

1. Description

- 1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Samoan, Samoa, Polynesian
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): 639-3
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 13.7745 degrees S, 172.0428 degrees W
- 1.4 Brief history: Samoa is a country which encompasses the western part of the Samoan Islands in the South Pacific Ocean. Becoming an independent nation in 1962, it features two main islands, Upolu and Savai'i. The capital city of the island is Apia which is located on Upolu. A possible origin of the Samoan people was that they originated from Austronesian predecessors. Contact with Europeans occurred in the early 18th century when Jacob Roggerveen was the first known person to make contact with the island in 1772. Samoa has had a long tradition of trade with Europeans for the use of the Coco bean and other staples which grown on the island. In more recent history, the island was inducted into the United Nations in 1976.
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Due to European influence, Samoa has become a relatively Christian island. Many of the documents about religion on the island, however, might be biased as they were written by Priests. A predominant feature of the island is that "Samoans, like many people of the non-Western world, seem capable of compartmentalizing Christian and indigenous beliefs so that what appear to be contradictions in the two systems do not seem to cause any anxiety or conflict," according to Samoan Village by Holmes.
- 1.6 Ecology (natural environment): The natural environment of the island is very lush with tropical rainforests.
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: With the exception of the largest, outlying cities in the country, the average size of the villages is 700. There are approximately 300,000 people in the world that speak Samoan

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Both men and women engage in agricultural work. One of the main carbohydrate staples on the island is the coconut. Besides being the only product from which the Fitiutans (locals) derive cash income, the tree provides other uses such as a heavy wood and leaves which can be woven into baskets or house blinds. Other useful sources include the meat of the nut which can be sold. Although the coconut is the most useful product that the Samoans make, the most popular food is taro, which can be eaten either by baking or boiling. And lastly, a food which finds its way into Samoan culture is the breadfruit, which is produced when an abundance of fruit means that much of the fruit will fall to the ground. When the fruit begins to rot, it is placed in pits and is uncovered many years later and cooked.
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: The main source of protein on the island is fish and, although it is preferred to other forms of protein, they spend very little time fishing in modern times. This is due to the fact that it is much easier to send someone to a local store to buy a can of fish rather than fish for several hours to get the same amount of food. However, over many years the Samoans have developed a wide variety of ways which they can fish including wooden traps for taking eels, lobsters, crayfish, and crab.
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Due to modernization on the island there has been the introduction of modern weapons such as guns. However, the traditional weapons of the island are spears and bow and arrows.
- 2.4 Food storage: There seems to be little need in recent years for traditional means of food storage as any food can be eaten, sold, or processed by modern means. This information, however, is not exclusively discussed in any of the literature examined. The main focus of the books was what foods the locals were eating, not how it was stored.
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: With regards to cooking, "The culinary arts are the special preserve of the men. Since the members of the aumaga have always been designated as the special servants of the chiefs, ceremonial cooking has, over the years, been their responsibility and has probably established men as the proper cooks of traditional foods," as according to Samoan Village. Women are not allowed to touch food because, as they menstruate, they are considered unclean (although this belief is fading away.) Weaving is generally done by the women, with girls 12 years old and younger are introduced to the various stages of production. Women also make barkcloth, a type of ceremonial purpose. Both men and women participate in Agricultural work, however it is said that men do the more laborious work (such as clearing the land) while women plant seeds.
- 2.6 Land tenure: In recent years the Samoans have
- 2.7 Ceramics: There are relatively little ceramics on the island, however, the women are known for weaving baskets by using pieces of bark.
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: N/A
- 2.9 Food taboos: N/A
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? – The Samoan people are known for being excellent sailors. They utilize canoe making by using Coconut tree wood which is known for being very strong.

3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Male: 5 foot 7 Women: 5 foot 4
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): Male: 145 Women: 125

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): There is little constraints on any of the following information, especially in recent years.
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): " "
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Varies depending on resources of family and biological constraints. However, large families are the most desired outcome in Samoan culture.
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): Variable although it is relatively short, 4-5 months, as large families are desired more than small ones.
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Men and women tend to be young (late teens, early twenties) however due to increasing western influences, the ages have been increasing.

- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Relatively low due to beliefs about marriages. Not as much importance is placed upon Samoan marriages as it is upon American marriages. This does not mean, however, that there are not unhappy marriages. Often couples would rather separate than divorce because getting divorced costs money.
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: None due to recent Christian influx on the island mixing with traditional methods. Also historically speaking, Samoans are not a polygynous society.
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: “ Samoan wedding feature an exchange of a vast amount of property (toga for aloa) and the engagement period is always a busy one for both families involved. The origin of this institution of lavish gift exchange at weddings and a number of other important occasions is not known, but various students of Polynesian culture have speculated on the function it fulfills in the social organization. One position is that it adds some spice of life to an ordinarily humdrum existence. It is, to speak, having Christmas several times a year.”
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: Inheritance patterns are determined through the dominant family. The dominant family is determined by who the son/daughter chose to live with. If the couple chooses to live with the husband’s parents, for example, then the inheritance will go through him as well as inheriting leadership, a very desirable goal.
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Little to none out of Western standards.
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:N/A
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):N/A
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?: No partible paternity and due to western influence, there is a modern conception as to the male’s role in conception.
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”): Again, with the influx of Western ideation and science, there is a fairly accurate representation of how the reproductive cycle.
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?: No
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: Not recorded.
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): There is no preferential category for spouse however relatives are avoided and
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?: Yes
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: No. As with most western cultures, extramarital partners are not preferred and is a source of divorce.
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?: The husband will raise the children if the mother dies.
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: N/A
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: No
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): Men are expected to become new fathers throughout their entire life as large families are the expected norm. According to “Elite Communication in Samoa: A Study in Leadership”, “Good behavior by a younger man (as in serving his superiors, leadership qualities, making a “strong marriage”, and accumulating wealth are among many variables which may count in choice of a titleholder besides having a senior line of descent.”
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?: According to “Elite Communication in Samoa: A Study in Leadership,” “Women exercise, too, highly institutionalized authority rights within kin alignments. While there is in Samoan culture a strict brother and sister avoidance on a sexual basis, the relationship between brother and sister is close and sacred. Persisting from the old religion is a concept that a sister’s curse is particularly destructive and potent, and that brothers have a duty to please their sisters.” “It is unseemly for brothers and sister, or their extended kin-equivalents, to dance in front of one another, or partake of any sex tinged activity.”
- 4.24 Joking relationships? “Elite persons, steeped as they are in this traditional etiquette, can usually step out with ready facility and carry on Western forms of etiquette. A handshake, joking and other relaxed expression, a witty speech, or dignity when required, come easily.”
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: “ The migrant Polynesian families which settled Samoa, although spreading out over the islands, preserved memories and tended to retain contacts, especially as regarded their senior lines of descent and intermarriage, and intricate networks and hierarchies of “great family” relationship became spun widely over Samoa.” “The category “European,” as used in Western Samoa, originated in the settlement of white ancestry. But it has also come to apply as a legal category to part-Samoan descendants of white Europeans of legitimate descent on the male side, or “legitimized by court process as desiring to hold European status.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: There is kin avoidance on the island, through culture, which prohibits incest. Usually events where there is a higher level of kin, such as certain ceremonies, have lower levels of sex potential.
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?: According to “Samoan Village” “Samoan wedding feature an exchange of a vast amount of property (toga for aloa) and the engagement period is always a busy one for both families involved.” Food is often given as gifts to the couple, as in the past it would have spoiled if it were not eaten. Weddings are announced exactly 2 weeks from the date of the event. On the day of the wedding, the wedding party gathers in front of the house and there is a wedding procession to the Judge for the civil ceremony and then to the church for a traditional religious one.
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?: By marrying the man.
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): no real effect or difference between men and women.
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? : There are arranged marriages which are arranged by the parents.
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: Not significant.

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: There has been almost no deaths due to warfare in recent years due to western interference. “Feuding and warfare throughout Samoan history have been primarily a) struggles within kin groups for control of their

- larger titles, b) struggles among kin and locality groups to enhance their power and prestige position, and c) a seesaw rivalry between the two great power systems of the Samalietoa and Satupura, which at crisis points could engulf all Samoa except perhaps Manu'a in war and devastation until one side or the other temporarily gained control.
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: "Feuding and warfare throughout Samoan history have been primarily a) struggles within kin groups for control of their larger titles, b) struggles among kin and locality groups to enhance their power and prestige position, and c) a seesaw rivalry between the two great power systems of the Samalietoa and Satupura, which at crisis points could engulf all Samoa except perhaps Manu'a in war and devastation until one side or the other temporarily gained control."
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Again, almost none in recent years due to Western influence.
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The islanders have a good rapport with Western Worlds, in particular the United States, partially due to the US Navy's presence on the island since WWII.
- 4.18 Cannibalism?: No

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: The mean local residential group size can be from the hundreds to the thousands.
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): They live in one house year round.
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): There are titles, some more prominent than others, which can be inherited or gained due to conflict. This usually has more meaning than name and can sometimes be associated with name.
- 5.4 Post marital residence: Usually with the parents of one side of the family. They can live with either side, the men sometimes choosing to live with the wife's family if there is a better chance to become head of the family.
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): There is no active territorial defense as the island has little enemies. With regards to individual territoriality, there has been a shift in recent years. The main disputes on the island occur over that of the possibility of titles.
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Boys and girls have very little interaction during the formative stages of their youth. Girls usually lose their virginity when a boy their age or an older boy have sex with them. There are also duties which are designated to men and those which are given to women.
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: N/A
- 5.8 Village and house organization:
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): No
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? : No
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:
- 5.12 Trade: The main trade item on the island is coconut, which can be sold to the United states for various purposes such as hair products and food.
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?: The closest thing to social hierarchies can be seen with titles which are associated with prominent members of society due to marriage, money, honor, etc... "The chief forms the centerpiece for all such activity: embodiment of the "dignity" of his group, seated in the position of honor, the focus of speeches, a recipient of appropriate services, in the case of "royal" personages invested almost with diety, and all of course meticulously ordered in terms of his precise rank."

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6.0 Time allocation to RCR: "More than a century of mission work has submerged the old religion, through it survives selectively. Most Samoans are adherents of the London Missionary Society, which has become an indigenous church with almost fully Samoan personnel in leadership. There are minorities of Roman Catholics, Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists, Latter Day Saints, and a few others, including a local church developed in American Samoa."
- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Died out.
- 6.2 Stimulants: There are no modern stimulants.
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): There are meetings every week of the year which cover how people should act with regards to others and is completed by Orators. Topics can include how children should pay respect to parents and how to pay respects to the chief's kava ceremony.
- 6.4 Other rituals: Every village community has a malae, or village square, which is the ceremonial center. Each subdistrict, district, great kin, and other traditionally organized supracommunity group has its correct malae or malaes. "Display and transfer of property in gift-giving ceremonials may become a highly developed form of communication among groups and their elites and as an important technique for demonstrating and validating status and for fostering social interaction.
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): There are no lasting creation myths due to the influx of Christian style groups.
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): "Visible material prestige symbols are a mark of elite interaction having high recognition value. For important occasions the house or other space setting is likely to be furbished and often elaborately decorated with leaves and flowers, the best matting, and other indications of ceremonious use. On ceremonious occasions the chiefs and orators use distinctive fly shisks, which, hung over a shoulder, are something of a "badge of office." Carved wooden clubs may be held in the other hand as they lean on a wooden staff for speeches."
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:
- 6.8 Missionary effect: Mentioned elsewhere in questionnaire.
- 6.9 RCR revival: None Apparent
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: They ascribe to the traditional Christian belief of Heaven and Hell.
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?: No
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy?: No

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): There is some debate as to the level of involvement of the old religion in new religious beliefs. Although nearly all Samoans identify as Christians, there is still widespread knowledge of indigenous mythology and spirit lore. While all Christians subscribe to the belief in a Heaven and a Hell, there are few Samoans who would not recognize the word Pulu. Also, some people may believe that the creation myths apply to White people but not to Samoans.

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: The traditional tattoo is the Pe'a and is very ceremonial. Traditional Samoan tattooing of the pe'a can take weeks to complete and is very painful. It used to be necessary before a man could receive a Matai title but this is no longer required. Also women can receive tattoos recently although this does not have as much ceremony.

7.2 Piercings: There is a myth that the men of the island used to pierce the skin between their testicles as a puberty ritual however this statement has been debated.

7.3 Haircut: Short

7.4 Scarification: None

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Adornment can include earrings (made from coconut shells, pua and oyster shells, and boars' teeth), bracelets (made from coconuts), necklaces (made from bone, dried plant seeds, and coconuts), as well as hair adornments.

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: There are two kinds of hair clips for ladies. One is made from coconut fiber and the other is made from coconut shells.

7.8 Missionary effect: There has been a massive missionary/western effect on the island. This has led to innovations such as technology reducing the need for fishing and relying on stores and agriculture. In other matters, warfare has decreased on the island as a result of this influence. Other matters that have been influenced include marriage which is now conducted in manners closely associated with America.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: None Apparent

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: Siblings are said to have a very spiritual, important relationship even though kin avoidance and especially sibling avoidance are avoided.

8.2 Sororate, levirate: N/A

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

1. Holmes, Lowell D. *Samoan Village*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974. Print.
2. Keesing, Felix Maxwell, and Marie M. Keesing. *Elite Communication in Samoa; a Study of Leadership*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1956. Print.
3. "Nafanua: Saving the Samoan Rain Forest [Hardcover]." *Nafanua: Saving the Samoan Rain Forest: Paul Alan Cox: 9780716731160: Amazon.com: Books*. Web. 04 May 2012. <<http://www.amazon.com/Nafanua-Saving-Samoan-Rain-Forest/dp/0716731169>>.
4. McKay, Cyril Gilbert Reeves. *An Introduction to Samoan Custom*. Wellington, N.Z., 1957. Print.
5. Mead, Margaret. *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization*. New York: Morrow, 1961. Print.