samoa, the church is to act on behalf of God to provide the advice to the state concerning things that are needed to be corrected and things that are needed to be avoided in the country. The *malo* from heaven prophesied by our own prophetess Nafanua was realized when Christianity reached our shores, the *malo* that changed our old culture to a new culture shaped by Christianity.

Solomon disobeys the covenant with God (1Kings 11: 1-13) when his heart follows the desires of his wife to worship her gods and not the Lord God of Israel. The Lord's anger was upon Solomon resulting in the dividing of the kingdom of Israel (1Kings 11: 1-20) and ultimately leading to the nation's exile.

Such blunt stubbornness to the prophetic voice concerns me, particularly with what the state has now done. They paid no attention to the voice of the church about matters that affected Christian lives. They left the motto "*E faavae i le Atua Samoa*" aside and prompted their own decision without relying on the Church for a prophetic voice. Furthermore, we see the influence of the Chinese in the country and who knows if this is the beginning of another big change in the future. We tend to fall into the weakness of placing emphasis on money,

¹²³ The Holy Bible, *New Revised Standard Version*, - (1Kings 9 part of verse 6&7)

wealth and better living neglecting the will of the Head of the Church, by not respecting the teaching of the gospel and allowing things that bring in devastation to the lives of Christian Samoans.

Without sounding all anti-government, the church could also pay attention to the positive aspects of the casino as it may prove instrumental in the development of the country in terms of the nation's economy and the creation of job opportunities. Those opportunities can be used by other church members to earn income for their families and thus supporting the church. What the church should then do is to strongly educate its members of the consequences of this kind of business so that they are aware of the negative implications and consequences. The government also must do everything to make sure the spiritual lives of the country are not compromised. Villages must promote the Christianization of the authority held by its *matai* ensuring Christian values and principles are emphasized and uphold at all times.

There is a Samoan proverb saying, "*E sili le puipuia nai le tautogafitia*" (prevention is better than cure). I believe that because we are founded on God, it is better to adhere to our foundation. Carry out God's will is essential because Samoa is founded upon the Christian God; the God Nafanua prophesied to Malietoa. *Ia tali i lagi se ao o lou malo* was the prophecy for Christianity and thus all authority on earth must be based upon Christianity.

CONCLUSION

This work has been an attempt to find out whether Samoan politics, economics, sociology, and indeed its religious realm still acknowledged the church in its decision-making and whether or not Samoa is still faithful to its motto: *E fa'avae i le Atua Samoa* (Samoa is founded on God) – the authority endowed by the supreme God of Christianity. The arrival of Christianity in Samoa did not happen by chance. There may be a slight discrepancy in the

modern technology. The prioritizing of good living caused the Samoan government to pursue more money for the development of projects. The issue at hand is not the pursuit of money. The issue is that more than likely, the government is compromising the spiritual life of the country for money. The government members are all church members, but they turned away from the advice of the church with regards to many things that identify the social fabric of the country.

The underlying argument therefore is that the church was in fact prophesied by our own local prophetess and received by the Malietoa. It was the *ao* for the Samoan people from heaven and it needed to be obeyed. The onus therefore is on the Samoan government to uphold its historical foundations, for these were the very foundations on which the Samoan government was built. The Bible is full of teachings of the dangers of disobeying God's will and such is my concern for the Samoan government. *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* should not be reduced to a bunch of words stashed away at the bottom of the Samoan coat of arms, but it should form as the core of Samoan values; the mission statement of Samoa's political face; and the nexus of Samoa's chronology from past to present to the future.

APPENDIX 1

List of Interviews

1. Kini, Ulu Vaomalo Ulu, (High chief, Tiakono Toeaina EFKS, Toamua)

Personal interview with author at his resident at Puipaa, 20 May 2011

2. Lafolafoga Malotau, (MTC student)

Personal interview with the author at the Malua Theological College campus, 19 April 2011

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONS OF THE INTERVIEW

1. *O le a sou silafia i le tala i a Nafanua?*

What is your understanding of the story of Nafanua?

2. *O le a sou silafia i le perofetaga a Nafanua, "Tali i lagi se Ao o lou Malo" o le a lona uiga, ao fea foi o loo faatatau i ai le Ao ma le Malo o loo ia taua?*

What is your understanding of the prophecy of Nafanua, "Tali i lagi se Ao o lou Malo" and what is its meaning, and where does the 'Ao' and the 'Malo' refers to?

3. *O le a sou silafia faaSamoa i perofetaga po o perofeta foi i le tatou atumuu (Samoa) i aso ua mavae ma lenei foi taimi?*

What is your knowledge of the Samoan Culture 'fa'aSamoa' in terms of prophecies or the prophets of our nation in the past and also in modern day Samoa?

4. *O a ni suiga o le olaga fa'aKerisiano I le taimi nei I Samoa pe a fa'atusatusa I le taimi ua tuana'i I le fa'atoa o'o mai o le Talalelei?*

What are some of the changes in the Christian life of Samoa in comparison with those of its earlier times?

5. *O le ā sau vaaiga lautele i le tulaga o le Pule (authority) fa'aSamoa i le vaaiga lautele i le fa'alemu'u, fa'aleaiga, ma le fa'alemalo?*

What is your overall perspective or opinion in terms of the Samoan authority from a community, domestic and political viewpoint?

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