

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Samoan, Samoan, Austronesian

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

Smo

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

13 degrees 35 S and 172 degrees 20 W (10)

1.4 Brief history:

19th Century Overview: Germany, Great Britain and United States tried to influence Samoan factions (3)

1900: Western Samoa became a German colony (3)

1914-1962: New Zealand Occupied Western Samoa (3)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

1800: isolated European sailors and escaped convicts settled on Samoa bringing with them the first notion of Christianity. (3)

1830: Missionary John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS) landed in Sav'ai to spread Christianity (3)

1835: Missionaries settled in Samoa along with Roman Catholic priests in 1845 (3)

Tonga and Fiji are very powerful international neighbors that influence trading with Samoa; Samoan fine mats for parrots (3)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

Islands are of volcanic origin, Mountain ranges rise steeply, and overall tropical climate with abundant rainfall, average humidity is approximately 80%, and the average temperature is 22-30 degrees Celsius. (3)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

Population Size: In 1980 the Samoan Population was approximately 188,000. Approximately 32,000 are from American Samoa and 156,000 from Western Samoa. (3)

Mean Village Size: 1500

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

taro, breadfruit, bananas, coconuts, papayas, potatoes, onions, lettuce, carrots, cabbage, beans and tomatoes (3)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Chicken, pork, canned corn beef (pisupo) and seafood (3)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

“Formerly the only arms used by the Samoans were clubs, axes, spears, and slings, but of late years firearms have been introduced, and generally adopted throughout the islands, whilst iron axes and knives have quite superseded the old stone axes and adzes. Clubs, spears, and slings are still used in warfare.” (5)

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Men were generally in charge of for heavy agricultural work, fishing and housing construction. Women were in charge of sewing, weaving floor mats and sleeping mats, laundry, childcare, and cooking. Nursing is also an acceptable job for women although men hold most of the professional titles. Now, men and women share more jobs than they traditionally did. These jobs consist of: working in tuna canneries, banks, stores, tourist related businesses, and the school system. However, some jobs remain dominated by males. These jobs are construction, transportation, shipping, and government agencies. (3)

2.6 Land tenure:

Most land is owned by Samoans with the exception of small amounts of government property and churches (3)

Communal ownership was traditionally by 'agia and controlled by matai (3)

Currently, you must have at least 50% Samoan blood to purchase a piece of property (3)

2.7 Ceramics:

Lapita pottery is common (3)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

Large meals are made at ceremonial occasions and the guests are expected to eat a large portion. The guests are also expected to bring leftovers home to share with their families. (3)

Elders and guests are served first. Women and children are served after (3)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

“The Samoans in the early days were great navigators and colonizers, so that many long and distant voyages were undertaken by them to various parts of the Pacific” (5)

“At times a division of a fleet of canoes was employed to make a sudden descent upon some portion of the enemy's territory, and having ravaged it, speedily to decamp, such attacks being usually made about daybreak.” (5)

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): 5'10

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): 200lbs

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f):
Around 14 (when coming of age rituals begin) (3)
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):
Age at first birth generally occurs shortly after marriage because usually sexual prevention is not used.
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f):
Family includes extended family and immediate family living in a housing structure connected with many different segments containing the different families. (3)
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):
Each woman births approximately 3 children
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):
Nearly everyone gets married; usually in their middle to late 20's (3)
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
Divorce is very rare, but re-marriage is common among young people (3)
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:
In pre-Christian times, polygyny was practiced, although probably only by matai of high rank. (3)
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:
"Tapau tradition: by which a chiefs' daughter remained a virgin until marrying a chiefs' son" (4) Please note that this declined with missionary arrival.
Exchange of goods occurs between parents to make the wedding official (3)
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns:
"Members of the descent group retain rights to use and control of customary land occupied and cultivated by their 'äiga, regardless of where they live. The same applies to matai titles that are not subject to any automatic Inheritance rule." (3)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:
"Starting at about 1½ years of age, children become subject to an education Europeans would label as "authoritarian." They are expected to obey their parents and elders at once, without hesitation and without asking questions. Overt and direct expressions of hostility and aggression are discouraged, but *musu*, the state of sullen unwillingness to comply with orders, is a culturally tolerated outlet"(3)
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
There are many men in Samoan society that have feminine roles and duties in society. They are called fa'afafine; the word in itself means in the manner of a woman. It is related to homosexuality and transvestites. From an early age, these men are often with their mothers helping with traditional woman duties such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children. The society embraces fa'afafines and many of the parents express feelings of pride and gratitude towards their children, no matter their role in society. (1)
"I think I'm very, very humbled and very proud that the fa'afafines community is well accepted in our country. Most of the families consider having fa'afafine in some one home as an asset, because it, in the plantation they are men, in the house they are wonderful and great house keepers" (Chief Vasili Fiji, 1)
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
Community endogamy is discouraged (3)
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?
N/A
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")
Samoa is an educated country and procreation is taught and viewed in a scientific sense (3)
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
Samoa is an educated country and conception is viewed in scientific sense (3)
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
Rape and sexual coercion have been debated often in the anthropological community. Freeman and Margaret Mead are two quite infamous anthropologists that discuss the prevalence of rape and the sexual freedoms of women. Freeman regards rape as extremely common and due to the competitive nature of samoan men. Mead on the other hand, described women as being sexually free to mate with whomever they choose. These two opinions differ drastically and the truth probably lies somewhere in the middle. (7)
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
"Members of the father's and mother's descent groups are forbidden as marriage partners, and community endogamy is also discouraged. Bride and groom should be of similar rank." (3)
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
Females enjoyed sexual freedoms until the coming of the missionaries. Western religion has made parents very protective of their young daughters and has made religious purity a standard to be upheld in society. (4)
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
N/A
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
The baby (or children) are generally placed with extended family. They will also raise offspring if the mother is too ill to tend for her children (8)
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
1.06 males: 1 female (6)
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
Did not find significant evidence of couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

Samoaan respect for their siblings and elders is a prevalent part of samoaan society (3)

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

bilateral descent (3)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

Members of the father's and mother's descent groups are forbidden as marriage partners (3)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

“Today, a church wedding is an important and costly affair, but many marriages are still customary ones, man and wife living together with their parents' consent after the appropriate exchange of goods.” (3)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

Marriage is preferred to be in Samoaan community; preferably due to the distribution of property in Samoa (3)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

Marriages are not arranged, but there are certain things that parent's value in a wife such as virginity (3)

Commonly, an exchange of goods occurs representing a wedding between the man and woman's family (3)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Conflict is not apparent in many prospective marriages, one of the only things that concerns the community is the social status of both the man and woman who are getting married (3)

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

Death rate is 1.5 in Samoa

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

“Sea-fights were often bloody and destructive encounters” (5) This would be an out-group cause of death

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

“The pride of many chiefs was also a fruitful source of war and bloodshed, which evils were not simply occasioned by their intrigues to gain power, but also in some instances from a desire to have their name associated in the recollection of posterity with a war; it being the custom to enshrine the names of those more particularly connected with a war in the record of it.” (5)

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

The relationship with New Zealand and Australia is a special relationship. The 1962 Treaty of Friendship between Samoa and New Zealand cemented their friendly relationship. Samoa also relies on most countries for importing of goods, so international relations remain relatively good for Samoa (9)

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

Town populations range between 300 and 1,200 persons and average 450 to 600 persons. (3)

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

No seasonal mobility because of temperate climate. However, in recent years, there has been a tendency to give up settlements along the coast and to shift towns to newly built roads farther inland. (3)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

The matai generally decide what is best for the society. The matai is an “chief” elected by extended family to represent the family in a tribal meeting called fonofono. A fonofono is when all of the chiefs get together to talk about important decisions for the tribe.(4)

Pre- western Samoa was a society focused mainly on the community as a whole- it did not recognize western individualism until the missionaries came to Samoa. There were not large gaps in wealth and status- a man's wages were earned and put to use for things that would benefit the community. This did not change until Samoa was westernized. The missionaries and the matai established a sharing of power that still survives today in Samoa.(4)

5.4 Post marital residence:

After reaching the coming of age, many young unmarried women lived with one another. Men also lived with other unmarried men until it was time to marry (4)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

Boundaries mainly rest with the matai. When the Samoaan government was enacted, the heads (*matai*) of the different descent groups (*āiga*) of the community were entitled to claim blocks of land for themselves and their dependents. Overall authority over lands, however, was vested in the council of matai (fonofono), whose members could revoke ownership of the respective 'āiga. (3)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

From a very early age, Samoaan children are taught the interactions of the adult world. They learn to respect their elders and when the time comes for Samoaans to learn a trade, they often shadow an elder until they are proficient at his/her duty. Samoaans are not shielded from reality as much as children living in a completely western world (4).

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization:

“The Samoaans have been mainly a coast-dwelling people living in self-governing, autonomous towns (*nu'u*) linked by Political and ceremonial alliances. Households center on the sacred central place (*malae*) of each nu'u where the ranking high chief's assembly

house is also situated” (3)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

Most households resemble one another, the main consistency is the the houses are centered around the malae, and often times family groups have houses next to one another (3)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

There are several groups of individuals in Samoan culture. The aumaga (untitled men) constituted the brunt labor force of the society and tried to gain the respect of the community to eventually become a matai. Matai are high standing members of a particular branch of a Samoan family that represents the family and their interests in the fono (council of chiefs). The matai is essentially a chief of the family. The fono is when all of the chiefs meet together to decide upon important issues in society. The extended family called the aiga is also an important part in Samoan culture, since the aiga often elects a matai. The aualuma is also an important part of Samoan society. The auluma represents the young women in Samoan society. However, it also represents the honor of society. Young women are in charge of decorating the house and entertaining guests. During Pre-westernized Samoa, it was also common for a young woman to march at the front of a warring party to represent the purity/honor of the tribe. Please note that some of these positions are not given weight in modern Samoa, but are merely ceremonial. (4)

5.12 Trade:

“There was only a limited amount of interregional trade in pre contact times. Samoan fine mats (*'ie tōga*) were exchanged for parrots and red parrot feathers from Tonga and sometimes from Fiji. Intraregional trade, too, was Limited.” (3)

“Today, Western Samoa is dependent on the world market, its three most important export items being copra, cocoa, and bananas” (3)

“Some regions and places were noted for their products, such as nets, which are said to have been made mostly by towns in the interior. Some places were noted for their boats, adzes, and kava bowls” (3)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

“The system of authority and service is organized largely on seniority-those who are younger serve and obey those who are older. Ironically, this kind of system is stable only as long as the participants are sure that it will continue. As long as the system is closed and the cycle secure, young people perceive their service as a tolerable burden, knowing that one day they will, in their turn, command the service of others”. (4)

“The cycle of tautua has been broken in the minds of many young people today. New technology and a market economy make individual production, profit, and accumulation of wealth possible. Many young people seek their futures in wage labor outside the village or even over seas, and they doubt that their own service will ever be repaid by a younger generation”(4)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

Sunday is the main day for religious worship based on the influence of Christianity (3)

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

“In aboriginal times, disease was supposed to be caused by the wrath of some particular aitu. Treatment was sought with the aid of the special matai, Taulāitu (whose name means "anchor of the Aitu"). They were asked to intercede with the aitu they represented. Various herbs and plants were administered and massage was also applied.” (3)

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Tattooing was (and is) an important ritual related to puberty for both men and women. “The man who was not tattooed was not respected. He was considered a minority. He could not think of marriage and was constantly exposed to taunts and ridicule” The tattooing usually occurred at age 16, at this age the man was welcomed into manhood by his peers and elders. However, this ritual was not just for men. Young women also experienced tattooing at the time of their puberty. It was often done to become more desirable to men. This was usually done between the ages of 14 and 16 (4)

6.4 Other rituals:

“Many native ceremonies focus on life-cycle rites. Attendance is an expression of the rank of the persons involved. The kava ceremony, in which a beverage prepared from the *'ava* root (*Piper methysticum*) was consumed in Ceremonial style, was performed to honor important guests and to mark important social events, such as the deliberations of the fono” (3)

6.5 Myths (Creation):

Before the arrival of missionaries it was believed that Tangaloa was the creator of everything. Their people and the matai served as the religious leaders. (3)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

“Oratory, dancing, singing, and tattooing continue to be means of aesthetic expression. Today, hymns for church services are an important outlet for expressive needs. The traditional art of bark-cloth (*siapo*) making and printing is not very widespread today.” (3)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

I could not find any significant sexual differences with men and women in religion. Both men and women are allowed to be matai.

6.8 Missionary effect:

Since the introduction of Christianity, the largest denomination is the Congressional Christian Church of American Samoa. Catholicism also claimed about 20% of Samoan population. (3)

6.9 RCR revival:

“Aitu formerly were family gods, and they have retained their character as locally associated and kinship-bound deified ancestors.” (3)

Christianity is the staple religion in Samoa and there has been no reversion to worshipping

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

“Samoans believe in the dichotomous character of human nature. The separation of the "soul" (*agāga*) and body (*tino*) is tantamount to death. That the *agāga* continued to live after death as an *aitu* was the focal topic of the pre-Christian religion. There are various accounts of an afterworld, but no uniform picture of its nature can be gleaned from the historical and ethnographic sources.” (3)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

Today, Samoans are devoutly Christians following protestant and catholic denominations of Christianity (3)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

The coming of age ceremony where young men and women are tattooed for days is the most important ritual in Samoan society (3)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Women are tattooed on their thighs (4)

Men are tattooed from the waist down to below the knees (4)

7.8 Missionary effect:

Missionaries highly disapproved of the tattooing and deemed the samoans “heathens” for indulging in such acts. However, tattooing is still prevalent today despite the period of disapproval (4)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

Most members of a Samoan extended family (cousins, etc) are referred to with samoan language as siblings. Samoan terms are often applied to a wide variety of kinship because extended families are very close knit. This makes it difficult to determine a set classification for siblings (11)

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

N/A

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

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