

**A HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAMOA
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

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ABSTRACT

After World War II, Samoans from the territory of Eastern Samoa began to migrate to the United States in search of better life opportunities. Being far away from home, their people and culture, there arose the need to conserve their identity – Samoans. For such, they came together as a community and decided to establish the first Samoan Church at San Diego, California under the umbrella of the LMS (later became the CCCS). Their perseverance and dedication led to the expansion of the CCCS in the US despite the challenges they faced. This thesis focuses on the origin and the establishment of the first CCCS in San Diego. Their remarkable story reflects their faith and attitude towards serving God and it remains an inspiration for generations to come.

DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

Signed:

Date:

DEDICATION

To my wife

Cynthia Lauauga Faletagaloa,

To my daughter

Sia Miracle Faletagaloa,

To my Mother

Fitiuta Luapo Tavita,

To my Beloved Father

Faletagaloa Luapo Fepulea'i Tavita,

To my spiritual father and church

Rev. Andrew Leavasa and the EFKS Vai o le Ola Church

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCCS	Congregational Christian Church of Samoa
LMS	London Missionary Society
SCCC	Samoaan Congregational Christian Church
US	United States
USA	United States of America

INTRODUCTION

The arrival of Christianity in Samoa in 1830 brought dramatic changes in the lives of the Samoan people immediately thereafter.¹ Their culture and new found knowledge about God materialized through their everyday lives. The merging of the *faa-Samoa* and Christianity formed a two-fold identity for the Samoans.

The main reason why Samoans migrated overseas to New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America was to seek employment opportunities to better provide for their families. However, the search for such wealth came with new problems because they found themselves isolated from their country and friends. The number of Samoan migrants grew in each town they resided in, yet there was still a void in the life of the Samoan; thus as they were entrenched in building their families, so too came the desire to build Churches that could provide the same atmosphere that they experienced in Samoa.

This thesis focuses on the history of the origin and the development of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in the United States of America. I will look specifically at San Diego, California and its relationship with the Church in Moanalua, Hawaii where it grew out from. The dedication and the sacrifices of those who paved the way from the beginning have resulted in the formation of a CCCS district in the United States of America.

The establishment and development of the CCCS San Diego church has not been well documented in the past, but sources such as the *Sulu Samoa*² has provided copies of original letters from the San Diego church to the CCCS centre office in Samoa, has been obtained to document the development and progression of the CCCS in San Diego.

¹ John Williams, *Missionary Enterprises*, (London: Paternoster Row, 1837), 110

² The LMS Samoa Church official magazine since 1839.

Also, the US Navy documents at the American Samoa History Archive files have provided information about the influence and impact of the US military upon the Samoans and their migration towards the United States.

Chapter One focuses primarily on the impact of Christianity that helped form the two-fold identity of a Samoan migrant before leaving Samoa for the USA. The mindset and attitude of the Samoan migrants from this two-fold identity became a major factor in their determination to establish Samoan migrant Churches, as will be highlighted and discussed.

The second part of this chapter focuses on the influence and impact of the US Navy on the people of Samoa during their military missions in the Pacific before World War II. Samoa's economical changes and growth will also be discussed and analysed together with the new opportunities that were presented to the people, giving birth to the idea of migration.

The last part of chapter one will look into the establishment of the (*fitafita*) Guard and its impacts on Samoa's political, social and economical state during this period. New opportunities that were offered by the US military for the people and the impact on the village level will be examined and discussed.

Chapter Two focuses on the Samoan migration to Hawaii and the Church expansion beyond Samoa. The motives for migration to Hawaii will be discussed as well as the struggles they experienced in this new environment. The origin and the development of the CCCS church in Moanalua with the key figures that played important roles in the establishment of a new Samoan Church in the US will also be analyzed.

The latter part of chapter two focuses on the controversy over the selection of the minister for the Moanalua Church and the decision by the Elders from the LMS. The

ramifications of the decision by the Elders Committee during this controversy will be analyzed in conjunction with the subsequent decision of other Samoans to migrate from Hawaii to the continental USA.

Chapter Three focuses on the establishment of the Church in San Diego and its relationship with the US Navy. The establishment and development of a CCCS Church in San Diego and the need for expansion after a few years will be explained and thoroughly discussed. The issue of its location and the struggle to accommodate state and federal laws without interfering with US Naval policies and the first worship service in San Diego will be explained.

The last part of the chapter critically analyzes the historical expansion of the CCCS Church in the United States of America, its impacts and challenges, issues and controversies. The conclusion will look into the overall effect of the establishment of the San Diego Church and its impact on the Samoan communities throughout the United States of America.

The methodology use in the writing of this paper includes primary sources, written statements and interviews by members of the San Diego Church, Church newsletters, official minutes of the CCCS General Assemblies and Committee, copies of the official correspondence letters between the ministers' of the Moanalua and the San Diego Churches and the CCCS Elders committee.

CHAPTER 1

SAMOAN IDENTITY

1.1. Introduction

Samoa's culture, beliefs, practices and social structures were profoundly affected by the arrival of John Williams and the missionaries in 1830.³ It was the dawn of a new era for the Samoans as the ideals of Western civilization infiltrated Samoan culture and thought patterns through the influences of the missionaries. With the penetration of the Western ideals and Christian values into the *faa-Samoa*, a new and dynamic two-fold identity began to evolve for the Samoan people. An identity based on the *faa-Samoa* and Christianity.

Their traditional ways and beliefs were modified with regards with Christian values and norms. What used to be normal practices within societies and communities were either banned or toned down because of the missionaries' influences. The impact of these changes brought by the missionaries rapidly transformed Samoan society into a new and modern way of thinking and behaving. European concept about a single deity led the Samoans to question the validity of their traditional beliefs that was passed on from generation to generation.

1.2 Fa'a-Samoa and Christianity: The Two Fold Identity

³ John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, (London: John Snow, 35, Paternoster Row, 1840), p. 327-358. The LMS official date of arrival in Samoa is dated August of 1830. K T Faleto'ese, *O le Tala Fa'asolopito o le Ekalesia Samoa (LMS)*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1959), p. 10-11. Faleto'ese notes that Williams and the missionaries arrived at Sapapali'i, Savai'i on 21 August 1830. But Williams stayed on board until the 24th of August when he went ashore and met with Malietoa Vainu'upo. R J Crawford, *The Lotu and the Fa'a-Samoa*, (Ph.D) Thesis, New Zealand: University of Otago, Feb, 1977), p. 68-71. Crawford asserts that Mosese Nusitoga had been to Tonga and he began a Tongan Lotu before John Williams' arrival. He also states that Peter Turner confirmed that the Wesleyan missionaries arrived before 1830, but did not commence teaching until later. Lowell D. Holmes, *Samoa Village*, (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc, 1974), p. 12. Lowell states that the first missionaries to arrive in Samoa were the two Wesleyan teachers in 1928 that stayed at Manono.

1.2.1 *Fa'a-Samoa and Samoan Religion prior to Arrival of Christianity*

The Samoans worshipped many gods before the arrival of Christianity. They also believed that the gods and the spirits (of their deceased relatives) have an effect on human activities. Tradition holds that there were two forms of gods: those who have non-human origin, *atua*, and those of human origin, *aitu*.⁴

The *atua* was considered superior and the creator of all things, while the other gods including the *aitu* were seen as part men and part god. The *aitu* was considered inferior and could transform itself into any animal such as a bird, a fish, or a plant, an insect or even in a form of a person. Examples of *aitu* in Samoan history include great warriors such as Nafanua (a war goddess from Savai'i), Tamafaiga (a ruthless warrior from Manono), and O le Fe'e (who had the form of an octopus and was given annual celebration by the A'ana district). These *aitu* were worshipped as gods.⁵

People believed that both the *atuas* and *aitus* were great because they held supernatural powers. These gods were admired and worshiped by the people. They believed that these gods could empower and bring good luck during wars between districts and villages.⁶ These gods greatly influenced the Samoan people's tradition and beliefs.

Samoans also believed that the dead could still exist after death and return among the living as a spirit or *aitu*. They also believed that the *aitu* could influence the activities of the living. They believed in a concept of the dead either going to heaven or

⁴ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, (Apia: University of the South Pacific, 1987), p. 36-37. J B Stairs, *Jottings on the Mythology and Spirit-lore of Old Samoa*, (The Journal of the Polynesian Society), vol. 5, 1896, p. 33-37

⁵ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga...*, p. 35. Brother Fred Henry, *Samoa: An Early History*, Revised by Tofa Pula, Nikolao I, Tuiteleapaga, (Hawaii: Creative Printers, 1980), p. 83-84. George Pratt, *Folk songs and Myths from Samoa*, (Royal Society of New South Wales Journal), vol. 6, 1891, p. 203

⁶ K. T. Faleto'ese, *Tala Fa'asolopito o le Ekalesia Samoa (L.M.S.)*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press), 1959, p. 6-8. Note: Information from K T Faleto'ese's book was written in Samoan and was translated in English by the writer.

to Pulu (an underworld place) in which the spirits were kept but can be invoked only by spirit mediums which were usually relatives of the deceased.⁷

The people believed that these gods brought sickness and harm as well as blessings to them. Therefore people were careful of their actions because they did not want these spirits to interfere with their daily lives. These gods were greatly respected and feared by the people not only in districts and villages but also in the family circles.⁸

1.3 Impact of Christianity upon Samoa

1.3.1 *The Impact of Christianity on the Fa'a-Samoa*

Christianity is defined as the religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible as a sacred scripture.⁹ Christianity upholds a high moral and ethical standard by which all Christians live by. They believe that a person can be resurrected from the dead by Jesus Christ at the end of times through believing and having faith in Him as their Lord and Saviour.

The *faa-Samoa* can be defined as the way the Samoan people act and live that makes them distinct from any other people. Their social and religious structures form and shape their beliefs and culture. It is reflected by their everyday cycle of life within each community through their actions and interactions with one another.

The first example of how Christianity impacted the *faa-Samoa* was through the Samoan perception of life after death. The Samoans believed that all souls of the dead were gathered in a place called *Pulu* in Savai'i. There were two separate places in

⁷ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga...*, p. 36-45

⁸ Unasa Leulu Felise Va'a, *Samoa National Human Development Report 2006: The Fa'a-Samoa*, (Apia: Centre for Samoan Studies, 2006), p. 125. Data was gathered through an article written by Associated Professor Unasa Leulu Felise Va'a, Centre for Samoan Studies at the National University of Samoa. Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco Theology: Aiga - The Household of Life. "A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa"*. (Erlangen: Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 2000), p. 60

⁹ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed. (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1999), p. 203

Pulotu, one is reserved for the chiefs, who was called “*Lualotoali’i*” and the other for the common people called “*Lualototufanua*”. The chiefs’ souls were transported to its destination by a boat called the “*Va’alua*”. The entrance to *Pulotu* was guarded by an *aitu* named Leosia.¹⁰

The teachings by the missionaries changed the way Samoans viewed life after death. Their perspective about the after-life experience was changed to a Christian view in which Jesus has the sole authority over life itself. There was still a place for the saved and the unsaved. Heaven was considered a final destination for the faithful and Hell as the place for the unfaithful.

The second example of the Christian impact on the *faa*-Samoa was seen in war tactics. War between faction groups not only devastated many lives in the past but it also ruined many properties. The acceptance of Christianity by Malietoa Vainu’upo was the beginning of a peaceful time for the Samoan people. Though there were wars between the faction groups later, they were however, less violent than before. The cruel punishment by the victorious party of their enemy during times of war, such as the burning of their victims alive, was no longer exercised.¹¹

Christianity also impacted Samoan social practices such as polygamy. Polygamy was practiced mostly by the high ranking chiefs before the missionaries arrived. It was part of aligning oneself with other respected families and a part of the Samoan ideology. The missionaries taught the Samoan people about the bible and how such immoral

¹⁰ Brother Fred Henry, *Samoa: An Early History...*, p. 15-16

¹¹ John Williams, *A Narrative of the Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, p. 327-358. Sylvia Masterman, *An Outline of Samoan History*, (Apia: Reprinted by Commercial Printers Limited, 1980), p. 15. Masterman writes on how the victims of war were captured and burned in a huge fire that was kept alight for days while the victims were hunted down and thrown in. Plantations and villages were burned to the ground. This could have been one of the fires that John Williams referred to seeing the smoke on the mountain top while talking with Malietoa Vainu’upo when they first met. Felela Fred Henry, *Tala Fa’asolopito o Samoa*, Translated by K T Faletose, (Apia: Commercial Printers, 1980), p. 128-129. According to Fred Henry’s account, a huge pit was dug at Fasito’otai and they called it ‘*Tito*’. A large fire was kept alight for weeks and the women, men and children of A’ana were captured and were thrown into the fire alive.

behaviour is considered indecent according to Christian values. There were stricter rules for sex and marriages though the people found this hard to follow but eventually they acknowledged it.¹²

Samoan traditional practices such *poula* and tattooing was also impacted by Christianity. Traditional practices such as *poula* in which people get together to socialise in the evenings was seen by the missionaries as a lascivious dance. The dances were viewed by the missionaries as a sexual expression of human nature. It was understood to promote casual sexual activities. Therefore it was banned by the missionaries.¹³

Tattooing has been part of the Samoan cultures for years. When a young man receives a tattoo it signifies the transformation from boyhood to manhood and he is ready to serve his community. Samoan tattooing is different from the other Pacific Island tattoos and it is considered unique by many worldwide. However, it was seen as a barbaric and uncivilised act by the missionaries and it was banned because it involved the spilling of blood.¹⁴

Christianity also impacted Samoans through education. Educational impact further brought in Western thought and an influx of Western materials. The missionaries introduced the Samoan alphabet, reading and writing became part of not only children's curriculum but for adults also. The establishment of the printing press at Falelatai in 1839 provided the Samoan people with reading materials that inspired many to become literate.¹⁵

¹² Nove S. Fuala'au, *Theology of Migration*, (Suva: Pacific Theological College BD Thesis), 1988. p. 4

¹³ R J Crawford, (Ph.d. Thesis), *The Lotu and the Fa'a-Samoa*, New Zealand: University of Otago, 1977, p. 53. Latu Latai, (BD Thesis), *Samoan Enlightenment: An Interpretation of Modern Samoa*, Malua Theological College, Oct. 2003, p. 38

¹⁴ Latu Latai, *Samoan Enlightenment...*, p. 38. Martin Dyson, *Samoa and the Samoans*, (Victoria Review), vol. 6, 1882, p. 299-311

¹⁵ Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2005), p. 71-74

Furthermore, the establishment of the Malua Theological College in 1844 intensified another important influence of the missionaries upon the Samoan people. Education became an essential part of learning and it added general education with theological training. It produced the first elite group of educated men and women who gave lifelong services to the church to become pastors not only in Samoa but overseas.¹⁶

Pastors took pride in their superior education and many of them made sure that their children, in turn, should share the same advantage. The Church provided an aristocracy of education to the Samoan social structure. From pastor's family came not only future pastors and school teachers but government clerks, secretaries and wives of many important chiefs.¹⁷

The establishment of Papauta School in 1892 gave women opportunities to excel in secular education and other fields such as basic medical care and caring better for the children. By 1930 women from Papauta were hired by the government to help care for the patients at the hospital at Moto'otua. They became like guardian angels for the public serving and assisting the government through their work.¹⁸

Another impact Christianity had on Samoans was seen through the importance of parishes in each village. The pastor was seen as a father figure in the village community, trusted and honoured according to his position as a representative of God.¹⁹ Christian impact upon Samoans is also seen in clothing attire and the importance of good hygiene.²⁰

¹⁶ J W Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 37. Note: Graduates from the Malua Theological College are pastoring Churches outside of Samoa such as in New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii and the USA.

¹⁷ J W Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa...*, p. 38

¹⁸ K T Faleto'ese, *Tala Fa'asolopito o le Ekalesia Samoa (LMS)...*, p. 41-42. Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i...*, p. 697-701

¹⁹ Levesi Afutiti, *The Pacific Journal of Theology: Samoan Church and the Church Diaspora*, (Suva: South Pacific Association of Theological Studies, Series II No. 16, 1996), p. 15

²⁰ J W Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa...*, p. 37

In the Samoan culture, a *matai* title is believed to be God-given because of its divine origin. They are respected members of families and villages who are given the responsibilities of being leaders in communities. They are given the authority to exercise justice, truth and equity for the people to live in harmony. The *faiifeau* on the other hand is perceived to be a man of God. The minister is seen as a buffer between the people and God.²¹

The development of individual responsibility both between the *faiifeau* and the church and the *matai* and his household was central to the Samoan idea of religion. This community effort by the people helped sustain unity and security within the churches because the village leaders were the church leaders. Church became an integral part of Samoan life and inseparable from their culture. The Samoan communal way of life was reflected by their giving and supporting of the church without hesitation.²²

1.4. Changes: Samoan Identity Evolving

By the late 19th century the LMS mission in Samoa can be described as a success because in a very short time an ample conversion happened and the whole country was Christianized. Christianity was embraced within the context of the people and the pattern of their life. Traditions were moulded around Christian values. Church and culture became inseparable ever since. Orators' use of biblical allusions in their cultural speeches is one of the examples of these changes.²³

Though there were still a few that reverted to their old ways of religion, the majority of the people converted to Christianity. Religious thought and practices permeated every aspect of Samoan life. The Samoan culture and their new found

²¹ Unasa Leulu Felise Va'a, *SNHD Report...*, p. 115-118

²² J W Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa...*, p. 37-38

²³ Levesi Afutiti, *The Pacific Journal of Theology...*, p. 15

religious belief became a way of life and it helped form a new identity in which Samoans soon carried with them throughout their lives.²⁴

Perhaps the best example of their eagerness and determination for wanting to serve God is when many volunteered for the LMS missions throughout the Pacific in the late 19th century. They not only took the gospel to other remote parts of the Pacific but they also influenced those parts of the Pacific with their own culture. They were devoted to God and they were willing to sacrifice their own lives to save others. The LMS saw an advantage of having the Samoans as forerunners for the white missionaries and were deployed more often for mission work until the early 1970's.²⁵

1.5 Conclusion

Christianity gave the Samoan people a different worldview about religion. Instead of worshiping several gods they embraced and accepted the missionaries' concept of a single sovereign God. Religion and culture were interwoven and were inseparable in the Samoan viewpoint. Their new found faith in a single deity had great impacts on the Samoan mythological and traditional views. Old gods were no longer sufficient to make sense of the world and to deal with changes.

These prolific changes gave rise to a two-fold identity reflected through the combination of Christianity and Samoan people's social and cultural applications embedded in the *faa-Samoa*. Stories and myths about their past still exist as a reminder of who they were and how they came to exist. However, by embracing their new religious belief, they no longer saw themselves as just Samoans alone per se, but as Samoan Christians in all aspects of their lives. It is this two-fold identity that they take

²⁴ R J Crawford, (Ph.D. Thesis), *The Lotu and the Fa'a-Samoa...*, p. 63

²⁵ Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i...*, p.81-114

with them everywhere which became the roots of their identity as they migrate from Samoa to other foreign lands.

CHAPTER TWO

Relationship between Samoa and the Americans

2.1 Introduction

The competition between the European countries for wealth and power spilled over into the Pacific in the early 15th century. Traders and crewmen looking for better trading routes crossed the Pacific but had little interest about the islands. Reports about the Pacific described as paradise by these explorers that reached Europe caused missionaries and traders to leave for the Pacific.

Their contact with the Samoan people became a starting point for developing an economic system that is based on trading and capitalism. Manufactured and material goods they brought got the attention and the interest of the Samoan people. As they settled in Samoa, their way of life influenced many, especially their interest for obtaining wealth.

The American influence became the impetus by which the Samoans began to seek after wealth. At the same time the Church was having difficulties with a decline of morality and church attendance by the people. By the end of the Second World War after the US military personnel left, the Samoans were eager to migrate for the purposes of education and wealth.¹

2.2 Foreign Influence on Samoa prior to World War II

Britain became the leading super power in Europe because of the Industrial Revolution in the early 18th century. Its interest in the Pacific was mainly for importing of cheap raw materials for industrial manufacturing. They depended heavily on labour trading to provide the human capital to produce these raw materials and work the plantations they had on various Island territories. Their involvement with Samoa was

¹ Featuna'i Ben Liua'ana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004), p.278

strictly for trade and in reference to the LMS mission, they served as protectorate.² Like France for the Catholic, Britain protected the interest of the Protestant mission and other British residents in Samoa from England.³

The USA, a newly established nation that gained their independence from the British in 1776 had no interest in colonising but was focused on expanding their trading routes throughout the South Pacific. The Americans dominated the China tea trade and whaling. They were more concerned about protecting their commercial fleets and providing a safe refuelling place for their ships in the Pacific.⁴

Germany had only become a nation in the 1800s and it was eager to acquire new colonies and expand their trading in the Pacific. By 1870, Apia became the centre for German commercial interest. Large plantations of copra for import to supply the demand for oil, soap, candles and other products in Europe were established in Samoa.⁵

German plantations in Samoa produced profitable gains. The need for more labourers to help operate these plantations led to a disagreement with the British in 1880 over the recruitment of labourers. The confrontation reached its peak when Britain demanded a mandate over the islands, which drew warships from the Germans, British and the Americans in 1888. The hostility between the three Powers ended when a hurricane hit Samoa on 16 March destroying six of the warships.⁶

It led to an agreement by Britain, Germany and the Americans on 2 December 1899 in Washington. Germany was given (Western) Samoa (Upolu and Savai'i) to rule as a colony. The United States annexed Eastern Samoa (Tutuila and Manu'a) and

² Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga ...*, p. 47-48

³ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga ...*, p. 46-47

⁴ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga ...*, p. 48

⁵ Sylvia Masterman, *An Outline of Samoa History...*, p. 55

⁶ Sylvia Masterman, *An Outline of Samoa History...*, p. 33-34. Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga...*, p. 49. According to Meleisea, the Germans cruel way of kidnapping and forcing people from islands such as Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to become plantation laborers was causing the locals to take revenge on the European traders and missionaries by killing them.

Britain gave up the rights to claim Samoa in exchange for rights in Vanuatu and New Guinea.⁷

2.3 Establishment of the *Fita Fita* Guard

A US Navy Lieutenant Charles Wilkes and an expedition team were sent by the US Congress to locate and map each island harbour in 1839. Their report about the deep harbour of Pago Pago got the attention of the US government. It led to a treaty agreement with the island of Tutuila in 1899 and by 1900, Tutuila and Manu'a became known as American Samoa and are US Territories. A naval and a coaling station⁸ were built in Pago Pago and it provided people with employment opportunities. Commander Benjamin Tilley of the US Navy created a government consisting of only two institutions, the judicial and the *fita fita* guards.⁹

The *fita fita* guard was established in 1900 to maintain order and enforce court decisions with the goal of attracting the elite young Samoan men and thus bring them under the influence of the government. In the 1920's and 1930's, getting employed by the naval administration brought a great deal of prestige to the guardsmen. It was an important source of income for themselves and their families.¹⁰

By February 1941, *fita fita* guard grew to about five hundred members. They were trained in military techniques and were required by the Navy to teach and train civilians the military techniques they learned. The First Samoan Battalion Marine Corp Reserve was formed three months later and more young men from Tutuila were eager to

⁷ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga...*, p. 49. Featuna'i Ben Liua'ana, *Samoa Tula'i...*, p. 25-26

⁸ See Appendix 1 & 2

⁹ J A C Gray, *Amerika Samoa and its United States Naval Administration*, (Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1960), p. 105. Robert W. Franco, *The Pacific Theatre: Island Representation of World War II*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1980), p. 376. Lowell D. Holmes, *Samoan Village...*, p. 105. Ron Crocombe, *The Pacific Islands and the USA...*, p. 209

¹⁰ Robert W. Franco, *The Pacific Theater...*, p. 373

join the military. These two groups gave great support to the US government when the Second World War broke out in 1941.¹¹

Contacts with the US military forces had a great impact on the people. Not only did they gain knowledge working alongside the soldiers, but they were able to use the skills they acquired, later in their respective fields of expertise. Some were hired as heavy machine operators, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, surveyors, welders, draftsmen, and foremen. The people were able to use these skills to help the government and others after the US Marines mission at Tutuila ended on March 1, 1944.¹²

Employment opportunities motivated a large scale of people from Western Samoa to migrate to Pago Pago from 1940 to 1950. The rapid population growth in Pago Pago was due to the presence of the US military. Tutuila became one of the most prosperous islands in the Pacific at the time until the Marines pulled out on 1 March 1944 and the Navy took over until 1951 when the Department of Interior took sole responsibility of the territory.¹³

2.4 Impact of World War II: More Opportunities (1941 – 1945)

2.4.1 Impact on Western Samoa

The contact with the American military soldiers gave the Samoans a world view of unlimited quantity of consumer goods and cash flow they had never seen before. According to Michael Field, by the middle of 1942 the Marines outnumbered the locals on the island of Upolu itself. The Americans arrived in force and in style. Their presence had a great impact not only on the economy but also the church.¹⁴

¹¹ Robert W. Franco, *The Pacific Theater...*, p. 376

¹² Robert W. Franco, *The Pacific Theater...*, p. 377

¹³ Robert W. Franco, *The Pacific Theater...*, p. 378. Ron Crocombe, *The Pacific Islands and the USA...*, p. 109

A decline in Church attendance and morality was due to the marine's presence. Many Samoan women were attracted to join the Saturday night dances they held at the Taulaga Meleke by Magia. The Samoan women from nearby villages and far away districts crowded the Apia area on the weekends to hang out with the marines. They were influenced by a lifestyle of smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. It led to relationships between the Samoan women and the marines.¹⁵

The US military occupation of Western Samoa in anticipation of a Japanese attack on the island boosted their economy. Major construction projects such as roads, bunkers, hospitals and an airstrip provided thousands of jobs for the people. Many opened up businesses and services to cater for the soldiers needs. For example, Aggie Grey's restaurant at Apia opened 24 hours selling hamburgers as a taste of American food for soldiers.¹⁶

Laundry services for the troops were provided by women and children. Labourers learned new skills in various trades as well as gaining knowledge about working in different fields. Unfortunately, this all came to an end in 1943 when the Americans pulled out of Samoa. This led directly to the establishment of the Samoan migration network to the US and other parts of the world. Samoans refused to go back to plantations and sufficient lifestyle.¹⁷

Materialism and better education became the driving force behind the migration of the people. The traditional ways of providing for a family were neglected because of the influence by the marines. They were aware of a bigger world that could provide an

¹⁴ Michael J Field, *MAU: Samoa's Struggle Against New Zealand Oppression*, (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed LTD, 1984), p. 219

¹⁵ Featuna'i Ben Liua'ana, *Samoa Tula'i...*, p. 275-277. Note: Taulaga Meleke was a name given to a camp that was located at Magia by the airstrip at Faleolo where US marines were stationed.

¹⁶ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga...*, p. 143

¹⁷ Robert W. Franco, *The Pacific Theatre...*, p. 385

unlimited amount of goods and wealth. Hence, migration became the preferred solution for them.

2.4.2 Impact on Tutuila

In Tutuila the Navy moved the *fita fita* guards and their dependents to Hawaii in 1951 after the Department of Interior took over the administration. This decision by the US government was the most significant factor in the declination of Tutuila's economy. People were learnt new skills at the vocational skills school set up by the Navy in 1946. With the experience gained and exposure at working together with the soldiers during war time the Samoan perception of overseas labour force opportunities were shaped and formed.¹⁸

The concept of migration was also stirred up by the declining job market and other unfavourable conditions on the island. A deep recession gradually took over because of high winds that ruined many Samoan crops. A strike by the shipping companies in the US at the time completely cut off all imports and exports. Over population due to a great number of immigrants from Western Samoa seeking employment in Tutuila created a land shortage. These conditions and the widespread of unemployment contributed to the migration of the Samoan people overseas.¹⁹

2.5. Earliest Migrants

There are no official records of the first Samoan immigrants overseas. But the Samoans had constant contacts with Europeans and Americans in the 1800s. Some joined as sailors, others as entertainers, and adventurers. Leulu states that the first

¹⁸ Leulu Felise Va'a. *Samoan Migration*, (Doctor of Philosophy Thesis: Australian National University, 1975), p. 53

¹⁹ Gordon R. Lewthwaite, *From Polynesia to California: Samoan Migration and its Sequel*, (Journal of the Pacific, vol. 8. 1973), p. 133-155

migration group overseas to Hawaii came from these three groups. By 1920 some settled down in Hawaii seeking employment and better education.²⁰

The Pacific island newspaper on 15 March 1939 reported an increasing number of Samoans settling in Auckland, and a smaller group in Wellington, New Zealand seeking employment.²¹

2.5.1 Difficulties the Migrants Experienced

The migrants settled in Hawaii, faced many problems. Unlike Samoa where they lived on their own land freely they also found out that the cost of living could be a burden if the income is insufficient. Special skills and experience were needed to obtain a good paying job but most did not have either. Most Samoans took any job that was offered to them just to ease the financial burden. Luckily, others who had the necessary skills were fortunate to get employment with the government and other employers for higher salary.²²

A Mormon community in Laie, Hawaii provided jobs for some of the immigrants. Others applied for jobs at the pineapple plantations, canneries, construction companies, and lumber yards and at the Pearl Harbour Naval yard. These migrants shared information with each other creating a network that helped locate employments and housings that were available for themselves and their families.²³

²⁰ Leulu Felise Va'a, *Samoan Migration*, (Ph.D. Thesis)..., p. 54

²¹ Gordon R. Lewthwaite, Christiane Mainzer and Patrick J. Holland, *From Polynesia to California...*, p.133-155. Robert W. Franco, *The Pacific Theatre...*, p. 376. Lowell D. Holmes, *Samoan Village*, p. 105. Note: A newspaper article by the *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, Friday, Aug. 1, 1952 reports the arrival of the USS Jackson in Hawaii with about 921 Samoans on board, (American Samoa Government Department of Archive, Tafuna: American Samoa)

²² American Samoa Government Department of Archive, Tafuna: American Samoa, *The Honolulu Star Bulletin*, September 27, 1952 issue. An article that appeared on the *Honolulu Star Bulletin Newspaper* on the report by the Director of Territorial Employment Services for American Samoa at the time name Leigh E. Stevens reported on the progress of trying to help the Samoan migrants find employment in Hawaii.

Adaptation to a new multi-cultural environment posed additional problem for the Samoan migrants. Not only were they surrounded by multi-ethnic groups, but they were also surrounded by multi-denominational religious groups. Many, less than fluent in English, they preferred to speak Samoan. This made it hard for the Samoans to fit into their new environment, thus proposed the idea of implementing their Samoan ways and practices to their new foreign homes. The Samoans formed small niche communities throughout the places they migrated to and from there, they began to build churches as a way to unite the Samoans and make them feel at home away from home.

2.6 Conclusion

The US government granted permission for the Samoans to seek education and employment opportunities overseas. They took advantage of the opportunity that was given them and they left behind their families, friends and villages. They took their culture and beliefs along in their quest for a better life. Throughout their journey they never lost sense of their two-fold identity and their love for the country that was so dear to them.

They came together as one and established Churches like the ones back home to provide the people with the same sense of environment they were used to. Their sense of nationalism and willingness to cater for their people paved the way for the expansion of the LMS Church in Hawaii. They were determined to look beyond any obstacles they would encounter for the people to unite and worship God the way they were used to back home. Though they were thousands of miles away from their homeland, the Church gave them that feeling of being at home.

²³ Gordon R. Lewthwaite, Christiane Mainzer and Patrick J. Holland, *From Polynesia to California...*, p.143-148. Va,a Leulu Felise, (Ph.D Thesis)..., p. 54

CHAPTER THREE

Origins of the LMS Church in Moanalua, Hawaii

3.1 Introduction

The *fitafita* guardsmen and their spouses who settled in Hawaii in the early 1950s started the first LMS Samoan Church in Hawaii. Their determination and vision of having a place where they can worship and practice their culture freely led to the establishment of the LMS Church in Hawaii. These migrants wanted to establish an environment that they felt best suited the needs of their children in the future. They wanted an atmosphere where they can practise their culture and customs especially their worship as a community.

3.2 The Establishment of the Moanalua Church

One of the leaders among the *fitafita* guardsmen was Pita Leasau. He assembled the Samoans and held house services at 3137 H. Road, Damon Tract in Honolulu. The residence belonged to a Samoan lady Aimeamiti from the village of Aoloau, American Samoa. She was married to an American named James Mc Braun. The first service was held on February 6, 1950. Aimeamiti's residence became the centre for worship by these migrants at first until the congregation grew.¹

The need for a larger place to hold services and the issue of who to act as minister for the congregation led to lengthy communications between Pita Leasau and the main office of the LMS in Apia in 1953. The correspondences between Leasau and the Secretary of the Elders committee Vavae Toma in 1953 of who the board believed

¹Iosia Evile FT. *O le Ekalesia Samoa LMS i Honolulu ma le Matagaluega EFKS i Hawaii*. Paper was presented at the General Assembly by Rev. Elder Evile Iosia on 17 May, 2011. The presentation consisted of the origin and the spread of the LMS Church in Hawaii and the changes it went through over the years. Part of the same history is presented by Oka Fauolo in the Samoan language in his book (*O Vavega O le Alofa Lavea'i...*, p.681) but not in detail as Evile's account. An interview with Faatui Lalolagi on 18 August 2011. Laolagi was one of the fita fita guards who went to Hawaii when the Navy moved them in 1952. He agrees that Elder Evile's account is accurate.

would be best for this position created a division among the people. They disagreed with the board's decision of having Loloaso (Uatimani) Wightman, a Malua graduate who was among the group to be their minister. They argued that Loloaso and his wife hardly attended the Church.²

The disagreement between the members and their contacts at the main office in Apia further fuelled the division among the group. Later in 1953, Elder Tapeni Ioelu and Le'iato Tuli (Elder Deacon) visited the group in Hawaii and a decision was handed out by the elders making Pita Malae the minister to look after the church. The appointment of Pita Malae instead of Suitonu, Pita Leasau and Wightman as the minister shocked everyone. Everyone including Suitonu thought that Suitonu should have been the pastor for their church.³

Suitonu was disappointed by the decision of the Elders committee and requested the Navy to transfer him to San Diego, California. Suitonu's request was granted by the Navy that same year. Pita Malae and the congregation in Hawaii held a farewell service for Suitonu and his wife on 7 January 1955. Suitonu in his letter to the LMS main office in Apia (printed on *Sulu Samoa Feb. 1956*) gave an account of their emotional farewell with Pita Malae and the congregation in Moanalua.⁴

The split between Suitonu and other group members seemed like a negative thing at first. But it later became an important event that helped spread the LMS Church further into the mainland. Other Samoans who were living in California heard about the Church in Hawaii and they were eager to have one locally. That wish came true when Suitonu arrived at San Diego in 1955. A CCCS was planted in the US mainland.

² See, Iosia Evile, FT, General Assembly Presentation, 17 May 2011

³ See, Iosia Evile, FT, General Assembly Presentation, 17 May 2011. Elder Tapeni Ioelu, Deacon Elder Le'iato Tuli and Chief Solatoa in a photo appeared in an article on *The Honolulu Star Bulletin*, October 17, 1953 issue, (American Samoa Government Archive, Tafuna, American Samoa), collected 08/16/2011. Note: Pita Malae, Pita Leasau, Suitonu Suitonu and Loloaso Wightman were all members of the group that started the Moanalua Church.

⁴ *O le Sulu Samoa*, February 1956 issue, p. 37-38

3.3 The Establishment of the CCCS at San Diego Church

Suitonu and his family left Hawaii on 8 Jan. 1955 arriving in San Francisco on a Sunday morning. They rested and then travelled by train to San Diego the following day. They were welcomed by a Navy senior chaplain Officer Raim. T. C. Miller. Miller served in Samoa as a chaplain in 1930 and he was impressed with the Samoan people's hospitality while serving there. He was eager to assist Suitonu in establishing a Samoan Church there in San Diego.⁵

The first Samoan service was held at the San Diego Navy base on 23 January 1955. Suitonu led the service but Navy Chaplain Shackelford presided over the communion. Those who were present at the first service were;

1. Aimalefoa. Misailegalu (deacon)
2. Tumua and her children (faletua)
3. Sa. Atuatasi (deacon)
4. Meleane and her children (faletua)
5. Toso. Mauga (deacon)
6. Fiamaua and her children (faletua)
7. Fa'alili Sonoma
8. Tu'umalie. Mauga
9. Evo. Aimalefoa
10. Tu'umafua I'a
11. Tinei and her children
12. Viefu. Epenesa (youth)

⁵ *O le Sulu Samoa*, February 1956 issue, p. 38. An interview with Asovalu Tuiasosopo 15 Aug 2011. Tuiasosopo is one of the 29 Samoans who were hired as contract farm workers in San Francisco. A photo of some of the members of this group and their employer appeared on *The Oregonian Newspaper*, Tues, April 8, 1952 issue, (American Samoa Government Department of Archive, Tafuna, American Samoa), 15/08/ 2011). He later joined the Navy from 1950-1954 and he was stationed in Long Beach, California together with Fo'isia Misalefua one of the fita fita guards who was transferred with his family from Hawaii.

13. Ofisa. Fa'asi'I (youth)
14. Piula. Luavasa (youth)
15. Taleni. Logo (youth)
16. Pogai. Tuinei (youth)
17. Fereti. Tupuola (youth)
18. Faoa. Taufoli (youth)
19. Lutali (youth)
20. Logo. Le'ia (youth)
21. Atapu'ai. Fale (youth)

Samoans from all over California heard about the Samoan Church and they drove to San Diego on the weekends to join the services.⁶

On 28 January 1956 they celebrated the one year anniversary of the Samoan Church in San Diego. Suitonu's letter to the LMS main office on the progression of the Samoan Church in San Diego indicated its growth and highlighted a possible need to expand further. He mentioned that on communion Sundays more than 300 people attend the service. Samoans from nearby states heard of the San Diego Church and they travelled from thousands of miles away just to be part of the services on Sundays.⁷

According to Suitonu's letter to the LMS in 1955, he mentioned that there were five lay preachers in the church and they were all enlisted members of the US Navy. They were; Pita T. Leasau, Pouono Malau'ulu, Fa'afouina Iofi, Fo'isia Misalefua and Peni Poumele. These men later became pastors for other churches in California when the church grew. Their remarkable story of establishing a congregational church in the

⁶ *Ole Sulu Samoa*, February 1956 issue, p. 37. Note: Faletua is a formal name use to address a pastor's wife or a high ranking alii's wife.

⁷ *O le Sulu Samoa*, February 1956 issue, p. 37. Interview with Tuiasosopo 15 Aug. 2011. He claims that by the mid 1950s there were other Samoan families who were in the LA area working and going to school there. They used to travel by carloads of people to San Diego on the weekends just to join the services.

midst of a multi-cultural nation still stands as a great feat for immigrants from a small island according to the CCCS history.⁸

A letter from Suitonu to the LMS about his trip to Hartford, Connecticut in 1958 to attend a Church Conference as a representative for the LMS Samoa was printed on the *Sulu Samoa* January, 1961. In his letter, Suitonu expressed his wish of attending the Church General Assembly in Samoa on the following year with a full report of the conference he attended. He also indicated the donations made by the four LMS Samoan Churches in the mainland to help for his trip to the conference.⁹

The Church in San Diego continued to grow as relatives and others joined in. The people wanted to have a place that they could call their own and where they could worship and fellowship with each other like they did back home. In 1964 Suitonu sent a letter to the LMS main office inviting the Churches and its members to a grand opening of the first ever Samoan LMS Church ever built in the mainland.¹⁰

The Church was built from ground up by a Samoan carpenter named Sautia A. Lutu and his three sons who helped him: Fa'ataulolo'u, Seali'itu and Seali'info. Lutu became the first Samoan carpenter ever to build the first Samoan Church in the mainland. The amazing thing about his accomplishment is that he offered to build the Church for the San Diego Congregation for free without charge and he only asked for the people to help out.¹¹

On June 20, 1964 the San Diego Samoan LMS Church was opened and was named "Satauro Pai'a" (The Holy Cross). This historical event was a result of diligence

⁸ *O le Sulu Samoa*, February 1956 issue, p. 37. Both Tuiasosopo and Laolagi agreed to Suitonu's letter but they claimed that there were many others who were there when the Samoan Church in San Diego started.

⁹ *O le Sulu Samoa*, January 1961 issue. p. 13

¹⁰ *O le Sulu Samoa*, January 1964 issue. p. 31-32

¹¹ *O le Sulu Samoa*, January 1964 issue. p. 31-32. Note: Sautia A. Lutu offered to build the Church at San Diego without pay. Lutu understood the building enforcement codes that were required by every city in the US for all contractors to possess in order to build. To build the Church for free is a huge sacrifice.

and unity by a group of people that never gave up their dreams. The San Diego parish still exists today and it is a reminder for generations in the future that with God anything is possible.

3.4 Conclusion

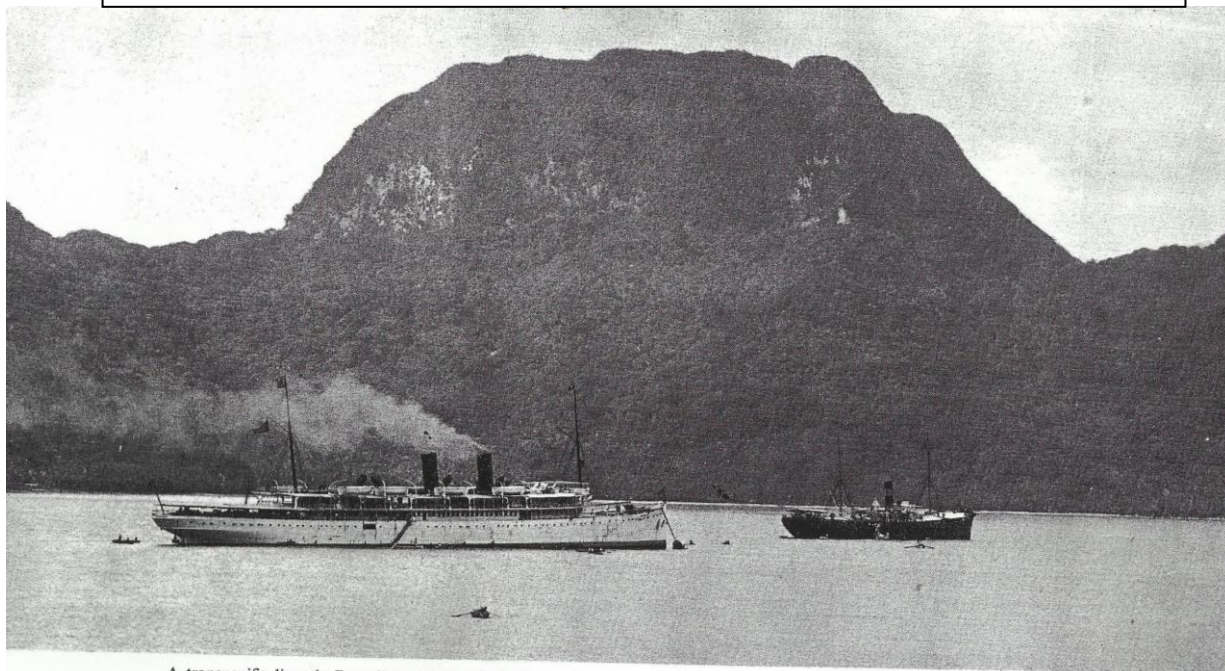
The events that led to Suitonu leaving Moanalua, Hawaii for San Diego were not ideal. Feeling as though he and his wife were slighted from the ministerial leadership of the Moanalua Church in Hawaii, Suitonu left Hawaii with a burning desire to open up a Samoan (LMS) Church in San Diego, California. With Samoan migrants scattered all over California and favourable support offered by the US Navy, Suitonu's dream of a Samoan Church in San Diego became a reality. The San Diego Congregational Church became a magnet for the Samoan communities from all over California and the nearby states. Not only was Suitonu's accomplishment remarkable based on the fact that he was a pioneer blazing the path for future CCCS Churches on the US mainland, but through the love and grace of God and his congregation, they were able to erect the first Samoan Church building in San Diego, California as a landmark for all CCCS Churches in the US. This memorial will forever stand as a feat of accomplishment unrivalled elsewhere due to the unwavering faith and dedication of the Samoan migrants trailblazing a new path for all Samoans.

The migrants showed their dedication and faith by uniting as one to establish a church for the Samoans that would later grow to become a district for the CCCS in the United States of America. The CCCS continues to grow in the US despite the hardship and the challenges faced. The development of the US CCCS churches in America stands as a testimony of the faith and perseverance of a people who travelled well over 2500 miles in search of a better life and better conditions for themselves and their

families. In the midst of their search, they never lost track of their two-fold identity that allowed them to create little pockets of Samoa wherever they travelled and settled. The defining piece to corroborate this statement is the establishment of Samoan Churches wherever Samoans congregate throughout the United States of America. To God be the Glory, AMEN.

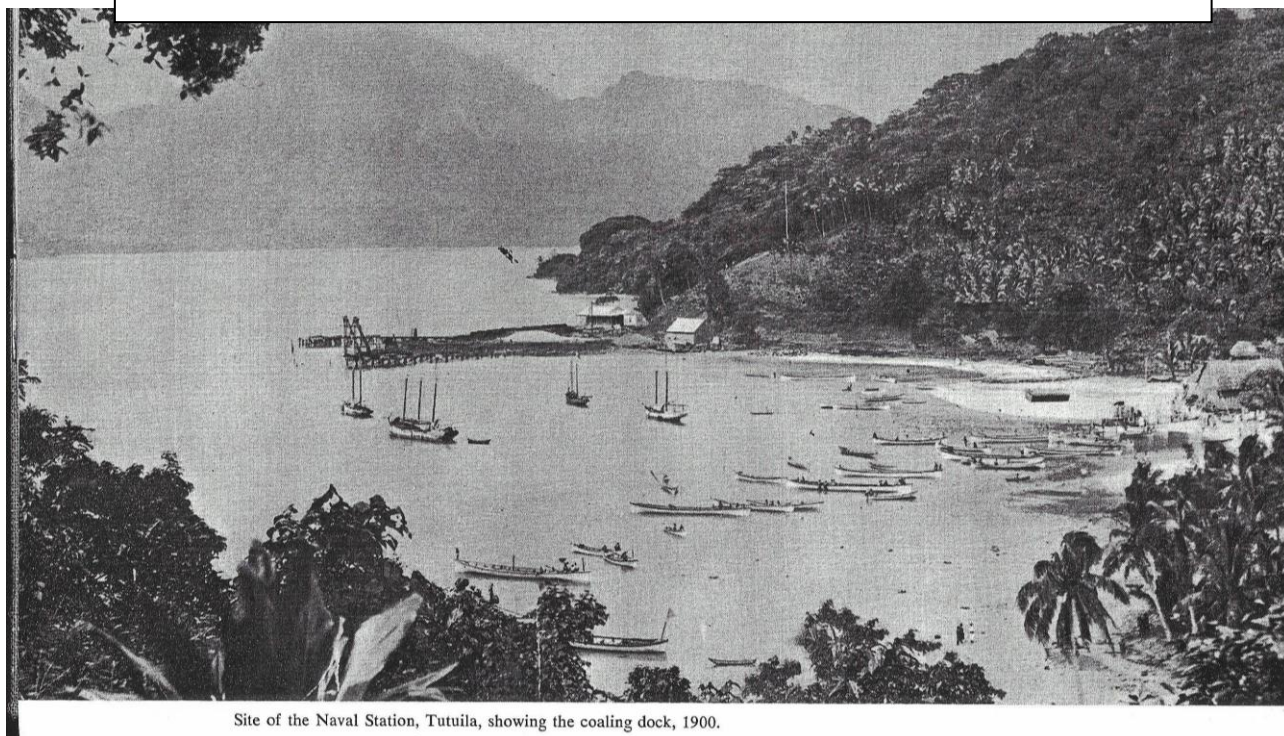
APPENDIX 1:

Diagram 1: Pago Pago Harbour before coaling station development
 Source: J.A.C. Gray, *Amerika Samoa and its United States Naval Administration*,
 (Maryland: US Naval Institute, 1960)



A transpacific liner in Pago Pago about 1900. Mount Pioa is in the background.

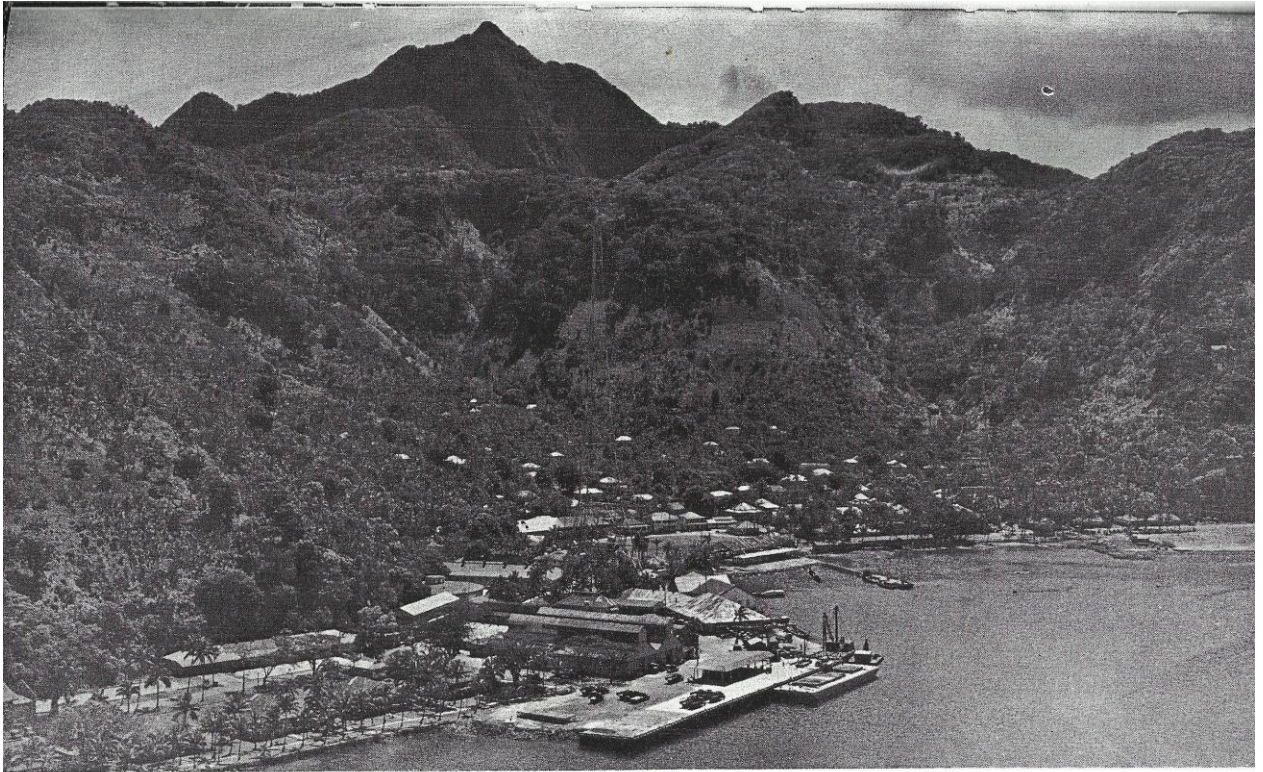
Diagram 2: Coaling Station for steam boats at Pago Pago Harbour around 1900
 Source: J.A.C. Gray, *Amerika Samoa and its United States Naval Administration*,
 (Maryland: US Naval Institute, 1960)



Site of the Naval Station, Tutuila, showing the coaling dock, 1900.

APPENDIX 2

Diagram 3: The new look of PagoPago Harbour after the developments
Source: J.A.C. Gray, *Amerika Samoa and its United States Naval Administration*,
(Maryland: US Naval Institute, 1960)



The Naval Station after World War II.

APPENDIX 3

Map of San Diego showing the area where the first CCCS church was established.

+ = First Samoan Church was established here in Coronado in 1955



APPENDIX 4

▲ = Expansion of the CCCS Church in the LA area (2011)



GLOSSARY

aitu	- spirit, ghost
atua	- god
faa-Samoa	- the Samoan way of doing things.
faife'au	- pastor
faletua	- proper Samoan name to address a pastor's wife
fitafita	- guard or soldier
lualotoali'i	- abysmal entrance hole for chiefs at Pulotu
lualototufanua	- abysmal entrance hole for the common people at Pulotu
matai	- a chief
Pulotu	- a gathering place for souls
va'aloa	- boat for transporting souls of the dead

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