

body/work: ASPECTS OF EMBODIMENT AND CULTURE IN SAMOA

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ASPECTS OF EMBODIMENT AND CULTURE IN SAMOA**

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor or Philosophy

McMaster University

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1994)
(Anthropology)

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Body/Work: Aspects of Embodiment and Culture in Samoa

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NUMBER OF PAGES:

ABSTRACT:

The body is a central reality of culture and a fundamental site at which culture is expressed, in action and in thought. Yet the body has not been systematically recovered by culture theory, because the body has usually been considered solely as an artifact of culture. In this text I argue that the body needs to be understood as the key site at which and through which culture is made possible, as an ongoing process of embodiment. Based on one year's fieldwork in Western Samoa, I describe some of the everyday practices through which embodiment is carried out as a culture-making process, and offer an outline of some basic propositions for a model of embodiment, as one way of making the body a central analytic issue in future developments in Anthropological theory. By linking everyday embodying practices with Samoan concerns for dignity, humility, and strength, I argue for a different way of looking at bodies, one which locates the body as a process of awareness and enactment, and not simply a thing culture acts upon.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A work such as this, which culminates so many years of obligations and assistance, produces more debts of gratitude than it may ever be possible to formally recognize. I am missing people in my thanks, not because they were not important, but because they are often too many to recall.

- I want to thank the people of the villages in Samoa where I worked for their interest, patience, and generosity.

- I most especially want to thank the members of the Aiga sā Manuleleua, my extended family in Samoa, for welcoming me, and providing with a space of comfort and affection in which to work. Particularly I acknowledge my deepest gratitude and affection for my matai, and the head of this remarkable family, Manuleleua Samesei'a Sene Lameta, whose patience, dignity, and good humour sustained and enlightened me, and his wife and my Samoan mother, Pai, whose death in the year after I left Samoa has been a loss I feel everyday.

- Many individual Samoans gave of their time and their energy during my stay. Specifically I want to thank Julie Lameta, my guide during those first confusing months; Silulu Elia, who taught me more about family and generosity than I ever had the right to expect; Albert, who spent so much time trying to explain the rules of cricket to me, that for that alone he deserves my lifelong gratitude; to the boys of Vaimoso, my neighbours and brothers - Penu, Siaso, Tagilima, Matau, Heni, Tielu - and to my sisters - Rosie, Tausala, Ruta, Sally, Martha, Mesepe, Matavai - for all the time we spent exploring ideas about growing up Samoan, and the future they hoped they would contribute to.

- My "son", Heston, always inspired and irritated and enthralled me, and I hope his new life in Hawai'i is everything his parents hope it will be.

- Mapesone, who found me sitting holding my head after a particularly stressful interview with the Minister of Immigration, and realized I needed a different kind of unconditional friend. His humour, his sense of play, and his understanding of the loneliness of always being a visitor, were often a still centre in what was a swirling bewilderment of sensations, ideas, and experiences.

- And my dearest friend, and closest companion, in so much of what I learned about Samoa, Jacko, to whose future I dedicate this work.

In Canada I had the luck of working with a supervisor, Dr. William Rodman, of great sensitivity, whose long-suffering support and encouragement have guided me through my entire graduate career. I am the anthropologist I am because of his attention and inspiration.

Dr. David Counts, who has been a friend and colleague for most of my stay at McMaster, continued to provide critical encouragement, as well as his not inconsiderable skills in dealing with administrative mazes.

Dr. Ann Herring, who came late but willingly to this process, did so with alacrity and probing questions, coupled with a capacity to be both supportive and critical, for which I can not thank her sufficiently.

Dr. Bil Thurston seemed at times to read my mind, and provide me with warnings and suggestions before I even knew I needed them.

Others throughout my academic career have provided support and ideas: Jacquie Fisher, who read this text with a loving eye; Mike Evans, whose own interests and insights on the Pacific have always triggered new understandings for me; the crew of other students who have moved through our studies together - Patricia DeFreitas, Gwen Reimer, Chris Justice and Wendy Renault - have been consistent companions, acute critics, and marvelous support; Rosita Jordan, Isabelle Brymer and Janice Weir are the heart of the anthropology department and their help over the years in ways I can no longer count has made working at McMaster a pleasure; and the other faculty and grad students, who know who they are, must be thanked for the conversations, the evenings at the Phoenix and for being friends when friends are needed.

The research on which this text is based was funded in part by the International Development Research Centre's Young Canadian Researchers Program. I want specifically to thank Margaret Owens, who shepherded my proposal, and the administration of my award with great skill and interest. Funding was also provided by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowship Program. Permission to conduct this research in Western Samoa was graciously granted by the Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Tofilau Eti.

My family in Canada have always been supportive, if perhaps a little confused, by the peculiar career I have chosen for myself. I can only thank them again for this.

Each act of writing, as T. S. Eliot once wrote, "is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate with shabby equipment" It is also an often lonely ending of something as well. The loneliness of the written word is often the deepest loneliness imaginable. I want to thank the Brodsky Quartet for their recording of the Shostakovitch String Quartets, which music formed the backdrop to the preparation of this text, and made the loneliness somewhat easier to bear. To the friends who listened to me discuss and discuss again the content of this text, thanks for your patience and your ears. To Stephen, who put up with so much by

putting up with so little of us, I can say nothing sufficient, and so will only say thank you for the life that continued around my often surly silences. And finally, to Trish Wilson, whose sudden death as I was completing this work, has robbed me of a friend and sister and partner in the madness of the world - a simple thank you.

I am responsible for this text, both in terms of its accuracy and for the argument I make. I am also morally responsible for the effect this text has on the people I lived and studied with. Writing anthropology, with its conflation of intimacy and evidence, friendship and analysis, will always be a troubling process for me. Committing experience to the page is never entirely satisfying, and never adequate to the lives such efforts seek to explore. To the friends and family I "made" while in Samoa - I wrote this as a son, a brother, and a friend, with love - always with love. I hope I have done you well.....

And yet these fine collapses are not lies
More than the pirouettes of any pliant cane.
Our obsequies are, in a way, no enterprise.
We can evade you, and all else but the heart:
What blame to us if the heart live on.

Hart Crane

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A Note on Pronunciation and Orthography

Samoan is a complex language, both when spoken and when written. A simple pronunciation key will help the reader with some of the Samoan words:

G [Gasegase] ā, ē, ī, ō, ū	pronounced pronounced	"ng" [singing] long vowel as in father where week lone moon
a, e, i, o, u	pronounced	short vowel as in cut set sit bond put
' [glottal stop]	pronounced	a slight tap before the vowel it precedes

Long and short vowels, as well as the glottal stop, alter the meaning of words.

eg: *tau* - deck of a fishing canoe and *tāu* -connected by kinship
ava - break in the reef and *'ava* - beard

As well, 'n' between two vowels is often pronounced 'ng' as in *lagona* [to hear or perceive] and *lagoga* [to weave a fine mat]. While this does not effect written Samoan, in speech such inconsistent variation allows for considerable punning and other plays on words. Vowel initial words with no glottal stop sound, to English speaking ears, as if they are being initiated with an 'h' sound, but this is a trick of the ear. As well, an 'l' following a short vowel adds the 'y' sound as in yes between the vowels [aiga = ai-yinga], while a short vowel following a 'u' is seperated by a 'w' sound [aua = ow-wa], although these are not actually present in the spelling of the word. All vowels are pronounced in Samoan words, though contiguous vowels are often blurred into what appears to non-Samoan speakers to be a single sound [tau = tao but sounds like tou as in out]. Unlike glides in English, however, both vowels are distinctly, though quickly, pronounced.

Chapter 1

Introduction and Agenda: The Body in Question and The Question of the Body

In a knot of eight crossings, which is about the average size knot, there are 256 different 'over-and-under' arrangements possible ... Make only one change in this 'over-and-under' sequence and either an entirely different knot is made or no knot at all may result.

The Ashley Book of Knots

I recall, and will always remember, the shock of first seeing a palm tree at night, rising in the dark as cool and slim as a ghost. And what nights, bigger than imagining: black and gusty and enormous, disordered and wild with stars. On such a night, after a long day of thunderous, dolorous storms, I borrowed a bike from a neighbour in the village in Western Samoa where I lived for a year, and rode ponderously up the village road toward the one small shop that sold American cigarettes. Set back from the road, thatched open walled houses and cottage-like bungalows were, in the brilliance of incandescent light against the darkness of a moonless Pacific night, a slide show of tableaux: family scenes and sleeping children, women hanging mosquito nets over mats or sitting in quiet circles talking and drinking cocoa, and clusters of teenage boys sitting just on the fringe of the web of light, laughing. Occasionally someone would call to me on the

road, ask where I was going or simply wish me a goodnight.

To reach the store, I had to pass over a bridge that crosses the often muddy stream that splits the village of Vaimoso down its centre. Bridges in Western Samoa are special places, because rivers and streams are popular thoroughways for *aitu* [often malicious spirit beings], who travel from the sky forest on the range of mountains which divide the main island of Upolu, to the sea. The streams and rivers become a nightly concourse of moving spirits. Rivers in Western Samoa are always places of respect and caution. At night they become places of real, sometimes fatal danger.

As I approached the bridge, I climbed down from my bike and pushed it cautiously along the road, looking up and down the Gasegase Stream as if looking both ways before crossing a busy street. The skin on the back of my neck and on my hands, holding the gripless rusted handlebar, began to prickle and moisten. I could feel the subtle grip of anxiety deepen my breathing, and my face tensed into an attentive pucker.

And then I was on the bridge and then I was over it, walking quickly several metres away before I climbed back on my bike and pedalled along to the store, and a soul soothing Camel.

I went to Western Samoa with a specific question in mind: how and why do Western Samoans choose between the two forms of healing available to them? However, the more I learned about the different aspects of illness and cure, the more often I had to shift my focus, and reexamine the implications of the

questions I was asking. The seemingly simple issue of decision making processes, a question that remains central to the kind of research I continue to do on Western Samoa and other Pacific societies, became entangled in a different set of questions, revolving around the process by which a person, or the person around them, makes the decision that he or she is, indeed, sick. This set of questions led me realize that to understand that set of practices, I first needed to begin to understand how the body is itself understood, before it can be understood as a sickened thing. This realization compelled me to recognize that to get at illness as one special case of body practice, I first needed an analytic frame that would allow me to understand what it means to have, and to be, a body at all. This search for such an analytic frame led me to begin disassembling the nature of the sick body in Western Samoan culture, asking what was being done, where and why and how, by whom, and according to what rules. From this I extended my focus to questions of how the body is understood and treated as a reliable and predictable locus of social knowledge and practical action, that is, the process of thinking about and enacting a meaningful body that I call embodiment: the combination, in practice, of organic sensations and form, cultural ideals and meanings, and the particular lived experience of individual bodies, on which and through which the meaning and effect of the body are enacted as an ongoing, fluid, process.

The body poses a fundamental puzzle for anthropology because it is simultaneously, the most obvious object in the social world, and the most elusive.

The argument I will make in what follows is that the body is a conundrum in that it is always present, an unavoidable object, and always changing, always being invented and reinvented. It is elusive and persistent, quietly constant and constantly disquieting, both a site of social action and one of its causes. Grasping the body analytically is difficult precisely because its presence is the most taken-for-granted aspect of sociality, rendering transparent the web of enactments through which people manage to engage the world and their bodies in it.

In those brief seconds as I moved toward, then over, and then away from the bridge over the Gasegase Stream, my body collided with my expectations in a mosaic of biology and memory and imagination, in an enactment both of my body and of the world with my body in it. The sweat on my palms, and the prickling skin on the back of my neck, were diacritics of an ongoing and reciprocal dialogue between what the body is as a thing in the universe, and what the body is as a meaningful project we are all engaged in, from that point of consciousness when we recognize where our body ends, and where the world begins. The body is a process through which we negotiate and manipulate that boundary, giving meaning and form to the thing we are in the world. It is a process through which that boundary between being in the world, and the world itself, shifts and vibrates with intention and attention. Through this we embody the world by embodying our self in it.

In this dissertation I will advance an outline of embodiment in Western Samoa, by focussing on the body as an ongoing process, rather than simply an

artifact of culture. Embodiment is a process that is continuous, shifting, and never complete, because the body is not only something we "do to", but also something we "do." That is to say, in doing something to the body, we are not only acting on an object, we are also enacting the body itself. The study of embodiment can open a window into this aspect of culture, making it possible to see culture constituted in the way people walk or play, in the way people treat illness, or initiate their young with scarring and ritual. A model of embodiment will allow anthropology to move beyond the grammar of bodies as solely objects acted upon, toward an understanding of how bodies themselves are created in everyday social action.

The Body Objected To: Theoretical Approaches to The Body

Most anthropological approaches to the body have failed to recover from the field of social action the processes through which the body is, in practice, enacted in the world. In general, such studies of the cultured body are a kind of encyclopedia of effects, a study of how culture is inscribed on the body. They assume a body prior to culture, which is manipulated, manoeuvred, and interpreted through a cultural lens. I want to explore some of these approaches briefly, to show how what I am proposing builds on, and departs, from what these studies have accomplished. However, this review cannot even begin to do justice to the proliferation of literature on the body since Marcel Mauss's **Techniques of the Body** first outlined an anthropology of the body nearly 60 years ago [Synnott 1993]. In recent years, but especially since the 1977 publication of Blacking's

edited volume, The Anthropology of the Body, the depth and range of literature in the social sciences and humanities which focusses, either explicitly or implicitly, on the body, has grown so dramatically that it is not unreasonable to speak of the anthropology of the body as an emerging sub-discipline in its own right. Indeed, the 1989 meetings of the American Ethnological Society devoted their entire scientific programme to the body.

Since the early 1980's several general discussions of the body, framed around issues of illness, health, and ethnopsychiatry, have been published [Glassner 1988; Stigler, Schweder and Herdt 1990; Helman 1990,1991; Featherstone, Hepworth and Turner 1991;Feierman and Janzen 1992; Lindenbaum and Lock 1993; Kunitz 1993; Good 1994]. Along with these general texts, there has been what Synnott [1993:228] refers to as a "veritable cascade" of books on special topics:

- pleasure [Ferguson 1990; Parker 1991; Tiger 1992];
- pain [Scary 1985;Morris 1991; DelVechhio-Good, Brodwin, Good and Kleinman 1992];
- sex and sexuality [Herdt 1982, 1984; Gallagher and Laquer 1987; Butler 1990, 1993];
- gender, gender ambiguity and body representations [Williams 1986; Hanna 1988; Clatterbaugh 1990; Epstein and Straub 1991; Roscoe 1991; Fuss 1991; Silverman 1992; Garber 1992; Herdt 1994];
- the discovery of the invisible interior of the body in Western art and medicine and its effect on the practice of body and self knowledge [Stafford 1991];
- emotions and the somaticization of cultural categories [Lutz 1988];
- AIDS and its effect on modern bio-social body politics [Bateson and Goldsby 1988; Crimp 1988; Sontag 1989;Herdt and Lindenbaum 1992; Farmer 1992];
- sexualized bodies and national identity [Mosse 1985; Theweleit 1987, 1989; Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaeger 1992];
- tattooing [Sanders 1989; Mascia-Lees and Sharpe 1992; Gell 1993]

- an increasing number of culturally specific ethnographic studies which use the body as the ground of enquiry - Papua New Guinea [Battaglia 1990; Weiner 1988, 1991; Gillison 1993; Lewis 1980; Frankel 1989]; Mexico [Finkler 1991]; Belau [Parmentier 1987]; Southern Africa [Comaroff 1985]; India [Alter 1993]; China [Zito and Barlow 1994]; North America [Martin 1987]; Ireland [1991]; Brazil [Parker 1991]; Australia (Pintupi)[Myers 1991] and The Phillipines [Ilongot] [Rosaldo, M. 1980; Rosaldo, R. 1980] to name but only a few.

As this partial list of body oriented studies suggests, the problem of the body as a theoretical object, returns and returns, in Coleridge's phrase, in 'obstinate resurrection'.

What separates most of these texts from what I am proposing here, however, is the tendency of most body studies to focus on specific kinds of bodies, or exotic instances of body practice, such as ritual, healing, or gender. In contrast, the model of the body in Western Samoa I will explore in this thesis seeks to demonstrate the linkages between the most trivial and the most exotic forms of body practice in the constitution of culture and action.

Medical Anthropological Approaches to The Body

More than almost any other subject in the social sciences, the study of human suffering has vexed and engaged thinkers and theorists for decades. I want to consider here three very general approaches this area of thinking has explored because I feel that, taken together, these perspectives represent the best that medical anthropology and sociology have offered, and open the greatest number of possibilities for further development.

David Mechanic [1974, 1978], for example, took up the challenge of Parsons's notion of the 'sick role'. From Mechanic's perspective, illness involves

the transfer of the person into a special state of being, distinctive from normal social roles, into what Susan Sontag [1978] calls the 'kingdom of the sick'. Sick role theory explores the processes through which a person is recognized as sick, is granted new status as a sick person, and details the obligations and privileges this new role entails, not only for the sick person, but for the people around him or her.

This idea of spaces of illness [Good 1994] advances the study of bodies and persons, because it opens illness to scrutiny as a set of practices. In recognizing the play of power and resistance, and of privilege and obligation, in the process of being ill and becoming well, sick role theory provides fundamental insights into the question of how the body is deployed as a strategy in social relations. By analyzing both illness and wellness as states or conditions negotiated over, sick role theory links the experience of the body to questions of agency and action, and exposes the body as a practice rather than only a thing practised upon.

However, there is also a fundamental limitation to the sick role approach. By virtue of its focus on roles, the body is conceived of as a thing reacted to, a not-me object [Petrunik and Shearing 1988; Winnicot 1986]. This confines our ability to see the body in action because it elides completely the question of how an actor comes to see his or her body as 'other'. By what practice does the body become super-corporeal, something the person acts on rather than something the person acts with. That is, the body in this model is a thing done to, is already

there in the world waiting to be acted upon, missing entirely the question of how the body, in practice, comes to have a meaningful presence, and how this presence maintained.

Brody [1987] in his work on how the stories we tell about illness help constitute the illness experience, Kleinman [1980] in his analysis of how beliefs are a fundamental aspect of the construction and experience of illness, and Helman [1991;1990] in his writings on the cultural aspects of illness experience, have attempted to move beyond the reifying limitations of the sick role model by building on the importance of intersubjective negotiation in understanding the process of illness and health. These authors focus on the question of illness and the body, and their relationship to the construction of self knowledge. They argue that illness is often about negotiations and arbitrations through which a person's sense of self is generated, justified, and legitimated. They recognize that the somatic phenomenon of illness cannot be disengaged from the somatizing effects of culture and they call into question the comforts of a universal biological body by arguing that culture restricts how the body can be experienced.

Such insights begin to locate the body at the nexus between culture and self awareness, but they do so by proposing a kind of fundamentally innocent, universal body onto which the trauma of illness as a cultural phenomenon is mapped. As far as it goes, this approach is central to any future development in our understanding of the body as a culturally centred epistemological phenomenon. Even with these refinements, however, the body remains a thing

acted upon, a kind of ur-object around which culture is practised.

Finally, Turshen's [1984, 1991] work on public health and political power in rural Africa, as well as other developments in Critical Medical Anthropology have advanced the study of the body. Work such as Turner [1984], on the sociology of power in illness and healing in Britain, and Harkin's [1994] recent work on the constitution of power, personhood and illness among the Heiltsuk people of the Central British Columbia coast, argue that illness, in its definition, epidemiology and practice, cannot be isolated from structures of power. Building on Foucault's [1973] notion that the 'clinical gaze' is a political process, and not only a scientific or curative one, these authors connect illness and the body to larger processes of political authority, domination, and surveillance. They expose the micro-physics of motivation which affect how the body is known, knowable, and controlled, by drawing attention to larger political issues of who defines illness and health, who has the power to enforce rules of proper body practice, and how resistance, through the use of illness and the body, can be linked to larger social practices of power and authority.

Taken together, these accomplishments in medical anthropological theory provide fertile prospects for developing increasingly sophisticated understandings of how bodies are invented and manipulated in social action. They also ignore what, for me, remains a fundamental question. While recognizing that in illness practice, as with all other body practices, there is an object, 'a body', out there in the social field to be acted upon, the problem of how that 'object' is constituted

and maintained is never addressed. Rather, each of these approaches begins with the assumption of a fundamental and universal body, which cultures act upon, without raising the vexing question of how anyone ever comes to apprehend the body at all. This is not simply a question of self awareness, or of the psychology of body image and body sensation.¹ Sensations occur, after all, independently of our 'recognizing' them. My concern is not with whether bodies exist as organic processes, but with how we come to attach meaning to these processes. What these and other medical anthropological models have not yet addressed is the question of how the body comes to be meaningful at all.

Recent work in ethno-medicine [for example Nichter 1992; Frankel and Lewis 1989] has taken up the challenge of this limitation in medical anthropology by exploring how cultural systems of embodiment constitute bodies differently, breaking through the restriction of a universal body by arguing that bodies need to be understood as culturally distinctive, an insight which has informed the development of the ideas this dissertation explores. By taking ethnobiologies seriously and granting them the same epistemological and practical weight often automatically granted to 'scientific' biology, these authors raise questions about the nature of body experience by arguing that it is not simply a question of different cultures having different understandings of body processes. Rather, different cultures might have different bodies altogether. The *to'ala*, or stomach-heart, of Samoan anatomy, while not appearing in any scientific biology text, must, according to the arguments advanced by those working in the field of

ethnomedicine, be recognized as a real organ for those who experience its existence, and the distress it can produce. This raises the question of how bodies are constituted as meaningful things more fully than conventional medical anthropology and medical sociology, without denying the insights and advances these models have provided. More than simply adding new data to the question of how bodies and illnesses are done, ethnomedical research has expanded the scope of questions medical anthropology can ask by problematizing the very nature of the body itself.

The Body as Art and Artifice

One of the most prominent places occupied by body studies in general anthropology has been the study and analysis of body modification practices in societies around the world. These studies examine such diverse practices as body painting, tattooing, circumcision and other forms of altering surgery, costume, and the many other kinds of attachments and alterations to which the body is subjected. They offer a more complete picture of how the body can be deployed and manipulated as a social process.

Whether O'Hanlan's [1989] analysis of body decoration in Papua New Guinea, Knauff's [1989] discussion of the poetics of body marking throughout Melanesia, or Herdt's [1982] edited volume on the embodying effects of initiation surgery on young boys in Papua New Guinea, the study of body modification has been one of anthropology's most substantial contributions to the opening up of a vigorous and critical understanding of the nature of the body in social

space. Such studies recognize that the body is an important surface on which social action can be deployed and enacted. They also draw our attention to the fact that, in looking at how the surface of the body is modified by social action, it is necessary to relate these superficial alterations and expressions to the way the body is experienced and practised as a totality. Studies of body modification remind us that the body is not only surfaces, it is scents and smells and ways of moving; it is internal processes and webs of external connections which draw together all the fundamental processes of culture at the site of culture's most intimate expression; it is an active matrix of possibilities as much as it is a machine that eats and sleeps and hungers and hurts.

This has also been a deficiency in the anthropology of the body modification. Although body modification studies have long recognized and dealt with the question of the invention of the body, they have most often done so either implicitly or superficially. That is, body modification studies are about how the body is an active invention, since they deal with the questions of how the modification and experience of the body are inseparable, but they do so in the context of a model of the body as a singular, universal phenomenon. Like medical anthropology, and perhaps precisely because body modification studies combine biology and aesthetics, the question of how that canvas is arrived at is not directly addressed. The evidence of modification as actively creating the body, in the sense, for example, that nosebleeding of Gnao boys remakes their bodies as stronger and as male [Lewis 1980], is constrained by the theoretical limitations

which posit a fundamental body onto which this transformation is a superficial overlay, theorizing body modification from the institutions of modification down onto the body rather than "theorize[ing these] institutions from the body up" [Frank 1991:49].

Relating bodies as artifacts of social action to the wider institutions within which bodies are deployed is important. However, I am proposing an approach which takes the focus on the body in a different direction than previous the body have gone, toward a model of observation and analysis that exposes the totality of the body as ongoing and invented, rather than encompassing the body in some other form of social totality, of which the body is simply an object or objective. In each of the attempts to theorize the body I have described above, the presence of the body as a meaningful thing has been treated, at worst, as completely unproblematic and, at best, as a simple artefact of the practices, whether diagnosis and healing or ritual modification, which have been applied to it. What is left to be explained is Mauss's recognition, over half a century ago, that the body is not an object at all, but "the condition for objectification" [Cited in Deutsch 1993:11]

The Body in History

There is an area of study outside anthropology that has made significant contributions to what I see as the process of building a model of the social body. The development of a field of historical body study has begun to unravel the puzzle of the body, to which the preceding paragraphs have alluded.² Bodies

have histories, not only in terms of beliefs or practices, but in terms of each individual body itself. That is the puzzle this dissertation explores. How are bodies enacted as particularized sets of practices which inexorably invent the very body itself, rather than simply revising how the body is understood, creating the particular body of a specific cultural moment, by the practices through which it is understood and employed?

Early attempts at body history, such as Gallagher and Lacquer's [1987] studies of the emergence of the modern sexualized body, begin from an assumption that there had been some fundamental shift in how the body is understood, a function in part of new knowledge, and in part, of new political power structures. Similarly, Martin's work on reproductive technologies [1987] focussed on the shifts which had occurred in the way bodies, as *a priori* objects, could be manipulated and constrained as a result of changes in the way the body was technically understood. More recent studies build on Foucault's assertion that the nature of the gaze turned on the body determines how that body is treated and manoeuvred in relationships of power [1973, 1979]. For example, Allen Feldman [1991] explores how, in the context of political disarray and civil war in Northern Ireland, the body is constantly reformulated and re-experienced in the political field such that individual experiences of the body are often the very engine which drives political action. His analysis of the process of embodiment in relation to the IRA prisoner's hunger strikes of the 1970's and 1980's argues for an understanding of political action in Northern Ireland in terms of the kinds of

bodies the various antagonists have, whether the emotionless and insensitive body of the "hardman" or the machine body of the British Troops. Feldman argues that the civil war has created these kinds of bodies, and that once created, their existence perpetuates the war that has created them, since their existence has come to depend on that war. These kinds of bodies are derived from the history of the conflict. Through them, not only is the body historicized, but history is somaticised.

In another example, Duden [1991] describes the medical experiences of a group of women in 18th. century Germany, and argues that the very bodies they had were different from the bodies we know today. Not only their knowledge, but the way they experienced menstruation as a heating up of the blood, made their bodies separate from modern German women's bodies. She challenges us to think about the organic body as something which is, itself, altered by the practices of embodiment through which it is understood and experienced. In effect, what Duden is suggesting is that we stop thinking in terms of differing medical or somatic models as ideas about the same basic thing, and begin to think in terms of distinctive bodies altogether. Her work argues that 'Western' scientific medicine and biology are also ethnomedicine and ethnobiology, and that they should be treated analytically with the same critical rigour we bring to bear on those of other cultures and times. Her call for a rigorous effort to recapture what she calls the 'lost bodies of the past' has been an important motivation in my own work, drawing me to understand that to get to this archaeology of previous forms

of the body, it is first necessary to devise a method for excavating the present.

One contribution to the development of these methods is the work of Scheper-Hughes and Lock [1987], and of Lindenbaum and Lock [1993], on the social basis of lived bodies. In their 1987 paper, Scheper-Hughes and Lock argue that we need to think of the body as having a tripartite structure, that is

(1) as a phenomenally experienced *individual body-self*, (2) as a *social body*, a natural symbol for thinking about relationships among nature, society and culture and (3) as a *body-politic*, an artifact of social and political control(1987:6 emphasis in original)

They recognize that the body, in sickness and in health, is "a form of communication . . . through which nature, society and culture speak simultaneously" (31). It is their insight, as Frank [1991] notes, to synthesize the concurrent puzzles of being a body, having a body, and having a body that is done to, and to open the question of how medical anthropology can begin to address this conflation.

Lindenbaum and Lock take up this challenge in the introduction to their edited volume of conference papers, noting that a renewed critical vigour in the anthropology of the body can help us to understand

how different practices change modes of knowing and conceptions of the self . . . by moving them to a new field site, at once familiar, but now conceptually different, since the body itself, with its insistent subjectivity, provokes us to inquire into the historical processes whereby biological and cultural phenomena are mutually determined [1993: xiv]

By exploring how different histories, and different moments in history, produce different bodies, not only ideologically, but also experientially, the contributors to this volume raise questions about how an anthropology of the body can continue

to develop.³

The Body as Paradigm

Anthropology has been over-burdened in its history by the pursuit of an unified theory of culture, but the one thing anthropologists are guaranteed to disagree on is a working definition of culture. Indeed, it is the very richness of culture as an analytic frame which obstructs its fruitfulness as a focus of knowledge in anthropology. The points of connection which make up 'cultures' are too various, too ill defined, and their salience as general principles is either immeasurable or constantly shifting in the histories and agenda of both the people observed and the people observing. Myth, politics, ritual, and superstructure and infrastructure, make up, both in the sense of being components of, and in the sense of inventing, cultures. It is not that culture is unknowable, but simply that what can be known about culture is never static, and not the same thing to all participants.

At the same time, however sophisticated our attempts to codify 'culture' as an analytic focus, the act of analysis in terms of cultural wholes is itself an 'enculturing act' which cannot move beyond the fundamental difficulty that the only culture anthropology knows is that culture which it invents within the frames of its theoretical orientations and its political, narrative, and even moral agenda [Abu-Lughod 1993]. The anthropology of culture struggles against the compelling problem that the enculturing gaze of the anthropological observer is teleological. Even those efforts to critique this effect [Marcus and Fisher 1986; Clifford and

Marcus 1986] simply invert the problem by adding a different, ill-defined, totalizing, enculturating gaze which looks back at the anthropologist.

Recent work on the body has offered what I think is one solution to this theoretical puzzle, by proposing that we move our analytic gaze toward the most intimate process in human existence, the process by which we come to have meaningful, practical, socially effective bodies. Thomas Csordas has made the most substantial contribution to date, through his analysis of the principles of embodiment which underlie Christian Charismatic healing in America [Csordas 1994, 1993, 1990]. He argues that what is needed in anthropology is a fundamental paradigm shift away from the question of aggregates and collectivities, to a more basic ground of experience, the individual's presence in the world as a meaningful body. Combining phenomenology and Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Csordas argues that we need a new model of culture which locates the body, a historically and experientially specific body, as an important, if not the most important, site at which culture is enacted. He suggests that we need to understand culture not only in terms of what people believe, but in terms of how they do or believe anything about the world as an aspect of constituting their bodies. Csordas is arguing for a different model of existence which takes, as its fundamental problem, how any person comes, in the course of their organic existence, to understand how to live and move as a body in the world. Taking up that call is, at least in part, what this text endeavours to do.

Recovering the Samoan Body: Prospectus and Agenda

In **Natural Symbols**, [1970] Mary Douglas writes of the two bodies, of the self, and of society, and argues that "sometimes they are so near as to be almost merged [and] sometimes they are far apart. *The tension between them allows the elaboration of meaning*" [1970:112, emphasis added]. Meaning is at the heart of the acts of embodiment this text will explore: meaning as a process of constituting the world, as an artifact of action, and as the foundation of how bodies are made. The thoughtful body, the body upon which this dissertation focuses, is the body imagined into existence by attention and interpretation and practice. It is not a body mapped on top of some organic body, whether genital or gustatory or respiratory, although the thoughtful body can never be isolated from these organic realities. Instead, the thoughtful body is the account given of those features of the organic body which, through the lived history of being a body, each person enacts, as a fundamental ground of social action. The thoughtful body is the 'real', lived, meaningful body. What I am proposing is a shift in body studies from the question of managing bodies as "biological, material entit[ies]" [Csordas 1993:135] to a focus on the body as an ongoing practice of constitution in which semantic information [models, concepts, ideals] is not separated from episodic information [particular experiences, particular lived bodies], that is, as "an indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and the mode of presence and engagement in the world" [Csordas 1993:135]. Not only are 'bodies good to think', to revitalize an observation of Levi-Strauss's, they are

also necessary to think. The primary issue my discussion in this text raises is the puzzle that, without bodies there is no culture and that without culture, there are no bodies.

A student once responded to a lecture on the nature of culture with the comment that 'culture is the process of creating culture'. To his comment I would add the codicil that the body, as well, is about creating a body. The tautology is unavoidable. This thesis directs attention to the fundamental issue of the constructedness of the world and of our presence in it.⁴

Study of the thoughtful body can be useful in the continuing revitalization of the concept of culture in anthropology, in the same way as the practice of embodiment is central to the ongoing vitalization of culture as a lived experience. The thoughtful body focusses attention on culture as the constitution and deployment of meaningful things in constituted, meaningful space. The move I am proposing involves a shift from an anthropology of the done to an anthropology of doing, by recognizing that the done, that is culture as retrospection, is better understood as something we are always doing, culture as prospective, as the generation of possibility. It entails a recognition that being and experience, conjoined as they are in the constitution of this ongoing, projective, culture process, are always decentred, transient, and cumulative. Lived experience and culture are not distinguishable. Lived experience does not 'happen' inside of culture, and culture is not the simple coral-like accumulations of lived experience. Culture is a verb, it is active and participatory, and an emergent property of the

engagement between the process of generating meaning, the practices of embodiment, and the relationships of unique individuals in socially meaningful space. This view of culture and the body emphasizes the need to shift our focus away from the notion of body knowledge as a repertoire available to actors by redefining the body as a generative practice rather than a reactive one. That is, the body is a practice which needs to be seen as an indivisible fraction of the constitution of culture itself.

To emphasize the importance of this aspect of the study of embodiment, the practices and habits I will talk about in the chapters to follow should be understood as no more exotic than what you or I did this morning when we washed and dressed and went about our various jobs. To reinforce this ordinariness I have chosen the aspects of Samoan bodies I will explore explicitly for their mundane, quotidian quality. This is to ensure that what I have to say about Samoan embodiment is not construed as strange, and to convey to you that the process of embodiment is present in every act. Indeed, the question of where to look for insight into embodiment is moot. Look anywhere, since in every moment of every act, the practice of embodiment is necessarily and always present. Whether the elaborate manipulations of a circumcision ritual in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea or the joyful dance of a twelve year old boy around the stalls of the new market in Apia, Western Samoa, on finding a shiny dollar coin among the debris of taro leaves and cigarettes, acting in the world in any capacity is an act of embodiment, and deserves close and careful scrutiny

and consideration.

The choice of sites of body enactment on which the following chapters are based is also framed by the kinds of understandings I came to have about the precepts and concerns Western Samoans bring to bear on their everyday affairs. Although I will develop these ideas more fully in the next chapter, I want to note that my selection, while guided by a desire for simplicity, and an avoidance of the exotic, was nonetheless affected by three fundamental concerns -about dignity, humility, and strength - which pervade all social action in Western Samoa. In choosing aspects of embodiment to discuss in this text, I have done so with an eye to demonstrating how these three key themes underlie all body practices for Samoans. In tracing the outlines of how the body is enacted in Western Samoa, I will show how these three concerns form the experiential ground on which Samoans live in, and through their bodies.

The chapters which follow will layout the observational ground for a model of embodiment, using Western Samoa as an example. Chapter 2 will present a general ethnographic overview of life and living in contemporary Western Samoa, a basic catalog of the concerns and conditions of life in the islands. In Part 2, **INVENTION** [Chapters 3.1 and 3.2] I will describe how the body is initially conceived and framed, from Samoan models of reproduction and sexual substances, through infant socialization and learning, to more general questions of constraints on body style and expression in the act of sexing, in appropriate costume, and in movement. The next section, **DEPLOYMENT**, [Chapters 4.1.

and 4.2] will enquire into questions of discipline and surveillance in such fields of action as sex and play, labour, fighting, punishment, and circumcision and tattooing. I will describe how issues of authority, cooperation, and the cultural construction of space are related to the kinds of bodies enacted by these practices. Finally, in Section 3, **PERIL AND PRESERVATION** [Chapter 5] I will examine issues of embodiment and meaning in the field of anatomy, illness, curing, and health, exploring the relationship between these aspects of body practice and obligation, shame, and dignity.

In the concluding chapter [Chapter 6] I will return to the theoretical issues raised in this introduction. I will offer a preliminary outline of an agenda for developing a critical model of embodiment, drawing together the ethnographic web described in the central, substantive chapters.

An issue I will not address in detail in these chapters is that of sexing and gender. Gender and sexing in Western Samoa is a subject of great complexity, and is an issue I continue to work on, in ongoing research on third gendered males in the Pacific. I feel the study of 'gendering the world' [vis Abu-Lughod 1993] is an area to which a comprehensive model of embodiment can make a significant contribution. However, to engage this complex and contentious topic, in other than the briefest way, here, would not be practical, given the two critically different objectives I will pursue in this text.

One is ethnographic. In describing aspects of embodiment in Western Samoa, this text adds to a growing body of ethnography on Western Samoa

which has been published in the last decade.⁵ Chapters 2 through 5 can be read as a straightforward ethnography of aspects of the Samoan body, building on this growing body of new work. They form an ethnography in the sense in which Jackson compares ethnographic discourse to Polynesian string figures used to tell and illustrate stories, that is, " a game we play with words, the thread of an argument whose connection with reality is always oblique and tenuous, which crosses to and fro, interlacing description with interpretation, instruction with entertainment, but always ambiguously placed . . . "[1989:187].

However, the second critical objective of this text is, I feel, more important. I have advanced an argument here to the effect that the body needs to be more closely attended to in anthropological study because, in the daily enactments of the body, the web of culture is actualized. What the balance of this text endeavours to demonstrate are the sorts of issues and analyses which an ethnography of the body will need to explore. In this very critical sense, the Samoan bodies I will describe in the remainder of this text are illustrations of a method for looking at bodies, as much as they are an example of the practice of embodiment. The model of the thoughtful body this text proposes by example will require looking more closely at the evidence of what people are up to with their bodies, connecting these acts and practices to the wider issue of constituting culture. The chapters that follow will explore one way of approaching the task of describing the relationships between bodies and ideas about bodies, and the day to day activities through which they create and recreate each other. Taken

together, this text is cumulative and exploratory, while at the same time, theoretically elusive. I am generating a model, rather than applying one. The chapters which form the core of this text should be read as different vantage points from which to survey the same geography. Like the early map makers devising their charts, while never losing sight of the shore that guided them, in what follows I triangulate several features of a metaphorical geography of the Samoan body, in order to begin to devise a method for making that geography sensible.

There is also another issue I will not discuss, but for different reasons. I will stress the fluidity and changeableness of *fa'a Samoa* [The Samoan Way] throughout this thesis, because the substance of embodying practices in Samoa is always undergoing transformation. Television, migration to America and New Zealand, and the increasing influence of formal education, have each been major sources of influence and change [Holmes and Holmes 1992; Ochs 1988:189-210]. However, this is no different than inter-island influences between Samoa and its neighbours, in the period before European contact. There has always been a process of fertilization and influence from outside Samoa which has been an important aspect of how *fa'a Samoa* is practiced as an emergent order of propriety and tradition. To overemphasize modernization as a source of change runs the risk of creating a false dichotomy between authentic and introduced Samoan practices, which would belie the flexibility, and inherent adaptiveness, which have always been a part of these practices. I will not address either the

source or direction of change, except where it is directly and explicitly relevant to the descriptive point I am making. Without denying the importance of such an analysis, I want to suggest that before we can discern where influences and changes have come from, we first need to discern the ground of practice on which these influences and changes are engaged.

I started with a story about how the possibility that an *aitu* would push me off my bicycle made me sweat and grow pensive as I pushed my bike across a bridge in the village in Western Samoa where I lived. That night the *aitu* left me alone. Or did it? That I remember that night, my skin retaining its own recollection of the tension across my shoulders, of the sweat that tickled the corners of my eyes as I tried to peer over the abutment into the dark water below, suggests that my own body, my own process of being and doing a body in the world now contains the presence, and the clear and present danger, of malicious Samoan spirits. My body has been transformed and made a different body than it was before that and the many other nights I spent learning to understand Samoan bodies, learning to see the differences and the commonalities in the body that I was doing and in those that were being done around me.

Endnotes: Chapter 1

1. The literature on body image psychology, spanning more than 50 years of research, is summarized in Fisher [1986]. This area of study of the body has explored the idiosyncratic, cultural, and pathological, aspects of body experience almost exclusively in European or American contexts. I will not deal with psychological perceptions of the body in this thesis, however, because my main focus is on the larger relationship between embodiment, and cultural ideals and values. Psychological studies of Samoan body image, which I feel would contribute to the argument I will advance here, require specialized research methods. This is an area of the study of Samoan bodies I am pursuing in continuing research.

2. Some of the best work in this area have been gathered in Feher's three volume **Fragments for a History of the Human Body** [Feher 1989]. Of particular note, Knauff's analysis of the poetics of body modification in Melanesia expands such studies from a focus on the aesthetics of design to a consideration of how these practices not only mark identity, but enact it as an ongoing process in societies where social identity is rapidly changing. Bynum discusses the relationships between food and gender in women's religious practices in the late middle ages in Europe, linking the experience of the transubstantiated host of the Christian Eucharist to issues of women's power and social position in patriarchal societies. [1989:160-219, and see also Bynum 1987]. Perhaps most important for future study of the body as a cultural and historical phenomenon, Duden provides a comprehensive annotated bibliography of body studies [1989:470-578]

3. For example, Fabrega [1993] explores how bio-psychiatry, because it is a practice of moral assessment of the qualities of the self, needs to be deconstructed as a knowledge practice in order to expose its body producing affect, while Comaroff [1993] argues that anatomists emphasis on the savage and simian qualities of Africans not only effected European perceptions of, and reactions to, African bodies, but also effected African's experiences of their own bodies.

4. I refer here to Berger and Luckman's [1967] work on the sociology of constituting the world; Gergen's [1985] review of the importance of the concept of social constructionism in psychology; Harre [1986] and Lutz [1988], whose work on the cultural constitution of emotional experience locates social constructionist studies in some of the most intimate aspects of a person's life; and Whitman's [1993] discussion of the practical value of social constructionist models in Western medical practice.

5. For example, Ochs's [1988] on socialization, language acquisition, and cultural knowledge, Mageo's work on such issues as gender and sexuality [1992], spirit

possession [1991], and the nature of self awareness in Western Samoa [1989], MacPherson and MacPherson's [1990] study of the history and current practice of 'traditional' healing, and most recently, Duranti's [1994] examination of the constitution of political authority through speech acts.

Chapter 2

Knowing Samoa: History and Place In Contemporary Western Samoa

So much of this I saw with the literary eye, or with the aid of literature. A stranger here, with the nerves of the stranger, and yet with the knowledge of the language and the history of the language and the writing, I would find a special kind of past in what I saw. . .

V.S. Naipaul - The Enigma of Arrival

One afternoon, while clearing my shelves, I checked the indices of 11 introductory level anthropology textbooks that I had accumulated. Samoa appeared in each of the 11 texts. The only comparable entry was the generic "Eskimo", which also appeared in all 11. It would seem that no other society has been as scrutinized and analyzed as Samoa. This, at least, is the appearance.

Much of Samoa's currency in anthropology, however, has been the result of the personality, and public role, played by Margaret Mead. It would not be unfair to suggest that while Samoa appears to be one of the most well known societies in the catalogue of human diversity which anthropology has compiled, what, in fact, is well known, are Margaret Mead's use of Samoa as a way of telling, mostly Americans, something about their own lives. The images of happy-go-lucky tropical islanders, and of anxiety free teenagers romping in the Pacific

surf, are less about Samoa, than they are about America.

Perhaps in response to the over-formalizing effect of this 'use' of Samoa as a moral tale, other work in Samoa has been remarkable for its consistency and rigour, and for its emphasis on the fluidity of Samoan culture. Shore [1977], for example, analyzes the connections between action, role, and context, in Samoan identity and personhood, arguing that for Samoans, identity is something drawn from the circumstances a Samoan finds himself or herself in. There are, he suggests, no fixed and rigid roles or identities in Samoa, only raw material in the form of skills and relationships between members, through which Samoans negotiate and renegotiate their sense of who they are in the world.

In his 1978 thesis, Keene analyzes the central role of surveillance and visibility in Samoan social control. He describes how all social action in Samoa is carried out in public, with the effect that structures of social control are underdeveloped. Systems of formal punishment, fixed rules of behaviour, and strictly applied sanctions derived from a standardized formula of propriety, are not components of Samoan social life, because the remarkable 'visibility' of Samoan sociality makes abstract and depersonalized structures of social control unnecessary.

Two different studies of Samoan psychology [Maxwell 1969, Gerber 1975] have also stressed the importance of contextualization and fluidity in understanding Samoan personality and social life. Gerber explores the cultural meaning of, and socialization into, patterns of emotion experience and

expression, arguing that Samoan emotion is tied to the immediate experience of roles derived from particular contexts throughout a person's life. The range of recognizable emotions, and the forms of their expression, are not finite and invariable. Rather, emotional life in Samoa is changeable and flexible, within a frame of restraint, which shifts as the social context shifts. Maxwell's study of Samoan temperament explores how Samoan extroversion and friendliness is a function of this flexibility, arguing that Samoan personality is being constantly renegotiated as Samoans move through different contexts and conditions in their lives.

Disagreements among Samoanists, except for the acrimony of Freeman's attack on Mead [Freeman 1983], have most often been about the implications of this fundamental fluidity for understanding life in Samoa. Mageo, for example, criticizes Shore's description of a fixed nature/culture dichotomy in Samoan ideology, arguing that the concepts *aga* [socially appropriate characteristics of a given person in a given context], and *loto* [qualities of behaviour which resist social conditioning], need to be understood as situational and interpenetrating, and not as essential and fixed qualities in Samoan self awareness [Mageo 1989]. Shore [1981], on the other hand, critiques the over-formalized model of gender Mead applies to Samoa. Instead, he argues, gender in Samoa is constituted in a flexible combination of gender and other social identities, sexuality and sexual desire, and reproductive responsibility, making gender roles changeable depending on the context in which they are performed [Shore 1981].

What each of these studies stress is that life in Samoa is never static.

Fa'a Samoa, the Samoan Way, is a kind of short hand Samoans themselves use to indicate a wide range of things, from their perception of how their ancestors lived, to their persistent concern with propriety and a truly Samoan way of living, to the tension between what many see as the conflicting influences of tradition, and the need for modernization and development. *Fa'a*, as a prefix, is complicated because it indicates, among its other meanings, aspiration to something, that is, a causal path toward rather than a fixed code or standard. While *Fa'a Samoa* is spoken of as a totalizing code, it is a code which is sought after or pursued, rather than adhered to or obeyed. It is, as one informant put it to me, "a Samoan's dream of what Samoa should be", a process of desire, rather than a fixed standard of regulation.

This recognition has informed my own approach to Samoa, and the research reported and discussed in this text. This chapter describes the conditions of that research, and reviews, in general, the nature and structure of contemporary life in Western Samoa.

METHODS AND INTENTIONS

This text is based on fieldwork conducted primarily in three villages in Western Samoa, between September 1991 and September 1992. I lived with a Samoan family, adopted as a 'fictive' son and brother from the moment of my arrival, because of my friendship with the second oldest son, whom I had met while he was studying in Canada. During this time I carried out extensive interviews, subjected my hosts and friends to questionnaires and other formal exploratory protocols, attended diagnostic visits with both 'local' healers and Western trained doctors and nurses, conducted focus group interviews with church youth groups and Women's Health Committees, attended and participated in meetings of village chiefs and interviewed government officials and teachers. I conducted surveys in several villages, including a detailed illness history survey of 92 people, as well as carrying out a questionnaire survey with representative samples of the residents in three villages. Along with these formal talks and instruments, I engaged my neighbours and relatives throughout the three villages in hours and days of conversations. This included a cluster of 6 key advisors who never hesitated to give of their time and knowledge. While I worked with and interviewed healers, the main focus of my interviews were with patients themselves and, in particular, I conducted 67 open ended interviews with informants, who were asked to recount, with little or no direction from me, the events surrounding an illness which they had experienced. I also conducted in depth interviews on eating habits and the meaning of food and collected detailed

sexual histories.

At the same time, anonymity and confidentiality are important issues in fieldwork because, as anthropologists, we are often asking our informants to talk to us about things which are not only private, but may be secret or dangerous. Out of respect for my advisors and consultants in Samoa, and for their desire for confidentiality, all names, except those of my immediate family in Samoa, are pseudonyms. I use my immediate family's real names at their request. In all cases, I have discussed the issue of confidentiality with informants, and with my family, and have abided by each of their requests for privacy, not using information which was given to me in confidence, but not meant for public discussion. In the case of my immediate family, I discuss nothing in this text which violates the privacy of our homelife, always relying on information from other sources, even when the knowledge was so close at hand. To do otherwise would turn my participation in my Samoan family's life into an exercise in surreptitious observation rather than what it was, a relationship of affection and kindness. In some cases place names have been changed or omitted, although the name of the village in which I lived during my fieldwork, Vaimoso, has not been changed, at the explicit request of the villagers themselves.

As important, perhaps more important, this text is based on the determination I made to do whatever my hosts and hostesses did. I took as my starting point Michael Jackson's point about fieldwork and being a body, which I would like to quote in its entirety:

Many of my most valued insights into Kuranko social life have followed from . . . [the] . . . cultivation and imitation of practical skills: hoeing on a farm, dancing, lighting a kerosene lantern properly, weaving a mat, consulting a diviner. To break the habit of using a linear communicational model for understanding bodily praxis, it is necessary to adopt a methodological strategy of joining in without ulterior motive and literally putting oneself in the place of another person: inhabiting their world. Participation thus becomes an end in itself rather than a means of gathering closely-observed data.... [T]o stand aside from the action, take up a point of view and ask endless questions, led only to a spurious understanding and increased the phenomenological problem of how I could know the experience of the other. By contrast, to participate bodily in everyday practical tasks was a creative technique which often helped me grasp the sense of an activity by using my body as others did. This technique also helped me break my habit of seeking truth at the level of disembodied concepts and decontextualized sayings. To recognize the embodiedness of our Being-in-the-world is to discover a common ground where self and other are one. For by using one's body in the same way as others in the same environment, one finds oneself informed by an understanding which may then be interpreted according to one's own custom or bent, yet which remains grounded in a field of practical activity and thereby remains consonant with the experience of those among whom one has lived.

While words and concepts distinguish and divide, bodiliness unites and forms the grounds of an empathic, even universal, understanding. . . . The way learning to light a fire disclosed new understanding for me suggests that we might recognize a reality revealed through what we do which is at once the matter and the measure of what we say and think. After all, as the Kuranko adage says: "The word fire won't burn down a house." [1983:331]

Playing rugby or weeding gardens, helping care for young children, being treated by Samoan healers when I was sick, and receiving my own "Samoan" tattoo, are as important to this text as the formal interviews, questionnaires and surveys I employed during my fieldwork. Throughout my stay I performed the duties expected of a son, brother, and uncle and participated in all the daily work and concerns as a family member, responsibilities which I have maintained since my

return to Canada by participating in important family decisions, and by contributing financially to family projects as an overseas son. I listened and watched and did as my family did, enveloping myself in the day to day labour and pleasure of life in Samoa as intimately and consistently as my status as a 'white, educated, older unmarried man' would allow. I combined formal data collection, the aggregation of things people say when directly questioned, with the personal experience of living and working as a member of a family, walking a line between participant and investigator which is not always easy to sustain, but which is at the heart of anthropology as a method of seeing the world. The resulting data, both in the formal sense of interview transcriptions and questionnaire coding data, and in the sense of the experience of living with, and as a part of, a Samoan family, which is inscribed in my memory and on my skin, combines practice and practicality in a web of different kinds of knowledge which, when taken together, serve as the foundation of a personal, but rigorous understanding.

With Jackson's insights in mind, this text is always as much about my own presence as an enacted body in the Samoan social field, as it is about the bodies of Samoans around me. A major irony is unavoidable: in writing about the body being done by Samoans, I am writing as a body engaged in its own enactment. My own embodying experience shapes and defines what I am seeing and doing as a body trying to light a fire in the rain while a group of Samoan boys watch and quietly laugh. Reflexivity begins and ends with this recognition on my part, that

what I saw and did, and what I say and do now, are filtered through my own embodying practices - of coming to experience illness, both of those around me and my own, as Samoan experiences; of climbing coconut trees, tentatively, and with my eyes firmly trained on the ground below me; through the hours spent with the young men of one village clearing and re-clearing a cyclone-damaged taro garden; through the deaths of loved ones and friends, both while in Samoa and since; through the fights I narrowly escaped, and through the acts of intimacy and connection, and the acts of privacy and exclusion, that pervade everyday life. One thing that I firmly believe must be at the core of a model of embodiment is this sense that in studying bodies, our own callouses and machete cuts, illnesses and desires, are as important a part of the field research as the notebooks of myths and interview protocols that weighed down my suitcase on my return home [see also Rosaldo 1989:1-21].

The balance of this chapter is a general review of what can be reasonably asserted about the nature and mechanics of everyday Samoan life. To do this, I combine previous work on Samoa: Shore's work on the political structure of Samoan society [1977, 1982], Mead's discussions of childrearing and social control [1961, 1969], and recent work by linguists [Ochs 1988; Duranti 1994] on the constitution of Samoan social order through language learning, and through speech acts. I have also been guided by Holmes's critical reproduction of Mead's earlier work [1957], and by his discussion of changes in Samoan village life, from the 1930's to the 1980's [Holmes 1958; Holmes and Holmes 1992]. To these

sources I add my own data and interpretations, not so much building on their work as adding a different point of observation. By looking at *fa'a Samoa* from the body up, I am expanding on the work of previous researchers, by taking their work in a new direction.

This combination of formal written sources with my own field experiences, necessarily produces an incomplete, mosaic-like, and very formal portrait. Any attempt to describe Samoa in a unitary and totalizing way cannot avoid the danger of over-directing interpretation and understanding, at the expense of both the diversity in Samoa, and of the ongoing, transgressive qualities of *Fa'a Samoa*. Milner, for example, comments on the "bewildering number of ways in which [common themes in Samoan culture] are worked out in villages" [1966:7]. There is, as Hovdhaugen [1987] and Love [1991] note with respect to Samoan 'myths' and folktales, a wide range of variety between villages and districts in Samoa, not only in the form and content of stories told, but in their meanings and implications. This feature, of great variation in a geographically constrained society, makes general comments on what Samoans believe, or what Samoans think, difficult. In describing the basic features of contemporary village life within which Western Samoans live, I want to stress an important *caveat*. When I speak of Samoans, I am always speaking of the finite group of people with whom I lived. I was lucky because my adoptive Samoan family had strong and wideranging ties throughout the country, allowing me to work among diverse groups of people during my stay. While I do believe it possible to make very general assertions

about certain fundamental aspects of *Fa'a Samoa*, I believe such assertions must always be framed more as possibilities than standards, as statistical probabilities rather than fixed, agreed-upon rules. What this review describes is a sense of the structure, light, and sound of daily life in Samoa.

To do this, I first need to lose sight of the body, and offer a kind of aerial view of Samoan's sense of their relationships to history and the modern world, before concluding with a sketch of the social geography of daily village life. Doing this defines the overall ground on which, and through which, Samoans deploy their bodies in their everyday engagements with culture and meaning. By exploring Samoans own sense of their mythical past, the current constellations of authority and conflict in politics, the family, and between generations, and the regular give and take of village life, I will provide the reader with a basic sense of the structures, practices, and concerns within which Samoan's live.

Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Samoans and Their Histories

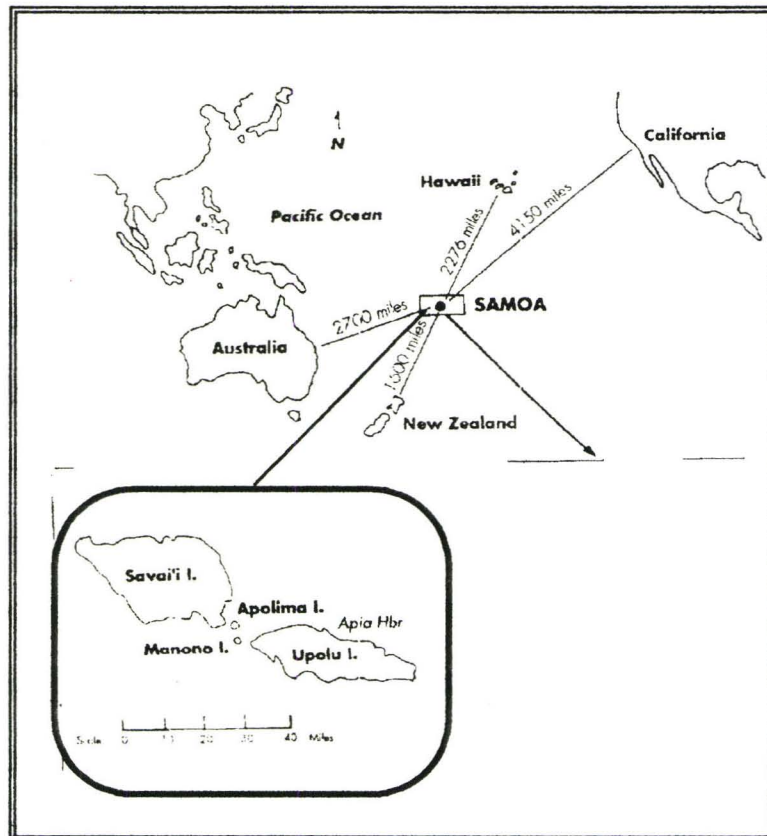


Figure 2.1 Location of Western Samoa in the South Pacific

" Samoa is an accident, I think?", Albert told me one afternoon.

Albert was somewhere older than 75, an untitled man who lived in an interior village several minutes by car from Apia, the capital of Western Samoa. When I first met him, he was sitting with friends drinking 'ava [piper methysticum], a mild intoxicant used in many Pacific societies, at the large market in Apia. This ongoing circle began near dawn and could continue late into the night, mostly older men sitting and talking. I had passed them several times, carrying bundles

of food to my family's pickup truck. Finally, he motioned me over and had me bend down so he could whisper in my ear.

" Are you one of those *palagi* who come here to marry our Samoan girls?"

I explained that no, I was a student living with a family in Vaimoso studying *Fa'a Samoa*. He laughed at this, and asked if he really was finally meeting Margaret Mead. Then he got the attention of his fellow drinkers and explained to them, in Samoan, who I was, a "very old schoolboy". The other men nodded or mumbled back at Albert who then beckoned me to let him whisper in my ear again. He told me to come and visit him whenever I wanted to find out the real truth. I didn't visit him for a number of months, and even then, only by accident. That accident turned out to be a turning point in my stay in Samoa, as Albert became a close friend and a sophisticated corrective to my lapses into misapprehension.

" An accident, Albert?" I asked. " One hundred and sixty thousand people bundled together on two tiny islands in the middle of the ocean is a big accident."

" One hundred and sixty thousand people bundled together on a couple of stones lost by God", he retorted with a cough. "And it is four tiny islands. You always forget Apolima and Manono. You are like all the other Samoans, there is only Upolu and Savai'i and then, always, America."

" But an accident, Albert. What can that mean? "

Samoa and the Dark Times

Samoa was formed, according to one of the many origin stories I was told, in the darkness of the time before the coming of the missionaries, by the supreme god Tagaloa throwing several stones over his shoulder into the sea. They landed with a splash, and the long history of Samoa's journey into the light begins with the sun slowly filtering through the spray. It was a time of cannibalism, killing and war, famine, and invasion by neighbouring peoples, particularly the now much ridiculed Tongans. The original union of the 35 islands in the Samoan archipelago was in a state of almost constant war, according to most Samoans today. These wars, the fires of which were the first sight missionary John Williams had of Samoa on his arrival in 1830, were most intense on the islands of Savai'i and Upolu, the largest islands in the archipelago, and the main islands of the modern Independent State of Western Samoa [Moyle 1984:69]

The environment of the Samoan archipelago is rich and tropical. The islands are volcanic in origin, with rich soil, and a pattern of rain-fed rivers and streams which make horticulture possible almost anywhere but in the central lava-plain of the largest island of Savai'i. Many of the islands are fringed by reefs whose waters are abundant with fish taken expertly by Samoan fisherman whose methods today have not changed notably from those described by the earliest missionary visitors [Stair nd; Barnes 1889; see also Buck 1971 (1930)]. Horticulture, mostly of tubers such as taro, and of breadfruit, coconut, and bananas, is the foundation of Samoan subsistence, a system of shared garden

labour on land attached to *matai* [chiefly] titles, providing food for often very large extended families [*'āiga*]. Samoan horticulture is labour intensive though not extremely time consuming, aided by annual average rainfalls of between 5000 and 8000 mm., cooling winds ten months of the year, and reliable sources of clean water from mountain streams which cross most of the islands [Fox and Cumberland 1962].

" But why an accident, Albert?" I asked.

" God forgot Samoa, he left Samoans to fight and to kill each other and to waste their land and their food for hundreds of years. He left us somewhere in the darkness for hundreds of years and he almost forgot to come back."

" But God did come back, didn't he?" I asked, recalling the accounts early missionaries had published about their welcome in Samoa.

" John Williams told God that Samoans were still here in the darkness waiting for him to come back", he explained, smiling, and throwing several small stones over his shoulder at the pig that had fallen asleep behind the rock where we sat.

From 1830 onward a regular stream of missionaries, mostly from the London Missionary Society, came to Samoa, not because Samoa was in special need of Christianization, but because Samoa was among the easiest missionary exercises in all of the South Pacific [Gilson 1970:70-74]. Conversion was invited by the Samoans themselves, rather than inveigled by missionary persuasion or duplicity, because Samoans had been waiting for the arrival of the missionaries.

The "goddess" Nāfanua, who is variably described as the sister, cousin, wife, or aunt of the supreme god, Tagaloa, had predicted that sailing gods would arrive in Samoa from the east, bringing with them a special command from Tagaloa to improve *Fa'a Samoa* by acknowledging the sovereignty of these new gods as expressions of Tagaloa's will. Jesus came to Samoa and was welcomed like a returning son. The time of darkness, barbaric misconceptions, and brutal wars, ended with the return of God to his 'forgotten' islands. Samoa, most modern day Samoans believe, has never been better than it has been since the arrival of God, moving out of the darkness of their isolation from the gods, forward into a time of light and prosperity and progress. Today the pre-European period is often referred to as the dark times, as Samoa's night, or as the time before Samoans could see.

This history, of a pagan horde labouring in the darkness until Christianity came to free them of their savagery, is a story told, with variation and embellishment, throughout the islands of Western Samoa. It is enshrined in the telling of *fagogo*, 'old stories' told at night as entertainments in the back villages, and on a weekly Samoan language radio program sponsored by the Methodist Church of Samoa. It is recalled in special versions of prayers which emphasize the biblical description of Jesus as the 'way, the truth, and the light.' It is reflected in the often critical, dismissive, or at least uncomfortable, attitude of many Samoans towards the myths and legends of old Samoa, collected now in illustrated volumes sold at the Methodist bookstore in Apia.

This version of the past, perhaps best described as the official version, is of central importance in Samoa because of the way it locates Samoans in the modern world, as a progressive and forward looking society that legitimately belongs, not as a newcomer, but as a longstanding participant in global history. It is a version of history Samoans use to distinguish themselves from what they see as their more barbaric island neighbours, and to establish themselves as peers in their dealings with the rest of the world, especially America. It is, however, not the only version of their history of importance to their everyday sense of being Samoan.

Politics and the History of The Fighting Brothers

The 35 island Samoan Archipelago is divided into three political units. American Samoa remains a semi-independent territory within the United States. Rose Atoll, a small coral island, is claimed by New Zealand. The remaining islands make up not only the largest land mass in the archipelago, but also the first independent state in the South Pacific. With Western Samoa's official independence from United Nations trusteeship in 1963, over 100 years of administration by Europeans, first Germany and then New Zealand, ended in the formation of a constitutional parliamentary government. This independence did not come without bloodshed and open revolt by Samoans.¹ In 1929, leaders of the Mau movement, an indigenous Samoan independence movement, marched on the offices of the New Zealand High Commissioner. The police fired upon the crowd of Mau supporters, killing their leader, Tupua Tamasese, along with

several others. In the ensuing years, the Mau continued to agitate among the leading *matai* [traditional chiefs] of the day, and a petition for independence was filed with the United Nations after World War II. Sixteen years of negotiations followed until a final form of constitutional rule was agreed upon.

The Mau were particularly active in the villages of Vaimoso and Pesega where I worked. During the cyclone in 1991, the bandshell in the centre of Vaimoso, which had served as the Mau headquarters, was destroyed, only its round concrete platform remaining. In the weeks, and then months, following the storm, debates sprang up among residents in the two villages over the question of restoring the bandshell, on which a weathered sign had once marked its role in the 60 years of agitation for independence. It was finally decided that, rather than the villages pooling their resources to rebuild the structure, the *matai* from all the surrounding villages should petition the government to restore it as a national shrine.

A controversy then developed over which *matai* should formulate the petition. It was argued that the Mau represented all of Samoa in their struggles and that, therefore, all *matai* should want to join in the petition to rebuild the bandshell. This was countered with the argument that the Mau was not a national movement, but a political party devoted to the furtherance of the aims of one of the two paramount 'sacred chiefs' [*ali'i*] in Western Samoa, Tupua Tamasese. The *matai* for whom the other paramount *ali'i*, Malietoa, was their ultimate leader, insisted that they would not participate in the petition since the Mau had fought to

exclude Malietoa from participation in the constitution as head of state. This was then countered by the Vaimoso *matai* with the argument that, since the constitution elevated both Malietoa and Tupua to the position of head of state, the old rivalry between the two titles was no longer relevant, the most important fact being that the Mau were instrumental in bringing the warring titled families together in a single Samoan government. Malietoa's supporters answered that the constitution had not brought the two families together because, while the current Malietoa had shared the title of head of state with Tupua at the time of independence, when this Malietoa died, the followers of Tupua would ensure that the new Malietoa would be excluded from the head of state position.

The situation I have just described typifies many of the political and social relationships in Western Samoa today. Samoan social order is built around relationships between title holding *matai*, who head their extended families [*'āiga*], and who stand as points of connection between all members of the *'āiga* and all other *'āiga*. This complex system of relationships is based on affinal kinship among members, and all Samoans can calculate their relative relatedness to almost any Samoan they happen to meet. Samoans distinguish between two forms of their extended family, the *'āiga*, which includes only those relatives who live in direct regular contact with each other in the same or related villages, and the *'āiga potopoto*, which is the entire congregation of related extended families. The *'āiga potopoto* are calculated by the relationships among *matai* contained in the *fa'alupega* or genealogies of *matai* [Charlot 1990; Kramer 1994]. However,

these genealogies are undergoing constant revision and manipulation as new alliances, either through negotiation or marriage, create new kin relationships among *matai*. The '*āiga* *potopoto*, the broader group of connected small '*āiga*, is activated only in the event of some occurrence of an extraordinary nature such as the death of a paramount *matai*.² Throughout this text '*āiga* will refer to the smaller form of the extended family, the makeup of which is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

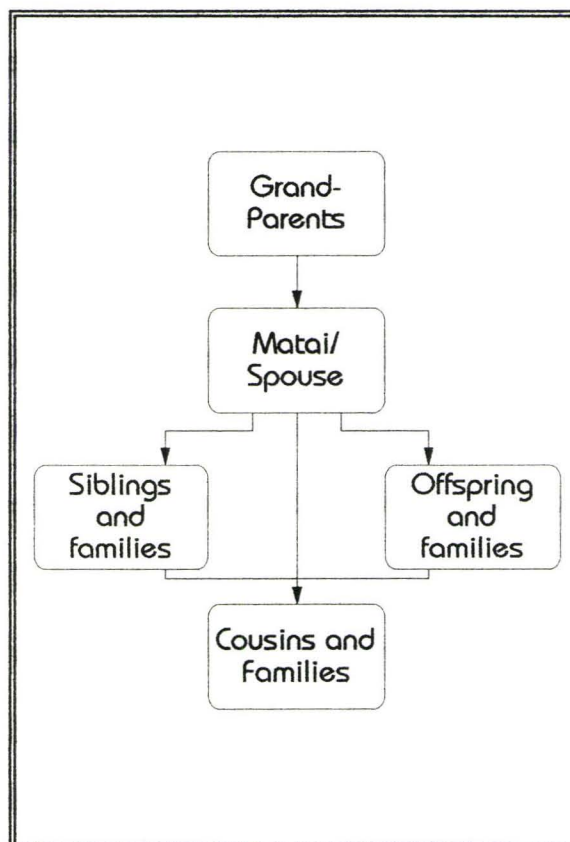


Figure 2.2 Members of '*āiga* by relationship to *matai* head.

Any member of an '*āiga* *potopoto*, either male or female, can, potentially, become *matai* of their or any other extended family to which they are related, and move up through the system of ranked titles toward the highest status titles in the system. Shore [1982:80] distinguishes between rank and status in the *matai* system, where status is the fixed relationship of asymmetrical connection between *matai* titles encoded in the chiefly genealogies [*fa'alupega*], while rank is the real-historical relationship of deference and obedience between title holders [and their '*āiga*] which are a function of the current constellation of

obligations and allegiances among title holders. Status, in Shore's sense, may justify the *matai* system, but rank drives it. Samoan's themselves may use status as a strategy in their dealings with members of other *'āiga*, but this strategic manipulation is just that, a specific and circumstantial manipulation rather than a formal code of order. In this text I will use the terms interchangeably to refer to the current relations of authority and allegiance between title holders.

All members of an *'āiga* are subject to the authority of their *matai*, and each *matai* is subject to the authority of those *matai* ranked above them in the hierarchy. Such a system is open to manipulation and conflict because the most successful *matai* are those who can use their knowledge of kin relations across *'āiga*, to the advantage of their own extended family. The current system of chiefly ranking and authority continues today in much the same way as it did at the time of the original missionary visits to Samoa in the 1830's [Gilson 1970:56-59]. Figure 2.3 [next page] illustrates the structure of related statuses in this system. Competition both for access to these ranked titles, and competition between holders of these titles, is often fierce, as control of 80% of the useful land in Samoa is tied to these titles. Traditionally all land was attached to *matai* titles [and not to the title holders themselves, control of the land passing with the title to the successor]. Even with the alienation of some land to private or government ownership, subsistence in Samoa is still dependent on access to this customary land. While control of access to titles, which may be held by either men or women, depends to some extent on the good graces of the title directly above a

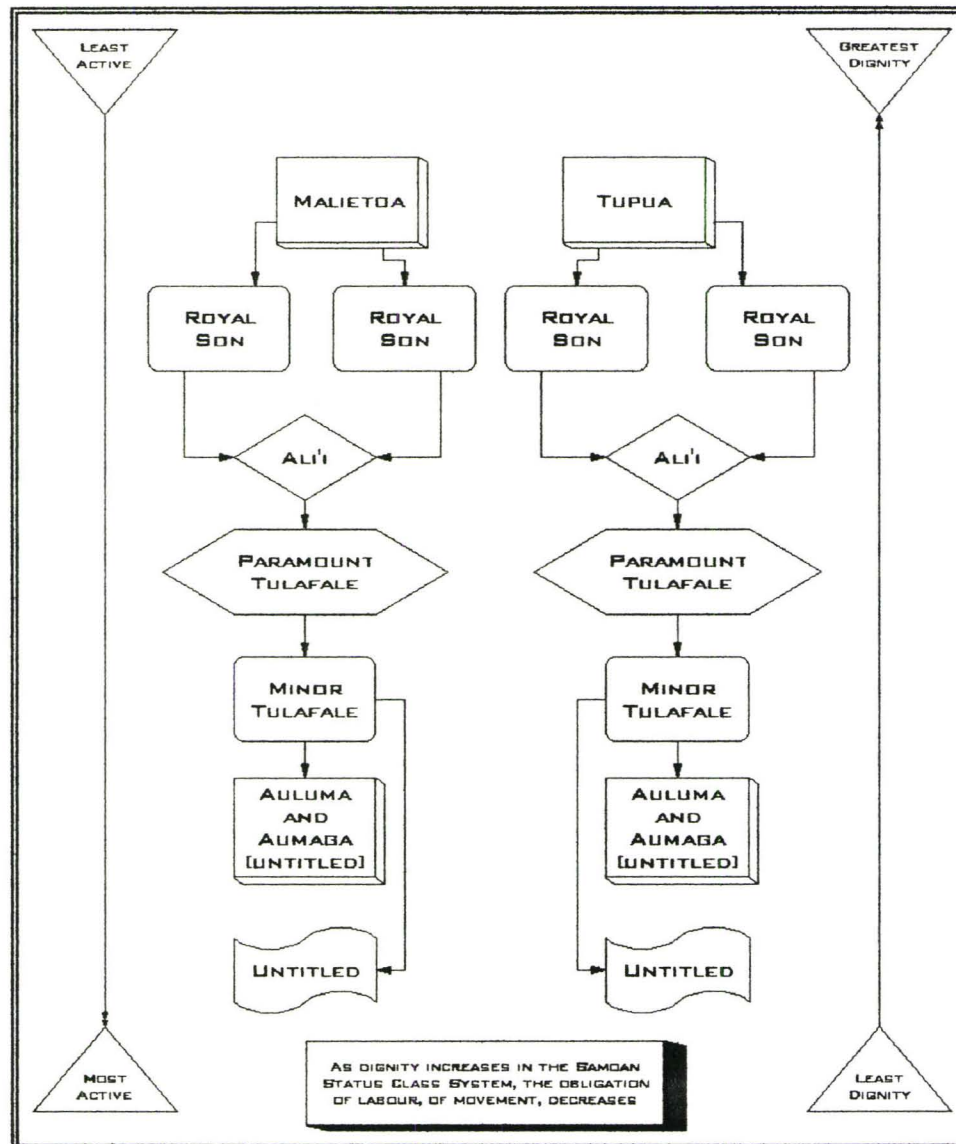


Figure 2.3 Samoan status classification system [idealized], showing the direction of increased dignity and of increased obligations of physical labour.

Note: Royal Son titles are not currently salient, *matai* describing their relationships in terms of their link to one of the two paramount titles. It is unclear if anyone currently holds these 'royal son' titles.

given title in the ranking system, accession to titles is primarily controlled by members of the *'āiga*, who meet to achieve a consensus on who should be granted titles over which they claim genealogical ownership. Once 'elected' by his or her extended family, a *matai* is expected to work on behalf of his or her *'āiga* in relations with other families, in dealings between the five political districts, and in relations between families and villages and the central government. While normally held for life, chiefly titles can be taken away by the family if they become dissatisfied with the title holder's performance of his/her duties.

Matai Types and Their Functions

1. *ALI'I* - One in each *'āiga potopoto*, serving as the sacred head of the interconnected households and *'āiga* within the larger family network.

2. *TULAFALE* - The voice and the power of the *ali'i*, the paramount *tulafale* serves as the *ali'i*'s spokesperson and the *ali'i* cannot act in any official capacity related to his title unless the *tulafale* is present to speak on his behalf.

3. Minor *matai* - ranked below the paramount *tulafale*, they are similar in function to the paramount *tulafale*, acting as the arms and legs of the *ali'i* under the direction of the paramount *tulafale*. There is no distinctive name for this second ranking of *tulafale matai*, but all *tulafale* ranked below the paramount are understood to be in a servile position to both the paramount *tulafale* and to the *ali'i*.

Competition and conflict across these different ranks is not over material resources. All land is alienated to the titles in perpetuity, and while enmity over the opening of new arable land may have been a problem deep in Samoa's past, today all possibly useful land is accounted for. Instead of material, *matai* compete

for status capital, a kind of bank account of dignity, which does not have direct material benefits for the members of the extended families led by their *matai*. Benefit is derived for the most part through the expansion of kinship relationships. All members of extended families are entitled to require assistance and support from any person with whom they have a measurable kin relationship. The wider the range of kin relationships a person can invoke, the better off they are. The extent, and the rank, of kin ties between *'āiga*, as a result of marriage, determines the overall success and status of that *'āiga*. Competition between *matai*, therefore, is for better, and higher ranking, kin ties, which enhances their account of status capital and allows them to attract or negotiate even better kin ties.

Competition takes the form of ceremonial exchanges of produce, pigs and *ie toga* [pandanus leaf mats], which take place at any important event involving more than one *'āiga*, such as funerals, weddings, births, and the investiture of title holders. In these exchanges [*fa'alavelave*, literally, to make or do something complicated] *matai* from each participating *'āiga* make cross presentations of goods, accumulating status capital by the wealth they are able to give away [cf Weiner 1992]. These exchanges can be massive in scale, drawing on the resources of all members of the *'āiga potopoto* to provide the various goods for exchange and presentation. *Matai* making the presentations calculate the value they have to spare, the status capital which will accrue to them from the presentation, what status goods they will gain from the cross presentations which the receiving *'āiga* will provide them. In the weeks leading up to a *fa'alavelave*, the

highest ranking *tulafale matai* of the *'āiga* involved will gather their resources, and calculate the size and components of the presentations they will make. They will calculate both the status wealth their presentations will earn them, and project these calculations into the future, taking account of *fa'alavelave* which they anticipate they will participate in the months ahead. At the same time, in drawing together their resources they will calculate every connection of obligation and duty they have formed with other *'āiga*, and call in those obligations, carefully measuring their material needs against the cost to them in status capital of releasing other *'āiga* from obligations to them. At the end of this, sometimes massive amounts of food will be transferred, but it is important to note that the accumulation of these exchanged goods is not, at least primarily, for their material value as food. Rather, the goods received by an *'āiga* during a *fa'alavelave* are, for the most part, distributed among *'āiga* members in order to be stockpiled for use in future exchanges. Usually only perishable food items are consumed.

The competition at the heart of this system is rich and complex and would require more space and more detailed analysis to appreciate fully, because the *matai* system is at the heart of all Samoan social relations.³ It institutionalizes a long standing relationship of competition and conflict in the system of political and social leadership. This antagonism is at the heart of contemporary national politics and informs political decisions and political controversies between *'āiga*, between villages and between political districts. It is the second version of

Samoa's past encountered regularly in Western Samoa.

This competition is often characterized as an obstacle to Samoan development and progress and is the butt, even among high ranking *matai*, of great humour, and ironic commentary. Yet it remains the central defining feature of almost all Samoan social organization, determining where people may or may not live, where they can or cannot farm or travel, whom they vote for in national elections, and even which churches they attend. The *matai* system writes in daily political practice the long history of Samoan kinship and conflict, and sustains and re-writes that history deep into the future. It bridges ambivalence about the 'dark times' with the practical exigencies of kinship, access to resources, and the need for some path to consensus and leadership.

Tattooing: History Written on the Skin

A final 'use' of history is important for the way the body, through tattoos has become intimately implicated in the enactment of Samoan nationalism. Many anthropologists have written extensively about the invention of custom in the south Pacific and elsewhere [Keesing 1992, 1989; Borofsky 1987; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Linnekin and Poyer 1990; Hanson 1989; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Wagner 1975], paying particular attention to how the deployment of revitalized tradition is an important part of emergent national and ethnic identity. That Samoan nationalism revitalizes tradition is not interesting because it is unusual, but because of the way the body is used as one of the primary sites for this historical renewal.

There are three key themes in Samoan tattooing: strength, endurance, and service [Franco 1991:134]. I want to reserve a detailed discussion of the implications of tattooing for an understanding of the Samoan body until later. Here I want to consider only the appropriation of tattooing, with its emphasis on strength and endurance, in the service of a new sense of nationalism. Historically, Samoan tattooing of men marked, among other things, servitude. Untitled men received extensive body tattoos in their early twenties, tattoos which then signified their role of server to their . Body tattoos indicated the young man's willingness to follow his *matai* and to subsume his own aspirations in the service of the needs of his *matai*. Later in life, these tattooed men were rewarded with titles of their own in recognition of their service, which suggests we read the traditional tattoo as incorporating service, self-effacement and humility in the over-all process of acquiring authority in Samoa [McGrevy 1973].⁴ Indeed, in the pre-European period, "tattooing was necessary for a chief to hold his title and an untattooed chief was unheard of. [Forsyth 1983:58, emphasis in original.]

Missionaries zealously stamped out the practice of tattooing, mostly because the loyalty to *matai* was thought to interfere with loyalty to the pastor and thus to God. It has been estimated that the practice of traditional tattooing was completely eliminated within 30 years of the arrival of the first missionaries [Forsyth 1983]. Missionaries, successful in almost totally converting Samoans to Christianity, exercised a great deal of effort eliminating Samoan body practices. The first to go were the night dances [*po'ula*] which were often mounted as village

entertainments for travelling parties of *matai* [*malaga*] engaged in political negotiations. These were banned because they often had carnal finales carried out in the bush surrounding the village. The missionaries then banned traditional hairstyles [involving shaving the head of everything except a long pony tail] and finally, traditional body tattooing. This focus on reshaping the surface of the body, as a measure of the reshaping of the soul is characteristic of Christianity's division between the carnal and the spiritual body [Greenberg 1988, Foucault 1980]. It recognizes that what is expressed on the surface is not separable from what is being thought inside and that reforming one is necessary to reform the other. Inside and outside are the single frame of the sacred, something which Samoans understood readily because it is a key aspect of their own sense of morality and embodiment.

Tattooing was renewed during the most active period of Mau agitation for independence in the 1920's and 1930's, but its renaissance was much more extensive in the years immediately following independence in 1963. Tattooing in several forms is now widespread throughout Western Samoa. Of interest here are the tattoos both men and women are receiving as markers of their status as 'true' Samoans. Some of these are traditional in form, such as the *taulima*, a bracelet like tattoo on the wrist which, in the past, was reserved for the sons of high ranking *matai*. Others are borrowed from throughout the Pacific, particularly from Maori patterns. Finally, others are classic 'biker' tattoos of dragons and busty women.

This apparently indiscriminate tattooing was originally something only the roughest of men, specifically town taxi drivers, were noted for. Any village youth getting a tattoo of this sort was the object of either humour or criticism for taking 'taxi drivers' as role models. However, in the last several years this practice of decorative tattooing has become more and more widespread. What may, originally, have been tied to issues of masculinity, and to the rough and ready subculture of the taxi driver, has now spread to women, school boys, Samoan professionals, and even some younger *matai*.

The most common explanation offered my questions about tattoos among younger Samoans was that it 'showed everyone I was strong like a real Samoan should be.' Many people were explicit that part of their desire for a tattoo derives from the fact that it had been banned by the early missionaries and European governing bodies, because something of the traditional Samoan values of strength and the ability to endure pain had been taken away from them by these early, somewhat punitive, restrictions. There is a widespread sense among many younger Samoans that the modern world is taking away many of the better features of *Fa'a Samoa*, particularly those of courage and fortitude, generosity and service, and respect for tradition. While it is acknowledged that many of these tattoo figures are not traditional in design, the key issue for Samoans is the act of getting the tattoo, rather than the specific symbols etched into the skin. Having a tattoo has become, for many younger Samoans in particular, a symbol in itself, a symbol of their Samoanness. However, this symbolism was not solely

the reasoning of younger Samoans. In the weeks following Cyclone Val in 1991, my adoptive family including my *matai* father, suggested I receive a tattoo a *taulima*, to mark my own Samoanness as someone who had participated in the communal efforts during the storm. The new tattoo is, at least for many, an attempt to reclaim values and traditions of pre-European *Fa'a Samoa*, this time in the name of a Samoan ethnicity which marks being Samoan as a distinctive identity which transcends kinship, *'aiga* and *matai* ties. That is, the tattoo marks on the body a sense of national self-hood which attempts to reassert what many see as the lost values of *Fa'a Samoa* as their ancestors practiced it. The politics of these assertions is intricate, combining the effects of the homogenizing influences of contact with other societies with the effects of Western style education which has elevated a kind of abstract Samoan traditionalism as an object of formal reverence and study. What tattooing also appears to write into the skin is the development of a canonical form of *Fa'a Samoa* which opposes the relative powerlessness of the young against the failure of the old and powerful to keep to the truth of the 'real' *Fa'a Samoa*.

The question of revitalizing authentic traditions relates less to the truth of the past than it does to the issue of who has the authority and power to authenticate [Bruner 1994], and points up a tension between the empowered elders and the powerless young in Samoan politics and ideology. Contemporary tattooing rewrites the story of how the original Malietoa, having taken up cannibalism from the Tongans as a true Samoan practice, was tricked by his

son, who offered himself in disguise as a meal for his father, to learn the danger of his error, and return to the true *Fa'a Samoa*. While issues of masculinity of sex and sexual prowess, and even of class, are also embedded in the post-independence practice of tattooing, it is this 'real Samoan history' explanation which is the most important to Samoans. It is another version of Samoan history, one which is inscribed, literally, on the skin. The renewed tradition of tattooing, if not of traditional tattoos, marks the current generation of Samoans as standing in a contentious relationship to their own sense of their history, both of the past and of their projected sense of their future, a contentiousness which they are expressing with their skin.

There are other ways Samoans relate to their history. The one I find most interesting is the 'negrification' of Samoans by Samoans themselves, which has its roots in the treatment some Samoans have experienced living in the large Samoan communities in Southern California. Many Samoans, particularly younger men in American Samoa, identify with African-Americans, and have adopted African-American slang, fashion, and music. This is less prevalent in Western Samoa, where the major Black icon is Bob Marley. However, among younger Samoans, especially males in highschool, African-American fashion, and a sense of standing in relation to 'whites' in a way similar to African-American youth is gaining importance. However, I have chosen these three - the relationship between modern Samoa and the Dark Times before Christianity, the playing out in the contemporary matai system of the longstanding historical antagonism

between the two paramount chiefs of Samoa, and the strain between chiefs and adults, and Samoan youth over who should control the definition and revitalization of Samoan tradition - because they highlight the tension that pervades *Fa'a Samoa*, a tension between being modern while retaining a sense of traditionalism. Whether it is a denial of the value of 'old Samoa', while retaining 'Samoan traditions' in their Christianity, a sense that the *matai* system is both necessary to Samoa's future, and a failure because it is unable to overcome the longstanding tensions built into the relationships between *matai*, and among the *'iiga* they lead, or the revitalization of a Samoan identity based on strength and service, contemporary Western Samoa is a contentious space in which values and ideals are tested, constantly reassessed, disposed of and reinvented. It is within this landscape of histories that daily life, in its samenesses and varieties, is carried out.

THE TOWN AND THE TUA: DAILY LIFE IN SAMOAN VILLAGES

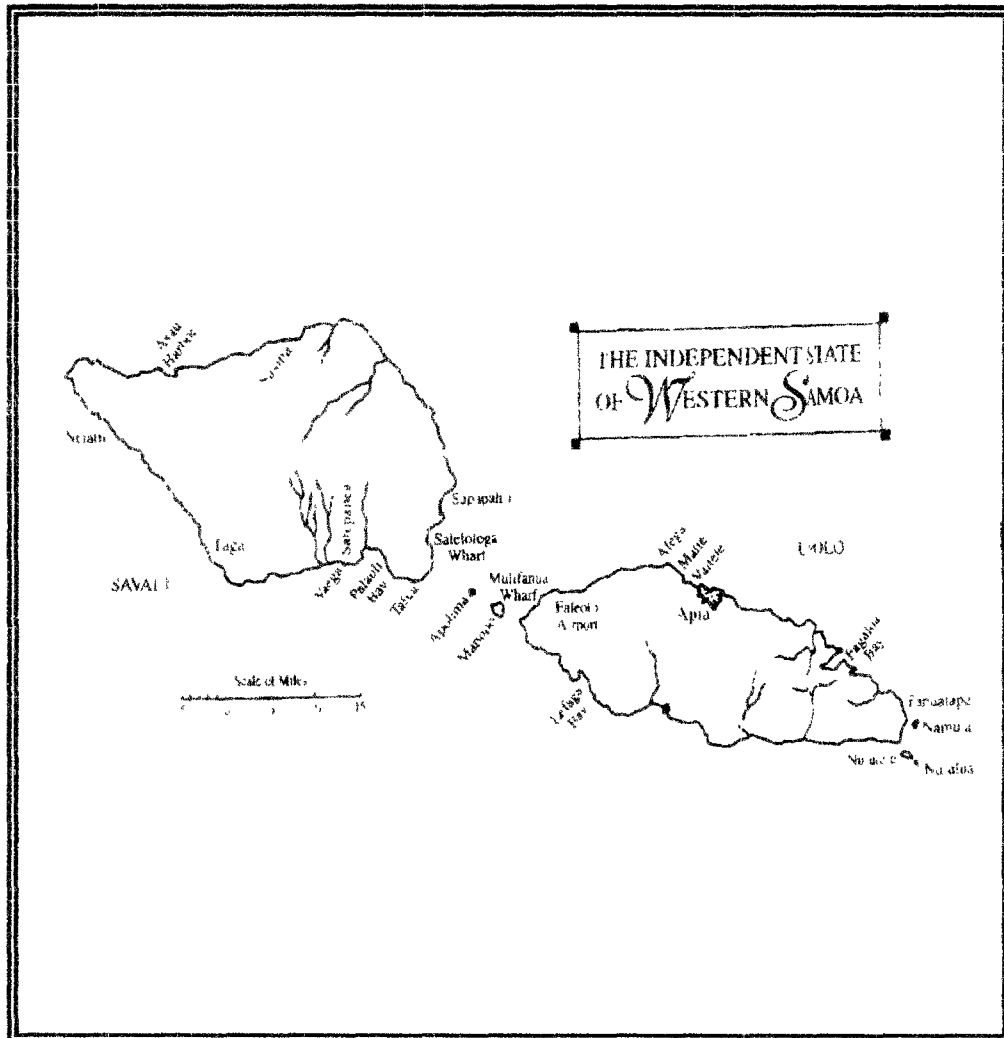


Figure 2.4 The Islands of Western Samoa

Western Samoa comprises five volcanic islands, of which 4 are inhabited, with a total landmass of approximately 2860 square km [Fox and Cumberland 1962:114] and lies 4300 km south-west of Hawai'i. Overall population density is around 140 per square mile, based on the most recent census data which gives the population at approximately 160,000 [per comm Dept. of Statistics,

Government of Western Samoa] However, this figure belies the fact that village population density is considerably higher. Vaimoso, for example, has a density of 750 per square mile, because of the close concentration of households in the core of the village. The main islands of Upolu, where the capital area of Apia is located, and Savai'i, the larger but least populated, are divided by volcanic ridges which form deep valleys running to the coasts. Upolu is now ringed by a single coast road which joins all areas of the island except the Aleipata district on the south-east coast, an area noted for both the excellence of its reef fishing and for its relative inaccessibility, surrounded as it is by high mountains and twisting passes. Along with the coast road, two main cross island roads link the north and south coasts. Savai'i is also ringed by a coast road which reaches all but the remote north-east corner of the island. Like Upolu, all areas of Savai'i are accessible, with varying degrees of difficulty, via several cross island and interior roads, including roads engineered and graded by villagers themselves.

Most villages are located along the coast road on Upolu, having moved from interior locations in the period following European contact [Gilson 1970]. Interior villages on Upolu are most often important agricultural centres, located in the midst of extensive village and government plantation lands. On Savai'i, villages cluster on the small coastal plain that rings the two major lava fields which form the centre of the island. The small islands of Apolima and Manono, located in the rough, windy strait between Upolu and Savai'i, are occupied by very small communities which, with devastating erosion caused by an increase in

tropical storms in the last 30 years, are now dependent on linked communities on Upolu and Savai'i for food and supplies

Almost all Samoans are engaged in some form of subsistence farming growing taro, breadfruit, bananas, and coconut. All Samoan families keep pigs, the excess used for food, but which are reared primarily for presentation at ceremonial exchanges [*fa'alavelave*]. Away from the Apia town area, most villages will include several families who fish on a daily basis, fish being an important complement in Samoan's diet. Subsistence practices, while still producing almost half the staples of some family's needs, are no longer the sole source of food in Samoan villages. Quite often, especially in villages on the southern coast of Upolu, food is grown in small, family plantation plots adjacent to households, or in larger garden plots some distance inland from the village, primarily for use in *fa'alavelave* exchanges, and for the feeding of pigs. In villages further from the Apia town area, even villages with extensive garden holdings, food from gardens supplements their diet, the bulk of the produce being grown either for sale at the Apia market or for use in *fa'alavelave*. Ready access to town shops, and the presence of small shops in almost every village on the two main islands, provides the new Samoan diet with its basic components of frozen lamb parts, rice, and prepackaged noodle soups. While daily meals almost always include such basic ingredients as taro and boiled banana, it is now not unusual for families to reserve their own hand-grown produce for *fa'alavelave* and provide for their daily needs with market or shop purchases even of produce they

themselves grow in some abundance.

Western Samoa can be divided into two general forms of village, the villages of the Apia town area and the *tua*, or back villages. This distinction is one Samoans draw themselves. Town area villagers think of back village dwellers as simple, less developed, and less forward thinking, and back villagers treat town dwellers as poor examples of Samoan values and beliefs. However, in practical terms, day to day life is not very different between the two types of village, since access to town facilities, and the influences and opportunities of the developing cash economy, are equally distributed throughout the islands. Everyone lives in a traditional village, although people throughout the island often dispute the calibre and authenticity of 'tradition' across villages, usually holding up their own living arrangements as more exemplary of *Fa'a Samoa* than those of even closely related villages.

This understanding followed months of confusion and misunderstanding that preceded my grasp of what the articulation of roads and open spaces and plantations meant in the villages I lived in. At first they all seemed a ramshackle and haphazard juxtaposition of concrete houses, traditional, open-walled *fale*, and tumbling down shacks with roads and paths running akimbo from the main road traversing or circling every village. Months after my arrival, "when the land had more meaning, when it had absorbed more of my life" [Naipaul 1987: 5] I came to understand and to feel that all Samoan villages have the same conceptual plan, although the physical layout of villages can be dramatically different.

Traditional villages are centred on an open green area [*malae*] around which are ranged the household compounds of the various *'aiga* who make up the village. The largest house in the village is usually that of the ranking *alii* chief. Behind this circle of residences is a second circle of buildings, including the cook house, sleeping quarters for younger family members, and an area for feeding and caring for the family pigs. Beyond this lay a ring where the toilet houses [*fale vao*, literally, forest houses] are located, near the plantation land. Beyond this lies the bush, undeveloped, but still owned, green space between villages.

With population expansion, especially in the decade following the influenza epidemic of 1918, and accelerating sharply in the mid-1940's [Harbison 1986:68-69], and with the slow movement of more and more people into what would become the villages of the town area, villages along the southern coast of Upolu and in the area of the government harbour and wharf on Savai'i, began to lose their roughly circular form as the living areas encroached on both the *malae* and the immediately contiguous plantation area. The effect of this was the emergence of more closely circumscribed *'aiga* compounds within villages, and the pushing of village plantation land further and further away from the village itself. While villages conforming to the older pattern of circular distribution are still common in the areas further from the Apia town area, the general influence of a steadily increasing population has led almost all villages to at least begin to abandon their open form.

The village of Vaimoso, where I lived and worked during my stay in

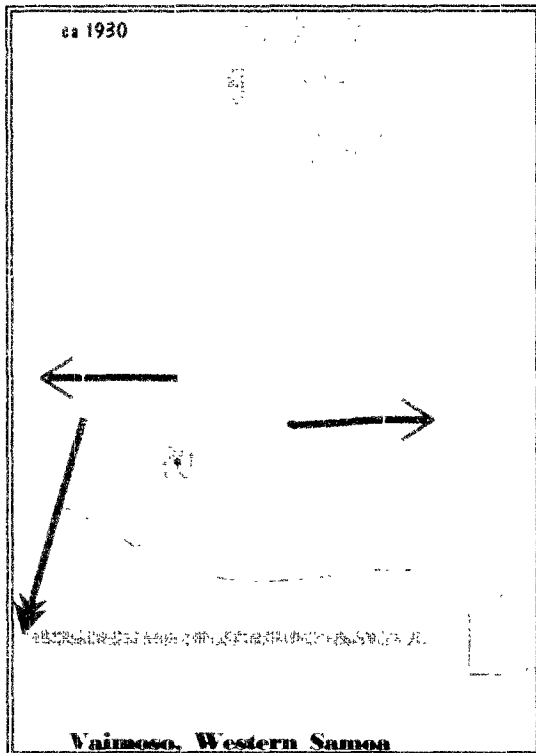


Figure 2.5 Vaimoso Circa 1930

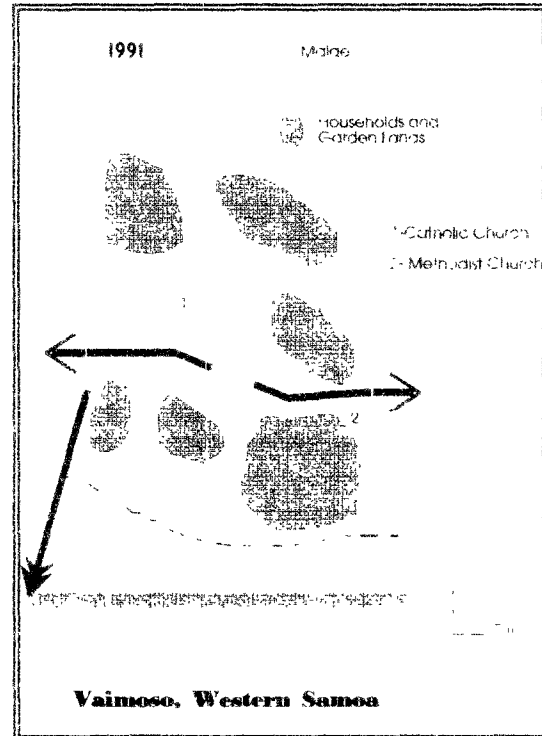


Figure 2.6 Vaimoso 1991

Samoa, is located in the heart of the Apia town area, and this transformation from circular to less orderly village layout can be illustrated schematically. Figure 2.5 shows Vaimoso as it is described in census information around 1930⁵ As can be seen, the central living area of the village, the *malae*, is still relatively intact in spite of the passage of the coast road, indicated by the arrow running left and right, almost directly through the middle of the village. By 1991 [Figure 2.6] when I was living there, Vaimoso had been completely transformed by population expansion. While the *malae* remained, even with the wider and now paved coast road running through it, the conceptual heart of the village, living spaces had become fragmented, and isolated, within the finite village space. Plantation land

had been overtaken by housing demands, and what plantations remained in the village were household garden plots, not unlike North American kitchen gardens, providing some basic foodstuffs for either daily consumption or for formal exchanges

However, even with these changes, villages retain their traditional conceptual geography, an often explicit and clearly articulated public discourse of village social space in which the village is divided into front and back and into centre and periphery. The front/back distinction relates mostly to the kinds of activities which occur in each part of the village. The back end of the village is the space of manual labour, dirt, and detritus. The front end of the village is the area of politics and religion, of formal events, such as weddings, funerals and village meetings and of socializing and play. In a sense, the front of the village is the place where one is a member of the community, while the back of the village is the place where one pursues more individualized activities. This front-back distinction applies at the household level, too, with the main *fale* in which all important family activities took place, making up the front of the household plot. The back buildings, that is the cookhouse and sleeping houses for younger family members, chicken coops and, finally, the toilet house, occupy the less visible and less social part of the compound. Finally, this front back distinction also applies to space within the main *fale* itself. These circular houses are divided into a front and a back space. The front space, marked by the front entrance is the space where family socializing takes place, while the back space, marked by a rear

entrance is the less formal private space. This distinction operates not only in the kinds of activities that take place, but in how people outside the house behave in relation to the house. A visitor coming to the front of the house is required to either remove his or her shoes and enter the house or, at least, to seat themselves on the steps leading into the house before engaging in conversation with someone in the *fale*. Someone approaching the house at the rear door is allowed to stand either at the bottom of the stairs or in the entrance itself, and carry on their conversation.

The centre/periphery distinction refers to the relative dignity of the space and the activities which occur there connecting the dignity of spaces to the level of social interaction and the degree of visibility. The centre of the village, focused on the *malae* and on the house of the most important *ali'i*, is the heart of the village, and the space of greatest social importance. It was and remains the space of greatest dignity. Dignity [*mamalu*] is a key concept in *Fa'a Samoa* and expresses, as one man told me, the "need to give away our own needs so that the needs of the *taiga* are better served." One of Shore's informants put it even more clearly when he said that "if we lived according to our own desires, there would be no dignity in our culture. Things are kept well ordered in order to keep the culture dignified" [1981: 163]. The dignified centre of the village is the core space where sociality and community are expressed and enacted. As one moves out away from this centre, and finally to the bush area around the village, the

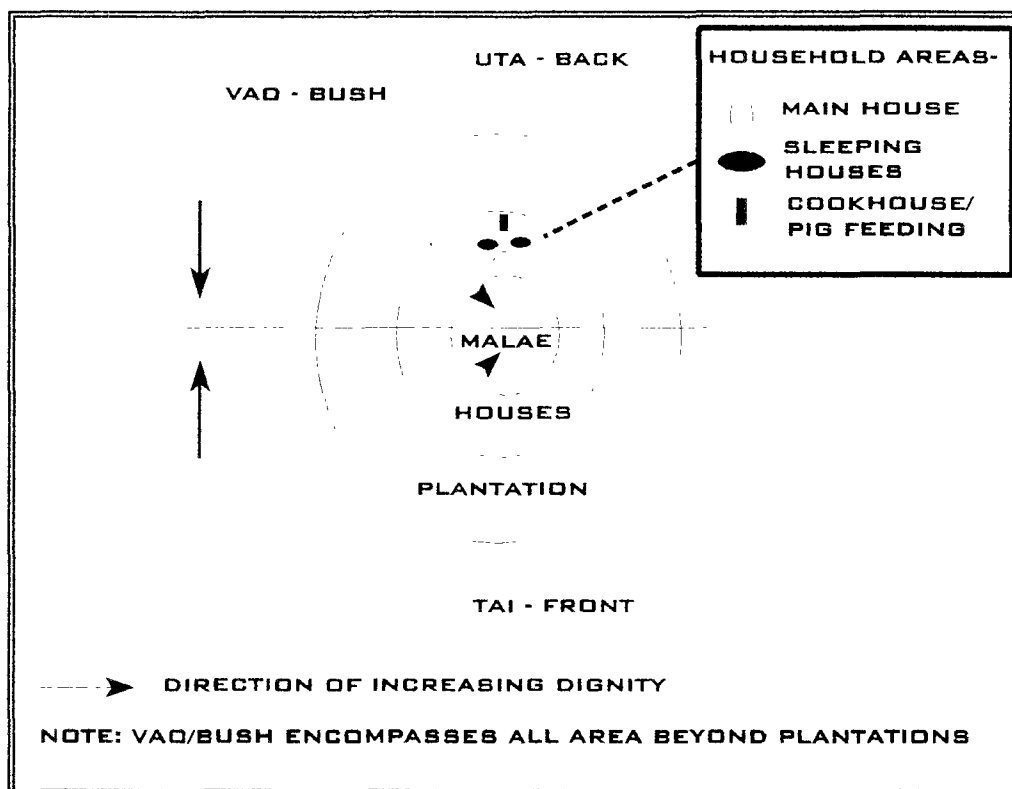


Figure 2.7 Concentric Circles of Dignity in Samoan Social Space [after Shore 1982:68]

level of dignity decreases, until, in the bush, all sociality and communal attachment appear to evaporate.⁶ Figure 2.7 illustrates this decrease in dignity the further one moves from the centre of the village. This pattern of decreasing dignity is fundamental to Samoan's understanding *Fa'a Samoa*.

What is diminishing as one moves away from the centre of the village is sociality itself, and in particular, surveillance [Shore 1982:67ff; Keene 1978]. The original circular village layout, combined with the open walled houses which one still finds throughout Samoa, formed the basic landscape of visibility by which all members of Samoan society were monitored and disciplined. Social life, for

Samoans, is the life they see, understanding and seeing something expressed in the same word, *malamalama*. Appropriate and good behaviour [*aga*], is that behaviour which can and should be seen. As one moves away from this visible centre, it becomes increasingly possible to do things without being seen and, for Samoans, that which is done in secret, either intentionally or simply as a function of distance from the centre, is *lāaga* -asocial and dangerous [Mageo 1989].

Lāaga is a difficult concept to translate into English, even though its more mundane component, 'bad', is most often given as its root translation. However, like all moral or ethical judgements, bad for Samoans embeds a combination of values and judgements which the simple word 'bad' cannot adequately encompass. Bad, for Samoans, is that which is either directly anti-social, as in murder or theft, or that which is asocial, that is, things done in secrecy. However, along with these two senses, *lāaga* can also mean failing to meet your social responsibilities. As one man put it to me one day, "hitting your child when he is cheeky is good, is the thing you must do, and not hitting your child to teach him not to be cheeky, that is *lāaga*." So, unlike the English word bad, which can be used to refer to everything from spoiled food to murder, *lāaga* directly implicates only those things which are specifically social and communal.⁷

This conceptual landscape of good and 'bad' space, then, is preserved even in those villages which have completely abandoned a centre/periphery layout, so that even in rectangular village layouts with '*āiga*' compounds butting up against each other or over overlapping, it is possible to map the 'rings' of

decreasing dignity from the heart of the village [today either the meeting house of the most powerful *'āiga*, the home of the ranking *ali'i matai*, or the church which the most important *matai*

attends]. If we look at Figure 2.8, which represents Vaimoso as it existed in 1991, we find that the two major distinctions of front and back and centre/periphery are still in force. The coast road which divides the village land serves as an approximate marker of the front and back of the village, the front being the area north of the tarred

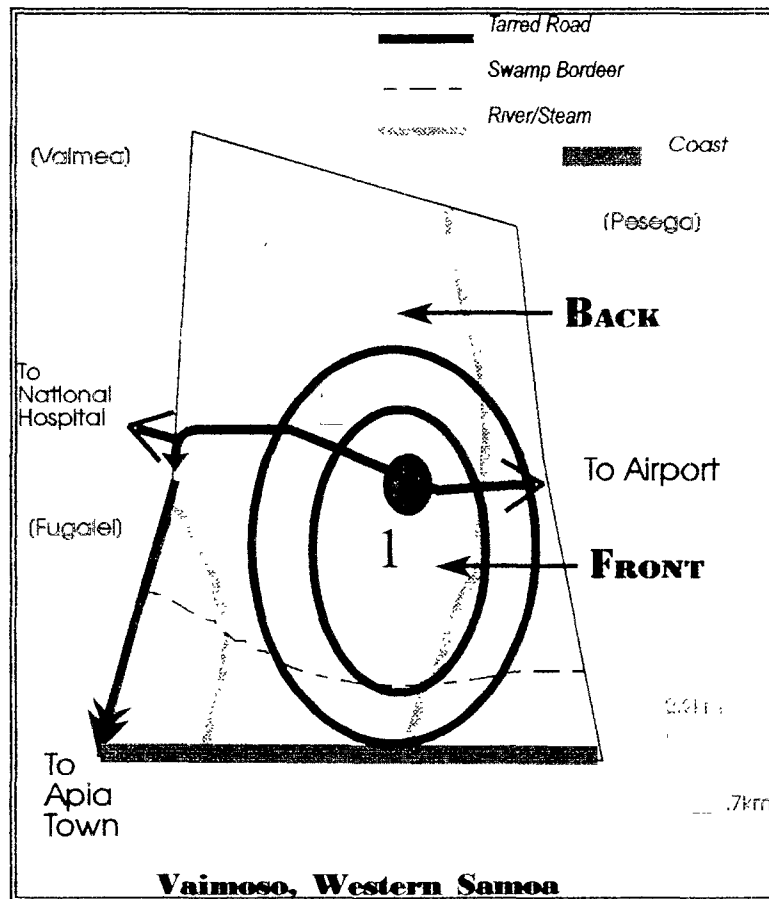


Figure 2.8 Areas of Dignity in Vaimoso, 1991

road, and encompassing the *malae*, and the households of the important *matai* attached to the ranking *ali'i* of the village. The centre/periphery marking of the village space is tripartite. The circle labelled 1, which includes the *malae* and the home of the ranking *ali'i*, indicated by the shaded circle, is the dignified core of the village of Vaimoso. Within this core all the households of important *matai* are

to be found, along with the Methodist church, which is the church of the paramount *tulafale matai* of the village. Circle 2, encompassing the core, is the area occupied by *matai*, and their *'āiga*, who rank somewhat lower than those in the core. The final roughly defined ring, labelled 3, is the space of the lowest ranking families of the village, along with the few commercial enterprises found in Vaimoso.

Not illustrated here, but of equal importance to the overall marking of the village space in terms of dignity, each area within the village can be mapped by decreasing dignity such that in area 1, the most dignified and formally important area of the circle is that area immediately surrounding the home of the *ali'i*, the *malae*, and the home of the highest ranking *tulafale* attached to this *ali'i*. Similar mappings can be done around the households of highest ranked persons in each of the other two areas. The key events of village life, some of which I discuss in later chapters, such as *fono* [meetings of *matai*], village entertainments, and even village trials, all occur in the centre of circle one, while key events of importance to smaller groups within the village areas take place in the most visible and open area of the section of the village in which they live. I should note here, briefly, that these demarcations are not just abstractions which refer to ideas about propriety and sanctity. They have real consequences. Boys from circle one, the area of the village where my Samoan family resided, would often pick fights with groups of boys living in other sections of the village, and then retreat quickly into the area centred around the *malae* in area one, explaining to

me that their antagonists would not follow and fight them there, because fighting in this area of the village would be 'too *lāaga*'.

This model of dignity and its relationship to visibility is expressed in other ways as well, for example, in distinctions between the inside and outside of houses and even within the household space itself. Traditional Samoan houses [*fale*] were unwallled platforms surmounted by steep thatched roofs on columns made of single logs. Gradually during this century, and with increasing rapidity since independence in 1963, these *fale* have been replaced by European style bungalows with small windows and tin roofs. The house has increasingly become a private space and the household unit, often including parents, children, one or more cousins or grandchildren and occasionally aunts and uncles, has increasingly become a private social unit. At the same time, however, markers of adherence to the tradition of visibility have developed, the most impressive of which are the large traditional *fale* of the ranking *matai* of the village. In many villages the ranking *matai*, usually the highest status *ali'i*, will live in a thatch roofed *fale* of monumental size, a fact people often explained to me as how they seek to preserve the integrity of their adherence to *Fa'a Samoa*. Within the private bungalows themselves, the 'simulation' of the visibility of life in the *fale* is sustained with the building of large living areas in the front parts of houses which are often walled with un-draped windows, in a glassed-in impersonation of the wall-less traditional *fale*.

Another, more subtle way that visibility is maintained as the key of the

sociality of the core of the village is in the layout of village roads and pathways. While more and more families have come to live in relatively isolating household compounds, compounds no longer ringed around a communal open area, village common paths and roadways are often laid out in such a way that they pass directly before the windows or doors of houses even though more easily graded routes are available. This placement of roads, and in some cases a proliferation of paths in and around even very small villages, is explained by many Samoans as being needed so that "we can see where people are going and what people are doing." The roads and paths at the heart of the village, along which village daily interaction takes place, have, in some instances, replaced the *malae* as the most dignified space in the village.

For example, in Vaimoso the most dignified area in the entire village is not the *malae*, but the roadway directly in front of my Samoan father's European style house because Sei'a, my father, was not only the most important *tulafale* attached to the *ali'i* who was paramount in Vaimoso, he was also the ranking *tulafale* for the political district of which Vaimoso was the centre. His presence in some official capacity transformed this often very busy roadway into a space of great sanctity, a fact he was well aware of, when, prior to the start of a wedding party in our house, he took me out onto the roadway, commenting that "now I am going to make your little road into a church."

Finally, while the *matai* of most villages had control of land far in excess of the land needed for plantations, village expansion has tended to use every

available metre of living space in the core of the village before expanding living areas deeper into the plantation or bush areas. In back villages where this process of change in village form is still continuing, it is not unusual to see houses being built such that they almost touch each other, while land outside the dignified centre of the village lies empty and unused, even for plantations. Samoans deploy their social existence in a space circumscribed by a concern for dignity and visibility and continue to maintain this centre/periphery distinction at the heart of even the most modernizing of efforts to transform the physical attributes of village life. It is a mapping of dignity which extends even to the way people talk.

There are two speech registers in Samoan. Formal or 'good' speech, characterized by the presence of the consonant 't', is defined by Samoans as the appropriate speech register to adopt when speaking with someone of higher status than oneself, when speaking of matters of great importance, or when talking about private and personal things governed by a concern for modesty or propriety. So called 'bad' speech, characterized by the replacement of most 't' sounds with the consonant 'k', and by subtle, but inconsistent, changes in grammar, is the speech of everyday life. It is the speech of parents addressing their children, of equals conversing in private and so on. In one sense, at least, 'k' speech is the register of friends and 't' speech the register of strangers. "T" spellings of words are also required in written Samoan.⁸ As well as changes in pronunciation, there are also two vocabularies of common words, one for use in

'good' speech and the other for 'bad', informal speech. I will, throughout the chapters below, refer to conversations or words in terms of their being parts of either polite, 'good' speech or informal, 'bad speech', because at times using polite or the informal turns of phrase is important to the meaning the speaker is trying to convey. To give a mundane example, while it is possible to informalize person's names, such as transforming Matau into Makau, in doing so the speaker may be stressing the status difference between him or herself and Matau, expressing anger or disappointment with Matau, or be attempting to infantilize him. The use of the 'k' in Matau's name can embed considerable information about the context of the speech and the intention and status of the speaker.

From village planning to the geography of appropriate kinds of space and activity to the manners in which people speak, the conceptual form of daily life is built on the pursuit and preservation order, surveillance, and propriety.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SAMOAN VILLAGE

Samoans are Polynesian people with light brown skin and straight dark hair. They are generally tall, about 6 foot, and, as they grow older, usually very approach 200 lbs. They move throughout the villages in which they live with a slow, swaying gait. While younger Western Samoans have adopted fashions from overseas, in particular America, almost all Samoans wear the traditional Pacific wraparound skirt, known as a *lavalava* in Samoan. This skirt, and a t-shirt, are the most common outfit in everyday life in Samoa. These are a stately and robust people, physically. They take great pride in beautifying themselves,

and even greater pride in their strength. While young men are usually well muscled and strong, young women are rounded, supple and sturdy. Mature men and women, on the other hand, are both massive, and each capable of comparable acts of strength and endurance. One very common career for Samoan men overseas is in professional football or in wrestling. Recently a Samoan was awarded one of the highest accolades in Japanese Sumo. It is difficult to describe Samoans physically except in terms of superlatives. While I offer a more detailed discussion of Samoan's physical characteristics in the next chapter, and in Chapter 5, I want to stress here that Samoans are, physically, a remarkably dignified and impressive group of people.

If the earliest missionary accounts are reliable, daily life in the villages of Western Samoa has, in general at least, not changed significantly in the one hundred and fifty years since the beginning of intensive European contact. The day begins around sunrise, when the young men of the village wake to feed the pigs and prepare the morning tea. Some of these young men will, after a shower and some hot tea, go off, to the plantations directly adjacent to the village, or to plantation land further inland, to weed, plant and harvest crops as the season demands. Other young women and men will perform duties around their household compound, before preparing to go into town, or to one of the small manufacturing plants, government offices, or town shops, should they be lucky enough to have a cash job.

While the young men prepare the small morning meal, usually of tea and

biscuits, older men (including *matai*) rise and spend some time cleaning and grooming the village common areas. Older women spend most of this early part of the morning supervising younger men and women in their chores, getting the older children ready for school, or visiting each other to plan the days activities. All villages on both Upolu and Savai'i are within easy walking distance of elementary schools, although not all children attend school.

Once the children, who have been dressed in their uniforms, are sent off to school and the young men and women have gone to the plantations or to their cash jobs, the older men and *matai* spend most of their mornings meeting with each other to talk about village affairs and to plan construction projects or village cleanups. Deference typifies these conversations and plans, regardless of the relative status of the participants. *Matai* and untitled men will spend mornings in these informal conferences, discussing and listening to each other's ideas and concerns before arriving at a consensus. While the paramount *matai* can and do sway the direction of village decisions, in some cases even controlling every aspect of village decision making, they do so according to strict rules of consensus and humility. In talking to people about their villages and their leaders, the English word most often used to describe good *matai* is humble [*fa'amaulalo*]. People explain that a good *matai* provides well for his *'āiga* in ceremonial exchanges and sustains the status and authority of his *'āiga* in relations between families and villages, but, at the same time, a good *matai* does not 'show off', does not wield his power obviously and blatantly. A humble man, they explain, is

a man who listens to other's concerns and interests, and always, at least explicitly, sets aside his own personal opinions, so that everyone in the circle of those concerned has a voice and a say. *Matai* are often criticized for being too bold and arrogant, and not enough like fathers. It takes humility, a young *matai* explained to me, to "realize that a *matai* is his family and not simply the head of his family just like a house is not just a roof, but is also its foundations.' This rule of humility applies not only in informal village conferences such as these daily meetings among the older village men, but in the formal meetings of *'āiga* and those formal meetings of *matai* known as the *fono*.

During the morning, older women supervise the younger women in preparing the more substantial mid-morning meal and in pursuing such projects as mat or blind weaving. In villages where they are active, Women's Health Committees often meet in the hours before the morning meal to discuss government health initiatives, to consider village health or other political problems, or to arrange such projects as cleaning up and grooming the church property. Women play a significant and powerful role in Samoan daily life and politics. They are vocal participants in all family and village decisions, in national politics, and in the running of the national education and health clinic system on the islands. While few women hold *matai* titles, their position in *Fa'a Samoa*, and in the web of power and authority in Samoa, is considerable and, in almost all things, equal to that of men. Although women's responsibility for maintaining the grounds of the church may seem a mundane, and even degrading role, it must be

understood that caring for the grounds of the church is the women's responsibility because the women of the village effectively control the operations of the church.

At about ten o'clock each morning, the older men and the women, if they are still near their households, sit with their families and enjoy their morning meal. At the same time, the young men working in the plantations stop work and eat a meal of bread and fruit which they have taken with them into the fields. This morning 'tea' break is also honoured in businesses and government offices. It is a time of gossip and conversation, of dealing with immediate family problems or planning family activities. It is also a time when relatives and village friends will visit among themselves.

The balance of the morning is spent completing projects started earlier in the day, going to the village store, or driving into the town area to do the day's shopping. In outer villages, this trip to town starts much earlier, governed both by the greater distance, and by the fact businesses shut down between 12 noon and 2 p.m. in the town area. Some people from outer villages will have come to town during the earliest hours of the morning in order to sell their produce at the new market, a major point at which island produce is distributed.

Children leave school at around 1 pm, before the worst heat of the afternoon, and return home to either play quietly along the village roads or to join their parents or grandparents in an afternoon nap. From about 2 until 4 p.m. the village is almost completely silent, except for the occasional barking dog or soft conversations among children. Most adults remaining in even the central villages

of the town area will nap through the worst of the day's heat and the young men working the plantations, having completed most of their work by around 1 pm, will either return to the village with food they have harvested, or sleep in specially built plantation houses until late in the afternoon.

By four o'clock the village begins to come to life again. Young men back from the fields, or from their cash jobs, perform their household duties again, feeding the pigs, or preparing the male, boiled, portion of the evening meal, before going off to whatever large field is available, to play rugby or the Samoan version of cricket. Young women and teenage girls, when they are not helping prepare the remainder of the evening meal, will visit among themselves, usually with their younger siblings on their laps.

This period of socializing late in the day is interrupted first by the major evening meal, the largest meal eaten on weekdays, and then again by the *sā*, a period of evening prayer. This period of evening prayer is observed to a lesser or greater extent in most villages in Western Samoa. Often a bell is sounded to mark the beginning and the end of about a half hour of prayer and hymns. During this time, all other activity is supposed to cease in the village. In some villages, the *aumāga* [a loose association of untitled men], or groups of lower ranking *matai*, patrol the village, ensuring that everyone has gone to their respective houses. Fines, in the form of food or cash or labour, but occasionally punishment such as beatings, are levied against violators. This restriction against activity during the *sā* extends to everyone, including people driving along the island

roads. In many villages, men patrol the roads at the entrances to the villages, compelling drivers, through the use of large heavy sticks, to stop, and shut off their cars or trucks until the evening prayer is finished. In other villages, young men will hurl large stones at cars travelling during the *sā*. During my stay a controversy arose over several coastal villages blocking the main airport road during evening prayers. Adjacent villages, where enforcement was less stringent, threatened to beat the young men blocking the roads during the prayers. I heard later that the issue was resolved when the stricter villages agreed only to compel drivers to move very slowly through the villages during evening prayers. They continued to block access to other roads in the village, however. A story I heard several times in villages where observance of the *sā* was not very strict recounted how, usually in an immediately adjacent village with which there was some dispute over land or access to water, the rigid maintenance of evening prayers was so strict that on one occasion the villagers actually allowed a house to burn to the ground rather than interrupt their prayers. The implication, always clearly stated, was that while *Fa'a Samoa* was good, sometimes it was better to be modern.

During both the *sā* and the evening meal, small family units are brought together in relative privacy, and all movement throughout the village comes to an almost complete standstill. This is the dignified core of the day's schedule, the sharing of food and the coming together of families in prayer, and it marks the end of the day's formal activities as well. While early evening may be spent

visiting or socializing, the few hours following the *sā* until people begin to retire, is a period of constraint and quiet, broken only by the sound of televisions playing martial arts films or groups of young people laughing and singing. In villages in the town area evening socializing may take the form of visits to Apia 'night clubs', of which there are several, or of drives in the family's pickup around the streets of the town.

Sundays break the rhythm of labour and rest beginning with the tolling of the church bell at sunrise. Young men in each household have been awake since well before dawn, preparing the *umu*, an earth oven in which the day's major meal, the *to'ana'i*, will be cooked. The preparation of this meal is so important and time consuming, that the Samoan word for Saturday is *aso to'ana'i*, which was explained to me as meaning the day when we begin preparing the Sunday meal. The tolling of the bell at dawn warns them that the *umu* should now be covered, and they should be preparing to attend the first of two church services which will be held that day. Almost everyone in the village will attend one of the churches in the village on Sunday, the only acceptable absences being for illness, or for those members of the household who must remain at home to finish preparation of the Sunday meal. Following the morning church service, senior *matai* and their wives, along with, occasionally, their adult sons and daughters, gather at the home of the pastor of their church for the main Sunday meal, which is served around noon. This meal, whatever the economic condition of the families, churches, or villages, is always extravagant, including as many as 25 different dishes. It is

brought to the pastor's house by young men and women from throughout the village, each family in a village contributing a dish to the feast. Individual village families will eat a smaller, but nonetheless elaborate version of this meal, in their own homes at the same time. Following the *to'ana'i*, almost the entire village retires for the remainder of the afternoon. Some families may travel to one of the many beaches which ring the island, but movement and noise inside the village is strictly prohibited.

Late in the afternoon, a smaller contingent of family members attends the afternoon or evening church service, a somewhat shorter version of the morning service. In some villages, there are as many as 10 church services, beginning at dawn and ending late in the night, but the normal pattern of attendance is two services each Sunday. Following the church service, the evening is spent socializing around or between villages. Young people from villages in and around the Apia town area may go into town to one of the two movie theatres showing martial arts and war films, Sunday being these theatres busiest night. Unlike weekday evenings, socializing on Sunday evenings usually continues very late into the evening, the village finally settling into sleep closer to midnight, in contrast to the usual 10 pm retirement during the work week.

Idyllic and restful, Samoan village life is remarkable for its similarity throughout the more than 20 villages I visited and stayed in, during my year in Samoa. However, the preceding paragraphs over idealize it, in order to give a sense of the ebb and flow of activity over the course of the day. There is more to

daily life, and certainly more to evening activities, than this pastoral picture suggests. The ideal day is one of diminishing activity, such that following the *sā*, the village should be slowly descending into sleep. The day is organized around its still points as objectives, as points in the day to be accomplished. The day is also a time of complex variation, from visits by the *pulenu'u*, the village mayor, who serves as the functional link between the *matai* of the village and the government, to the deliveries of coconuts, by huge dump trucks, from the government plantations. There are fights between groups of boys, village entertainments on the *malae*, and massive ceremonial gatherings for weddings and funerals. Even with these often disruptive variations, daily life in Western Samoa is remarkable for its stately sameness, whether in the traffic clogged villages of the town area, or the isolated fishing villages of the remote Aleipata district of Upolu.

Stillness and calm, whatever their idyllic qualities, must not obscure the fact village life Samoa is also physically demanding and tiring. In spite of 150 years of influence from more agriculturally advanced sources, subsistence farming in Samoa is still labour intensive and exhausting. It requires patience and skill to bring a crop of taro from its first planting to maturity, and this combination of patience and skill is at the heart of the ideal of strength to which Samoans aspire. While Samoans admire the physical prowess of athletes, in particular their own national rugby team, strength, they will tell you, is not a matter of extremes of power. Rather, strength is measured in terms of endurance. The strong person is

not the person who can lift 100 coconuts, although such a feat might be momentarily admired. Instead, the strong person is the person who can lift 10 coconuts 100 times. The loss of strength associated with age is not a decreasing in the power a person can expend, since older men will often perform the same manual tasks as younger ones. Rather, the loss is a loss of endurance. Strength is not a matter of brute power, but of longevity. So the day, however stately and regular, is also a time of great physical exertion by many villagers, a time of real labour and exhaustion. The progress toward the stillness of the *sā*, and the evening that follows, is a progress of fatigue as well as one of cultural ideals.

Where day is an almost stately progression of still points leading to the final still point of the *sā* and the evening meal, night is often an inversion of the stillness of daily life. Night is the time of invisibility and as such, is the time of the greatest privacy, and the greatest unobserved movement. Young people take full advantage of the night, and the enveloping stillness their parents retreat into, to pursue those activities which are most dangerous to the objectives of dignity and stillness in village life. Young men often gather in peer groups, on beaches or bridges, or in night clubs in Apia, to drink beer and fight, and to pursue the young women who spend their evenings travelling the more distant village roads. Night is the time for *ta'a*, roaming, and although calling someone *ta'a* is both an insult and a moral condemnation, implying that the person is unattached and uncontrollable, adults will often tell you that night is the time for young people to be *ta'a* because young people need it to help them grow into full, mature adults.

Outside direct control and direct surveillance, village night life includes the socializing of groups singing on the steps of houses, on the one hand, and wandering bands of boys looking for fights, on the other, all in the context of a space of increasing danger, as darkness isolates and hides the villagers from each other. It is this increasing danger and the asociality of the darkness, which encourages practices whose objectives are to draw back the veil of invisibility night brings with it. One such practice, of calling 'fā' [a short form of the more formal *tōfā*, goodbye] to people passing you in the dark or to cars or trucks passing you on the road, and in particular to calling 'goodnight' to people you cannot see and identify, sustains sociality and a simulacrum of visibility even in the concourse of night time travels. " I tell that man walking through my village that I know he is coming by, that he is here in my village, and welcome, and I know him, and his coming through my village" a young man explained to me, "and when I travel somewhere, I call out too, because I want them to know I am a good person passing their house, and not a *ta'a* boy or an *aitu* [evil spirit or being]."

Village life, then, is a repeating pattern of contrasts between stillness and movement, and surveillance and privacy, a balanced, but always tense, antagonism which energizes the village, and sustains its stately regularity with inherent transgression and ambiguity. Daily village life, simple and calm though it most certainly is, is the site of different types of necessary labour, from the labour of subsistence farming or house maintenance to the labour of drawing outside the

still gaze of constant surveillance into the dangerous spaces of darkness and privacy. Bodies circulate in the various spaces of day and night, in calm progress toward quiet and sleep, in the intensive labour of taro and banana patches and pig feeding, or in the spaces of conversation or *ta'a*, when various kinds of bodies connect in pursuit of the balanced articulation of the *aga* of *matai* planning a new road or the *lāaga* of village boys stepping outside the confines of the village and engaging the world in their exploration of the darker spaces outside direct social control.

Taken together, the regular practices of daily life, and the multiple, and often contentious, understandings of history, form a space within which Samoans constitute their fundamental concerns with dignity, humility, and strength. The following chapters will explore how these concerns are directly implicated in the ongoing practices of embodiment on which this thesis focusses, whether a young boy asking that he be circumcised, a woman avoiding walking in the darker spaces of the bush at night when she is pregnant, or a *matai* accepting a ceremonial cup of 'ava at an important village meeting. What I have shown here is the regularity and consistency of daily life, with its built in tensions and transgressions, around which all aspects of *Fa'a Samoa* are focused. It is in these apparently contradictory objectives of stillness and labour, and cooperation and the potential for conflict, that *Fa'a Samoa* is enacted, in its richness and contrariness. Samoans balance, in their daily lives, a complex of opposites, with the ease of a breeze lifting the leaves of a coconut tree in a dance-like

synchrony. The next five chapters explore particular sites in this process where the body is both the object, and a participant, in this enabling dance.

Endnotes: Chapter 2

1. This brief history of Samoan independence is based on my Samoan father's account. His own father was very active in the Mau, and Sei'a, my father in Samoa, was present during many of the meetings of the Mau, in the years leading up to independence.

2. The issue of what constitutes a corporate group in Samoa is complex, because the answer always depends on the circumstances. The most formal corporate group is the *'āiga potopoto*, but there are other corporate groups, including not only the smaller more intimate *'āiga*, but the household [similar to our nuclear family], the village, the political district and, occasionally, the nation as a whole. See Shore 1982 for a detailed discussion of the political and structural implications of different kinds of corporate groups in Samoa.

3. Shore [1982] provides the most detailed analysis of the *matai* system in Samoa, and I have relied on his account, combined with explanations of the importance of aspects of this system of leadership provided by my own informants.

4. Gell [1993] explores the tattooing complex throughout Polynesia, concluding that it was invariably associated with rank, or its acquisition, and was not, as Sparks [1965], and Marquardt [1984] argue, simply decoration or a way of attracting the opposite sex. The most detailed discussion of the process of tattooing in Samoa can be found in Forsyth [1983], and includes both a discussion of the relationship between tattoos and health, but also a thorough catalogue and analysis of tattoo designs. For a discussion of the relationship between tattoos and chiefly status in Samoa prior to European contact, see Franco [1991:128-134]

5. It is unclear if the census information was gathered in 1929, 1930 or 1931, because of conflicting information on the government maps and other documents.

6. In a study of chiefly language published after my text was completed, Duranti advances a parallel "moral flow" model of the embodiment of persons and space which confirms many of the conclusions I describe here [Duranti 1994]. His model argues that Samoan chiefly oration is one means Samoans have for mapping praise and blame as a way of deploying dignity in their everyday lives, an argument which coincides with my description here of the mapping of dignified village space.

7. Shore [1977] proposes that it is not unreasonable that *lēaga* is a combination of the negative marker *lē*, and *aga*, which can be roughly translated as socially good or appropriate.

8. There is a third form of Samoan, labelled by linguists as respect language, which is reserved for important public performances by *matai*. It is most often used at the openings of important meetings of *matai* or in formulaic presentations to the courts or to parliament. As such, its use is very rare.

Chapter 3.1

The Body Envisioned: Naming the Body Proper

Making bodies is work. From conception to birth to the first steps a child takes away from its mother and father, and into the community, the body that is being carried into the social field is being made through the practices of embodiment. I want to explore several points in this enactment which implicate a particularly important moment in embodiment, that is, the moment when we attend to some new body. To do this, I will consider the linked processes of reproduction, birth and infancy, and ideal body forms and postures. In each case, the body is being marked with basic meanings. The body of the infant, and the body of the foetus before it, are being assigned values, and probed for meanings drawn from cultural expectations of proper body form and movement. This strategy initiates what will become a life long process of sustaining a proper body.

Writing about matters which Samoans are often hesitant to speak about, and this applies most particularly to questions of sex and birth, is difficult, in part because the material needs to be linked from a wide range of informants, often revealed in tiny bits and pieces. It is also difficult because the act of writing, as a public act, violates fundamental rules of propriety and modesty, and as such, violates certain fundamental aspects of Samoan embodiment itself. I realized

very early in my fieldwork that what I was being told was often in strict and very hushed confidence, the confidence of, in some cases intimates, and in others the confidence of protecting mis-impressions by telling me things which, though normally private, needed to be explained to ensure my understandings were as accurate as possible. Material throughout this section on pregnancy and the development of the foetus is drawn primarily from conversations with several older women, beyond their reproductive years, who felt they could reasonably and without undue embarrassment speak with me about matters women, under normal circumstances, do not speak about, even with their husbands.

Several studies have examined the progress of pregnancy as a medical and cultural phenomenon in Samoa [MacPherson and MacPherson 1990 ; Fitzgerald 1989; Baker, Hanna and Baker 1986] and elsewhere [Jeffrey and Jeffrey 1993 [North India]; Chalmers 1990 [Africa]; Pukui 1942 [Hawai'i]]. What I will describe are Samoan explanations of the process of impregnation, and the circulation of body fluids between individuals, from the perspective of how these biological understandings connect to issues of dignity and proper social bodies.¹

Genital body fluids are not defined as either powerful or polluting by Samoans.² Indeed, Samoans are remarkably quiet about semen and menses, and no efforts are made to conserve semen, and menstruation, while embarrassing because of its association with marital sex and pregnancy, is not ritualized or secret.³ There are no restrictions on touching or seeing either, no menstrual purifying or protecting practices, and no prohibitions on sexual activity

during menses. While Fitzgerald [1989] suggests that menstrual blood may have been considered polluting in pre-European Samoa, today most Samoans find this idea either humorous, or evidence of the "stupid ideas" that may have been current prior to the Christianization of Samoa. Rather, genital body fluids are treated as practical substances, like building materials in a house, and their relationship to impregnation is understood solely in terms of a biology of combinations.

Through sexual intercourse, semen travels into the area around the *to'ala*, or stomach heart, an organ which normally resides in the abdominal cavity slightly below the sternum. An open space around this organ, known as the *fa'aautagata* [roughly 'to cause a person, carried here, to flow from this place], is the location for the combination of semen and the blood of the mother which results in the development of the foetus [*tama fafano*, literally non-adult person [tama] in a bowl [fafano]]. Although all the dictionaries I consulted give womb as the translation for *fa'aautagata*, it was never clear to me whether my informants were speaking of an organ, in the sense in which we use the term, or were simply referring to a place in the abdomen. Most people, when asked to translate *fa'aautagata* into English as they understood it, adopted variations of the phrase 'the place where babies come from' or 'the place where babies are made'. Since the infix 'au' has two connotations - to carry and to flow, as in a current - simply translating this in the English sense of womb misses the conceptual richness contained in the Samoan word.

In impregnation, semen [sī] provides white body substances such as bones, muscle, fat and skin. Blood from the mother provides the developing baby not only with blood, but also with the soft organs both inside the body, such as the liver or spleen, and on the outside of the body, such as the eyes or the tongue. Additional substances needed for the development of these body components is provided by the food the pregnant mother eats, including an increase in the amount of white, boiled, male food such as taro or bananas and more recently, rice. A relationship of combining substances of like colour conjoins with a sense of the practical complementarity of male and female body substances, creating the initial combination of substances from which the foetus develops. While linguistically marked such that one may only use the polite words for both blood [toto] and semen [sī] when speaking of pregnancy and birth, rather than words from the more vernacular vocabulary [gafa -blood- and pā - to explode - respectively] , this does not mark these substances as special. Pregnancy may only be spoken of in polite terms, out of modesty rather than mystification. The substances are not special, but talking about them is circumscribed.

Another feature of this combination of male and female substances, and the tissues they produce, relates to the question of sexing. That men's muscle tissue provides the building blocks for the muscle tissue of the foetus is important because it introduces a certain ambiguity about gender and sexing at the very beginning of the emergence of a functional Samoan body . Both the penis and

the vagina are, conceptually, muscles. Both the penis and the vagina are, conceptually, male organs, since they are examples of male substance rendered into different practical forms. The ambiguity of identifying features of bodies being defined as the same thing in different forms sites the process of sexing bodies somewhere other than solely on the surface of the body itself. The sexing function of genitals, which is socialized during middle childhood, is derived from what is done with bodies as a whole, rather than from some innate sexing quality of the genitals alone.⁴

The admixture of semen and blood, derived as they are from the parent's two bodies, is the process by which physical attributes from both parents combine in the physical form of the emerging baby. Although both men and women have bones and fat, as well as internal red organs, those of men are stronger, and more valuable for healthy foetal development. Equally, women and men share almost all the same internal organs, but women's internal organs are considered stronger because women are subject to fewer injuries and stresses on these organs from heavy labour. Women's organs are also protected by a substantial layer of fat which does not develop in men until much later in life. As well, both men and women explained to me that menstruation in women ensured that women's blood was always clean and strong.

Heat triggers the combination of semen and female blood, and Samoans consider the sweat raised during sexual intercourse to be evidence of sufficient internal heat in the woman to provide the agitation needed to combine the male

and female substances. The action of sex, with its stimulation of the interior of the woman's body, which is evidenced by her sexual pleasure, creates a turbulence in the womb by which the semen and blood are brought together and combined. This turbulence may take several minutes, and may last for as long as several hours, women often reporting agitated disturbances in their abdomen for some time after intercourse. However, no special precautions are taken to either sustain this turbulence, or to protect the woman in any way while this combination is taking place. Many Samoans have taken up the outlines of the Western egg and sperm model of impregnation, but only to the extent that they understand the components of the foetal egg, based on the egg of chickens, as the thing produced by the combination of semen [the white] and blood [the yolk]. One day, Mele, an 80 year old great-great grandmother explained to me how, when she learned about the foetal egg, she realized just why Samoa is named Samoa, which is translated by some as 'sacred chicken', but which she suggested might mean 'sacred egg'. For her, this proved beyond argument that "family is Samoa, everything else is *lāaga*, evil, not of God." While many younger Samoans have heard of sperm, and even seen photographs of these organisms, there was no organized change to the combination model of impregnation, and no formal ascription of a role to the sperm in this process. Rather, as one person told me, "maybe sperm move around and mix the semen and blood together."

Neither semen nor blood is considered to be finite, so the failure of one attempt at impregnation is not a concern. Indeed, repeated acts of intercourse

throughout the pregnancy are understood to either help sustain the pregnancy by repeated agitations of the womb, or to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of semen to continue to work in combination with the mother's blood. The only restriction on sex during pregnancy is a practical one. Husbands and wives abstain from genital sex in the later months because it is uncomfortable, and not because it is dangerous.

Pregnancy fulfils a central social imperative for Samoans, the creation of families. The polite phrase for sexual intercourse, *fai'aiga*, translates quite literally as 'making families', expressed in its other uses such as 'to eat a meal as a family' or 'to live together as a family', all three being aspects of making families to my Samoan informants. This aspect of sexual arousal and desire is inseparable from Samoans' knowledge about what the substances they combine produce. Sexual desire, expressed in the regular sex lives of husbands and wives, writes social obligation with the genitals, and sexual pleasure is defined at least in part as deriving from a recognition of the "family making" purpose of sex. This functional aspect of marital sex, conjoining a vigorous and passionate enjoyment of sex with an equally vigorous and passionate concern for 'making children', is one of the reasons Mead [1961], in her study of Samoan adolescence and sexual mores, failed to recognize that what appears on the surface to be a sensual and liberated sexual pursuit is, in actual practice, heavily mandated and formalized around considerations of social order and obligation. Ejaculation, orgasm, and the other sensual pleasures which attach to sex fulfil sociality and

are governed, not only by a concern for pleasure, but for social harmony and moral obligation.

Under normal circumstances, pregnancy, once recognized, is announced throughout the *'āiga* and village. Only where an unmarried girl or woman becomes pregnant without prospects either of formal marriage or defacto union with the father is pregnancy kept secret. Indeed, in an instance in the village where I lived, a young woman's pregnancy was kept hidden until the early morning when I was wakened to drive her to the National Hospital to give birth. Asking me to drive her and her daughter to the hospital was the final act of secrecy, since Siluga, the new baby's grandmother, told me that she had come to get me to drive because she knew that *palagi* do not gossip. However, because defacto marriages [often called traditional Samoan marriages by my informants], which involve little more than an announcement that the couple intends to live as man and wife, are so readily entered into and abrogated, hidden pregnancies are quite rare. In villages where surveillance is so intense that the fact a couple is having sex at all is rarely a private matter, pregnancies are important because they proclaim the couple is meeting their responsibility in the important master process of creating families.

The progress of pregnancy is generally smooth, with limited restrictions placed on the mother during the course of her term. There are practical prohibitions against dangerous activities, such as climbing or carrying heavy loads, or any activity which could result in a fall and the dislodging of the foetus

causing miscarriage [*fafano*, empty bowl]. The expectant mother is not treated with any particular deference or consideration other than being exempted from this heavy labour. Pregnancy, *ma'ito*, is conceptually at least an illness in contemporary practice, but not in the sense of either risk or disease. My informants explained to me that *ma'ito* refers to the fact that pregnant women are weaker, less capable of daily work obligations and likely to be less social because of fatigue or such symptoms as nausea or muscular discomfort. Neither Pratt's 19th. century dictionary, nor Milner's 20th. century text, based on data from the 1940's and 1950's, give the word *ma'ito* [*ma'i*, illness and *to*, to be pregnant], listing only the word *to*. The attachment of the concepts surrounding illness to pregnancy would appear to be of recent vintage, borne out not only by the linguistic evidence, but by comments by my older female informants such as "today women are sick and not pregnant. Every time a baby is coming women get sick and lazy, not like when my mother just worked and worked and did not care until the time came for the baby to be born." In general, most women I spoke with reported that the progress of their pregnancies was physically uneventful and that delivery was easy, whether attended by a healer experienced in *fa'atosaga* [traditional midwifery], or by a doctor in the National Hospital.

However, the progress of foetal development does obligate cautions on the part of the mother and those around her. The foetus is, from the point of the combination of semen and blood, considered to be intimately attached to the mother's body, such that whatever the mother's body is exposed to and whatever

the mother's body engages in, directly affects the development and form of the foetus. Anything which adversely affects this accumulative development, either by interfering with the acquisition of mass or obstructing the building up of appropriate tissues in their appropriate locations, is avoided.

Such things as excessive cold or excessive heat, both considered major causes of illness by Samoans, need to be avoided. Extreme cold could cause the child's skin to pucker, resulting in the child being born with mottled or pock-marked skin, while extreme heat could cause the child's skin to become inflamed and weakened, since heat thins the skin. Sudden changes in temperature, as well as sudden movements or loud noises, must be avoided, because their startling affect on the mother transfers directly to the foetus. A mother who is repeatedly startled or frightened during pregnancy will likely have a child who cries a great deal and is either very shy or very easily frightened. Changes in social relations which effect the mother by frightening or angering her are also avoided. Pregnant women are excused from participating in discussions of *'āiga* or village disputes, and arguments are abruptly halted should a pregnant woman come near the arguers. Finally, husbands defer to their wife's wishes more readily during pregnancy, again to avoid angering or upsetting them, and thus effecting the temperament of the child. This deference does not extend to avoidance of sexual relations during pregnancy, since additional semen, as well as additional physical agitation of the abdomen is considered useful for the proper and complete mixing of tissue producing substances during foetal development.

Other sorts of precautions are followed during pregnancy, again highlighting the homologous connection between the body of the mother and the foetal child. Pregnant women avoid travelling alone at night, because to do otherwise would put them at risk from attack by *aitu*, often malicious spirit beings. These attacks are not mystical in nature. Rather, *aitu* enjoy either frightening women or tripping them capriciously, which endangers the child's temperamental development, or may induce a miscarriage or premature delivery. Pregnant women will avoid completely locations where *aitu* are known to live. For example, the small Papasea gorge just south of Vaimoso has a well known rock slide and swimming hole which people travel to from around the islands. However, it is also known to be the home of a particularly vicious *aitu* known as Saumaiafe. Pregnant women will not only not visit the Papasea sliding rocks during pregnancy, but will avoid even travelling near the village of Papasea itself, or bathing in the river which feeds through this small gorge.

As well as avoiding sites where *aitu* are likely to be encountered, women will take precautions, when they sleep, to protect themselves from *aitu* attack which may take two different forms. The first involves direct attacks on the mother, usually in the form of kicking her, or pulling her hair. To prevent this, pregnant women try to sleep between at least two other persons, increasing the likelihood that one of their sleeping partners will be awakened by the *aitu*'s presence, and be able to ward it off. The other form of attack involves direct attack on the foetus, by either kicking the mother's abdomen or entering the

fa'aautagata [womb-place] through the vagina, mouth or armpit, and attacking the foetus, breaking its bones, or twisting its muscles. Children born with broken bones or distorted heads are understood to have been victims of *aitu* attack during gestation.

Attacks on women while walking alone at night are arbitrary, reflecting the *aitu*'s malicious nature. Attacks on sleeping pregnant women are more troublesome because they are indications of some serious problem in *'āiga* relations. Direct intended attacks by *aitu* most often result from conflicts between *'āiga* members, between residents of related villages, or as a result of some inappropriate or insulting behaviour by the mother, or a member of her *'āiga*, either toward some ancestor, or toward some specific *aitu*. When an attack is known to have occurred, steps are taken to resolve the conflict. When the effect of the attack is not known until after delivery, action will be taken to appease the offended *aitu* and, at the same, the infant will be treated with massage and herbal cures in an effort to repair the damage the *aitu* may have done.

If *aitu* can attack the infant through the mother's body, accidental behaviours by the mother can also affect the progress and outcome of the foetus's physical development [MacPherson and MacPherson 1990:186; Neitch and Neitch 1974]. Certain foods need to be avoided because they may affect the child. Octopus, for example, may cause the child to be born with rashes, or to suffer them throughout its life. A mother wearing items around her neck can cause the child to become tied up in the umbilical cord. A pregnant woman

placing items behind her ears can cause the child's ears to be malformed, while a mother using her teeth to tear either food, or thread in sewing, can cause the child's teeth to protrude or cause tears in the sides of the lips of the foetus's mouth. Not walking upright can lead to stooping in the child, while walking too quickly can cause the child's legs to overdevelop, making delivery, and learning to walk, difficult. What is common to all of these is a direct relationship between the body of the foetus and the mother's body. The foetus and the mother, as bodies, are inseparable. Changes in one are mirrored in changes in the other. A foetus which is developing malformed limbs may manifest itself in the mother's arms and legs, while developing malformations in the mouth or lips may be expressed in the face of the mother. In one case, a woman noted for her smile complained that it was becoming increasingly difficult for her to open her mouth and expose her teeth at all. A Samoan healer examined the position of the infant in the *fa'aautagata* and determined that the child's head was too large and that its face was being pressed against the wall of the mother's abdomen. Massage repositioned the foetus in a more appropriate orientation and the mother's facial constrictions were relieved.

Massage and dietary advice are the primary forms of obstetric care, whether received from a Samoan healer, from a doctor at the National Hospital, or from a nurse at a village health clinic. Samoan healers monitor changes in mass in the woman's abdomen through probing massage, and their treatment during the pregnancy consists mostly of correcting the foetal orientation, or

adjusting the mother's internal organs. Both ensure an easy passage for the foetus at birth and keep the mother's bladder and bowels moving freely to avoid potentially dangerous obstructions. Medical doctors from the hospital or local clinics, in co-operation with village women's health committees, provide prenatal care in the form of dietary advice and supplements, as well as some formal education about infant care. The general thrust of pre-natal care is to keep the mother comfortable, to ensure she avoids unnecessary risks, and to monitor the development of body mass in the foetus, objectives which are shared by both the traditional midwife and the Western trained medical personnel. This often means that pregnant women avail themselves of both types of service interchangeably, depending on which is more convenient at a given moment in the progress of their pregnancy.

Labour and delivery, whether in the village under the care of a healer experienced in *fa'atosaga* [midwifery], or in the hospital under Western medical supervision, should include the complete expulsion of all materials related to the pregnancy. Delivery is not thought to be complete until all the cellular debris has been expunged from the 'womb' and the cervix has returned to normal. Particular care is taken to prevent vaginal prolapse, *ma'i lalovasa*, or the displacement of the internal organs, which can result from the pressure the *to'ala* [stomach heart] exerts on the foetus to help with its delivery. Massage and rest following pregnancy ensure a quick return to fertility.

Infant health, like foetal health, is understood in terms of the continued

accumulation of appropriate tissue mass. Average birth weight in Samoa is approximately 3.5kg., and is in the mid-range of averages in world populations [Bindon and Zansky 1986:224-225]. However, twelve month weight gain in Samoa is rapid and considerable and average 12 month weight for both boys and girls being around 10.5 kgs. [p. 246]. While infancy is normally a period of "rapid hyperplastic growth", Samoan infants' weight gain in the first months of life is equal to, or greater than the 75th percentile average for American children [p.227]. The child is breast-fed, fed infant formula provided by the women's health committee, and fed increasing quantities of white food, especially boiled rice. An increase in bottle-feeding of babies in American Samoa has led to an increase in average weight gain among infants [p.236], which Bindon and Zansky suggest combines with a possible genetic predisposition toward obesity in later life.

At the same time, the mother eats large amounts of white starch foods in order to maintain her weight. The health of the mother, observable in both her return to normal day to day activities, and in the maintenance of her weight, is tied to the health of the child. Illness in the mother during the first year of her infant's life often requires curative treatment of both the mother and the baby.

The child should grow rapidly during the first year of life and should be alert and active, seeking out human contact and demonstrating a curiosity about the world around it. As well, infant death is a serious concern for Samoan mothers. Bannister et al [1978], found a decline in infant mortality in Western Samoa, from about 100 per 100,000 in 1950 to about 70 per 100,000 in 1970

[cited in Harbison 1986:73]. Infant mortality was estimated at 50/100,000 in 1989 [per.comm. Western Samoa Department of Statistics] based on data for the period between 1984 and 1986. However, these estimates are based on questionable birth and death registration data. Both inaccuracies in the data collection systems employed over the course of this century, and Samoan's tendency to not consistently report births and deaths, have contributed to limitations on most health statistics in Western Samoa. Most older women with large families, however, told me they had lost at least one child in infancy, while younger mothers fully expected that at least one of their babies would die in its first year. One protection against sudden death of an infant is to keep the baby in the company of caregivers at all times. From very early on, the child is carried by the mother or her older children, when they go to perform work around the village, or to travel into town or to other villages. It is almost always held facing away from the bearer and toward what is happening around them. While protecting the child from extremes of heat and cold, no other substantial effort is made to coddle the baby. It becomes an active body in the meaningful life of the village, and the wider community, almost from the day of its birth [Ochs 1988:85]. Its progress in weight gain, developing alertness, and social skills, are closely observed and commented on by all who come into contact with it. Its body is a constant focus of attention by friends and relatives, its weight, feces, and vomit, noted and discussed. Fluids must move through the body and should not be obstructed or hampered in their flow. Feces, for example, must be syrupy and easily passed,

evidence of properly working digestion and breathing. All of the infants' activities are monitored and observed. Particular attention is paid to the strength of its crying and the loudness of its voice. The gathering strength of its limbs is encouraged with games, such as placing small long objects in the infant's hand and then trying to pull them away.

During the first several months, the infant is spoken to constantly, a combination of nonsense sounds, often delivered in a sing-song voice by both men and women, and simple commands such as 'stop', 'quiet' and 'stand still'. Everyone in the household is involved in caring for the infant, with the father doing the least, although he remains an active caregiver [Ochs 1988:78-80]. From early on the child is encouraged to sleep at the same time adults sleep and be awake when adults are normally awake [Mead 1961]. Most women told me their babies slept through the night within several weeks of being born, and my own experience in households with infants confirms this.

From twelve months onward, a healthy baby, most easily identified as a very large and very loud baby, begins its physical transition to the status of child. This involves certain physical changes. Expectations of noise and movement become inverted as the process of socialization into appropriate body language and body style begins. The first twelve months of life can be thought of as continuing the process of gestation post-partum, in that the expectation of massive weight gain is encouraged throughout this period through overfeeding. The infant remains a foetus in its physical care, and its progress towards

childhood remains closely attached to its mother's body and health. The *tamameamea* [child-gift thing] remains special and distinctive during its first year, encouraged in excesses while at the same time encouraged in its attachment to others. Never left alone, fed on demand, prompted to be hyper-active and often

annoyingly loud, the infant is being lead into socially meaningful presence.

The destination of this year of attentive indulgence is a transition toward a new set of expectations about good and proper bodies, and the steady progress toward mature status both as bodies and as persons. Figure 3.1.1 illustrates this progressive process, from the combination of male and female substances in the foetus through the development of the foetus, then the foetal child and finally, the arrival at the point of transition where it begins its progress toward maturity and

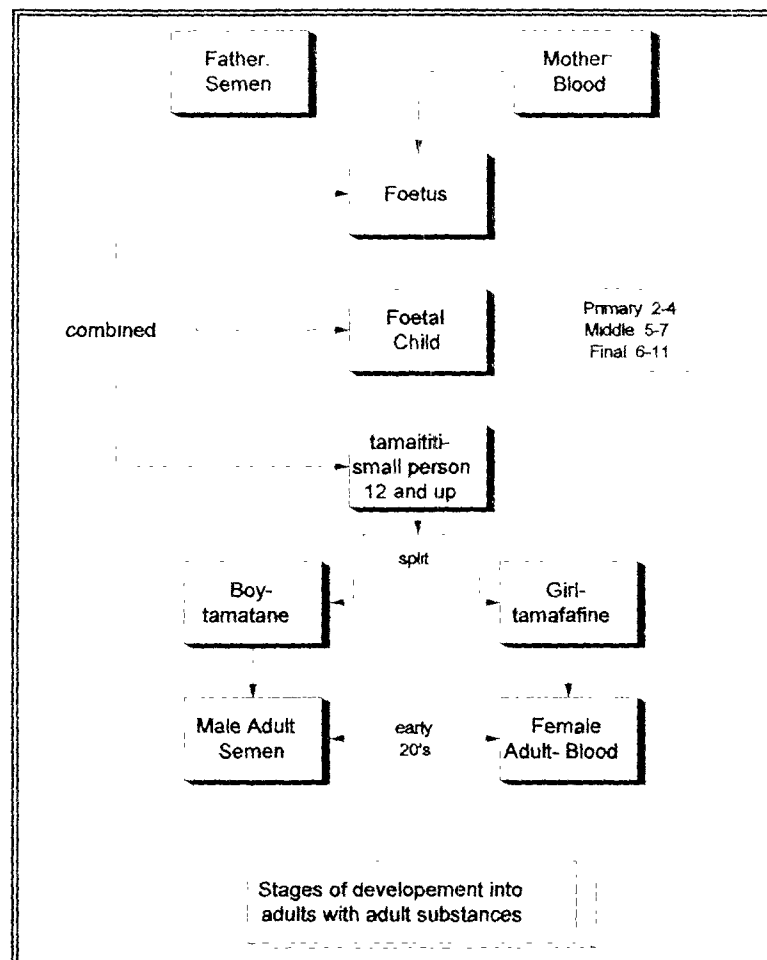


Figure 3.1.1 Stages in the Growth of Samoan Bodies and Persons

adulthood.

The ideal body style in Samoa is a combination of mass, strength, and stillness. The good and proper Samoan body is one which is imposing in its pure physical presence, but neither particularly active nor in any way domineering. That is to say, the good and proper body, is large and silent, moves slowly, but with steady and capable purpose, and never imposes itself by displays of specialness or distinction. This inverts the expectations of the good infant body. With the transition to childhood, the body of the child has now become socially informed and is now part of the process of constituting the social field. The training of the body in seamliness and suitability marks the emergence of the baby as a social being. Sione, a mother of 11 living children, one afternoon, explained it this way:

When a baby is born, it has to be shown everything, made to see everything and do everything because that is the only way it can know what the things are in the world that it must know, and so we don't punish babies and we won't yell at them and we like to see them crying and screaming and moving. We take them everywhere so they can see everything and then, later, when they are older, we can teach them what all the things they have seen, what they mean, and then we can teach them to be quiet.

Bodies, as organic phenomena, may be said to have an independent existence, independent, that is, of consciousness. Such existence, like that of plants, or moss stains on a rock, is the meanest form of existence, an existence with no being. The body I am interested in is the body attended to, that is, the body seen, interpreted, and experienced. This process of attention is the pre-

objective state of subjectivity, and it determines how distinctions between things are enacted. Attention is pre-objective because it "exists" prior to the object being attended to having any meaning at all. It is the ground for meaning, and therefore, objectification [Csordas 1990]. Attention both constitutes meaningful objects, and is a function of the ongoing constitution of the social field as something in which meaningful objects may exist. It is a relationship between things, and the meanings of things, in the sense that attention is a set of anticipations about what, in the world, can be seen. Attention is the basic code which determines what can and cannot be an object, and what can and cannot be observed. The enacted body is not the only 'object' to which attention is turned, but it is the most complex, since the meaningful body is both a thing and a consciousness of a thing. That is, it is complicit in the attention to which it is subjected. The body, therefore, can never be completely separated from the manner in which it is observed and made meaningful, because the body, as a thing which is conscious of itself, is always engaged in making itself observable and something which can and should be attended to. By doing anything with the body we engage the gaze of others in a process of being seen by making our selves, as embodied objects, visible and sensible. We become what we intend others to see.

In the earliest stages of embodiment, when the infant is beginning to be attended to as a body by those around it, the body is being recognized as socially meaningful. Through the gaze of its caregivers, the probing touch of relatives and friends caressing and pinching and holding it, the body of the infant, and the

infant's emerging awareness of itself as a socially meaningful body, are in transition. The restraint of parental care, from early toileting, cleaning, and feeding, to games played with body parts, engages the infant's body in a process of transformation initiated by the observers around it. Attention begins, in Samoa, with the singular qualities of the particular infant's body being measured against a set of fixed, general, expectations about how and when bodies will grow, move, and develop. The locus of attention, on the surface of the body, and on what can be observed and directly interpreted, sets the ground for the child's emerging awareness of itself as a thing that can be attended to, directing its own gaze and probing interpretation, by example, to attend to its skin, scent, and body products. Equally important, the focus of attention, which encompasses not only the infant, but also the mother, and her relationships, establishes a different aspect of the ground of embodiment, which begins to direct the child's experience of its body in terms of how it is inexorably connected to the other bodies around it.

Childhood, *aso fa'a tamaititi*, the 'days of making a small person', is a period of extensive socialization and training. Throughout this period, the foetal child of the first year of life becomes fully engaged, as a participant, in its community, and in the enactment of its body as a part of that community. The child is beginning the long progress toward maturity and adulthood. It is a progress marked by the child's socialization into propriety and appropriate body presence, and most particularly by its socialization into a particular manner of attending to itself and the bodies around it. Childhood involves, among its many

lessons, learning to be a body, and it is to that process of socializing the body into meaningful propriety that I now turn.

Endnotes: Chapter 3.1

1. Jorgensen [1983] provides studies of procreation beliefs and practices in several New Guinea societies, relating these issues to those of cosmology, identity, and notions of self and personhood. This remains the only focussed study of these questions in the Pacific.
2. In contrast, genital body fluids are often dangerous or sacred substances throughout Papua New Guinea and Melanesia. See, for example, Herdt [1981], Meigs [1983] or Jorgensen [1983].
3. In contrast, Sahlins has suggested that the semen, and possibly the menstrual blood, of "royal" Hawai'ians may have been considered dangerous, and subject to tabu's related to the enactment of political authority and rank in ancient Hawai'ian society [1985.3-26].
4. Sexualized body images, as psychological phenomenon, are explored in Fisher [1989]. The question of standards and pathologies in body image experience across cultures is important because, as Kleinman [1980] reminds us, what is pathological in one culture may be normative in another. Exploration of a culturally sensitive approach to body image psychology, and its pathologies, is part of my own continuing research on gendered bodies in Samoa.

Chapter 3.2

THE BODY ENCOMPASSED: LEARNING TO BE A PROPER BODY

At the end of the last chapter I spoke of the process of recognition through which the body of the infant is attended to as a socially meaningful thing by those around it. This process forms the foundation on which the child begins to learn the subjective exigencies through which embodiment is accomplished. In this chapter, I will focus on selected aspects of socialization, through which the child becomes complicit in the process of embodiment and meaning as an active participant. Through socialization of the child's body practice it learns to account for its presence and abilities in the world. This learning how to account for our physical presence is central to embodiment, because it is through accounting for the world, and one's presence in it, that the body can be deployed as a socially meaningful act. At the same time, the process of embodiment needs to be understood as constitutive of that account of the world, inseparable from it. The body socialized is also a body socializing the world it moves in and around. By learning how to sit in church, or the proper way to hold and chew its food, the child begins to use its body to constitute the social space in which it lives.

Heston was 4 years old in 1991, the second youngest son of the daughter

of a ranking *matai*. He was born in Hawai'i, where his parents had lived for fifteen years. At age 3, Mafa, his mother, had brought him to Samoa, and had left him in the care of his grandparents in order that he could grow up learning to be a "good and strong Samoan". Heston was sickly, suffering from a susceptibility to bronchial infection labelled by those around him as asthma. He had been a very small baby, and in his second and third years, his growth had been markedly stunted and slow. "He needs to be in Samoa" Mafa explained, "because he needs to get a strong body from growing up as a Samoan boy."

Samoans living overseas, as part of the ring of extended kinship which extends to New Zealand and Australia in the south and, to the north, to Fiji, Hawai'i and California, often characterize Samoa as the source of their health and strength. Samoans who become ill while living overseas, often return to Samoa to recover. De facto adoptions of Samoan children born overseas by relatives living in Samoa is quite common [Kallen 1982]. These adoptions have two main objectives, one focused on the child qua child, and the other on the extended family of which the child is a member. Returning a child to Samoa engages *fa'a Samoa* itself as a tutor through which the child learns the good and proper way to be Samoan and to have a good and proper Samoan body. "Overseas children are too cheeky and too weak", I was told. "They need the air and the work and family in Samoa to make them good so they can grow up to be real, you know, finished, whole - *uma* - Samoans". At the same time, de facto transfer of children from their overseas parents to Samoan relatives adds additional assistance and

support to the pool of family labour. "Children are their parent's arms and legs" Pai, my Samoan mother, would remind me whenever I would ask her about how her own children had learned to perform their household duties. Caring for children is also a key component of youthfulness and full community participation. "I will be uma - finished - when there are no more children for me to care for" one grandmother told me. "Until my children have no more children, I am still young because I am still a mother."

Children are of central importance in Samoan life because "they are our future, when they will care for old men and women, and they are our present because teaching *fa'a Samoa* is how *fa'a Samoa* stays alive and keeps alive." The process of socializing children begins shortly after birth, when infants are brought with adults, or other caregivers, to all events in the village, rather than being isolated in protected nurseries. It is continuous, and becomes something which the child learns to participate in as well. They are always held facing outward, their gaze directed toward the activity around them, their gaze drawing the gaze of those around them inward to attend to their presence. This circular relationship between being socialized, and socializing the world around one, is accomplished most directly in the way a child learns to enact a proper body in his or her daily practices.

Much has been written about childrearing in Samoa, most often from the perspective of the inculcation of stringent social control [Freeman 1984] or the absence of efforts to impose control [Mead 1961, 1969]. What both these authors

have failed to take into account is that the objective of socialization in Samoa is not comparable to that in the societies from which these researchers came. Where North American socialization, for example, is about learning to control urges, and to postpone gratification, Samoan socialization is about learning to direct urges and pursue gratification in a manner which is both proper in the sense of modest and humble, and exploratory. Both Freeman and Mead, as Ochs [1988;147-148] notes, were looking for domination and control, in some absolute and punishing form. Because of this, they missed the subtlety of Samoan socialization, which has as its objective not domination, but co-operation, and not submission but support. Learning appropriate body function contributes to this process in subtle ways.

Samoans experience most body functions as being discrete processes, although the details of their biological modelling are different from Western scientific biology. This includes, for Samoans, their experience of body functions as always undergoing development, transformation, and improvement. These developments in the major body functions are seen as progressive rather than regressive or degrading. Where North American toilet training, for example, involves learning not to defecate, and to control and disguise body function, Samoan toilet training is about learning to defecate in an appropriate and healthy manner. Samoan children do not learn to stop up their bowels, they learn how to keep them flowing.

There are four areas of body function in Samoan biology: the excretory,

the gustatory, the respiratory, and the cognitive/sensory. I will restrict my discussion below to only the first two, since the principles of appropriate flow of body substances is, in these areas, most directly related to the enactment of dignity. Each set of body processes progresses through development from excess to calm restraint, as the child grows during its *aso fa'a tamaititi* [childhood period] into young adult and then adult status. This period of excess is characterized as a period of inadequacy of function, rather than one of lack of control. The excretory functions exemplify this.

Little or no effort is taken to impose urinary and bowel control on infants or very young children. It was not unusual to see a toddler, having just learned to walk, stop to defecate in the middle of the *malae*, or to urinate outside the door of its *fale*. However, what Mead [1961:18-20] saw as a lack of control of children, became on questioning my informants, a matter of biology. As I noted in the last chapter, foetal development continues post partum for at least the first year and sometimes slightly later, if an infant has not gained sufficient weight to be considered healthy. During this time, the internal organs and the paths along which body substances are travelling are still growing and developing. To interfere with the excretory processes risks interfering with, or obstructing the complete and healthy formation of these organs. The ultimate and healthy form of the excretory pathways is one of easy and smooth flow. Any interference which would jeopardize this is avoided, not only in children, but in adult life as well. The use of mild purgatives, and of massage to assist infants and young children

whose bowels or bladder do not appear to be developing properly because they are not sufficiently productive, is quite common. Most mothers know the appropriate herbal mixtures and massage to apply.

When the infant begins the transition to being a young child, attention to its bowels and bladder shifts from the volume and quality of the flow to a consideration for the appropriate place for such acts. Slowly the child learns to defecate away from the household area and the village, though not necessarily away from the view of others, a consideration for modesty which develops much later. This change in concern, from the nature and quality of the substances, to the proper way to deliver oneself of them, is marked by a change in language. This is not captured in any of the dictionaries I consulted, but was often remarked upon by my informants. The polite word for faeces is *otaota*, explained to me as a longstanding pun on ripe banana meat, something Samoans find repulsive and inedible. The vernacular word is *tae* [usually pronounced *kae*]. *Tae* is from a class of words usually reserved for reference to animals or animal behaviour, and except as an insult, is never applied to an adult's faeces. It is also not applied to the faeces of an infant, the verb *ti'o* [to defecate] being used most often as a noun in reference to this. However, it is used even in polite conversation between members of the same sex to refer to the faeces of young children. They are learning, one mother explained, "how to shit like pigs so that then they can learn how to shit like Samoans." Slowly, during this period when defecating is moved further and further away from the village centre, the child comes to understand

that his or her bowels must move, must always be flowing. However, unlike animals, their products need to be taken away from the dignified and social centre of the village and into the bush. Even so, children show little embarrassment over excretory functions. Walking in the bush, it is not unusual for children to simply step off the path a foot or two and relieve themselves, while carrying on their conversation with you. A favourite game among young boys up to about the age of 10 is a competitive 'who can pee further' contest in which several young boys will lift their *lavalava*, or pull their penises out of their shorts, and try to outdo each other in both distance and volume. The game reinforces, through enactment, the standard against which healthy urination is measured.

Girls begin this process of moving their excretory functions out of sight much earlier than boys, and greater caution is taken to avoid being seen. While catching young girls urinating in the bush does not cause a great deal of embarrassment, young girls learn to seek out secluded spots to urinate or defecate earlier than boys.

Moved away from the village and, relatively at least, out of sight, excretory functions finally become private ones late in childhood. The waste functions of the bowels and genitals become linked to the process of sexing bodies, which also takes place over the course of childhood, culminating in the linguistic marking of boys and girls at the period just prior to puberty [*tama tane*, boy and *tama fafine*, girl and *fa'afafine*, a biological male, but neither male nor female] While Samoans certainly recognize the sex of their children from birth, both male

and female infants and very young children are subjected to the same rules of treatment and modesty, and to the same expectations in terms of body function, until well into their childhood years. By about 4 or 5, however, the often naked boys and girls begin to be covered in some form of clothing. At the time that *tamaititi* are beginning to learn the basic rules of propriety about body waste, they are also beginning to learn genital modesty. Beyond a certain age, although there is no consensus on the limits of this age, boys and girls should no longer see each others' genitals, referred to politely from this point on as *mea sã*, or sacred things. This is the beginning of the formalization of the brother-sister relationship, a relationship of profound importance in *fa'a Samoa* [Good 1980]. It is based on respect and protection of the sister by her brother, and on obedience and deference of the sister toward her brother. Its beginnings are enacted on, and with, the body, through the gradual transformation of the genitals into special things. However, genitals are not being hidden or denied, they are being located in their appropriate space. What happens, as Lacan has noted, is that in the social sexing of bodies, ". . . words, titles, clothes, accoutrements . . . are, barring the actual *seeing* of the genitals, the "essence" of the human "sexed" being" [cited in MacCannell 1986:50]. Clothing, privacy, and modesty enact a new body location, signified by a deflection of attention away from the actual genitals, toward their social charged implications.

The function of the genitals is being divided, from solely excretory, to a combination of excretory, erotogenic and reproductive attributes. They become

sex organs in both senses: organs which sex the individual and as organs used to have sex. Childhood play that involves genital touching is not discouraged in mixed sex groups during the earliest years of childhood, but by the rough midpoint in this period [age 4 to 6], genital play among girls, or between boys and girls, is prohibited out of fear the girl's organs may be damaged. It is encouraged among boys well into adolescence, in order to strengthen the muscular aspects of their penis and testicles.

An important point about these organs needs to be introduced here. Samoans have three distinctive genders, rather than two. That is, there are men, women and *fa'afafine*. The *fa'afafine* are genetically male in that they have penises. They use their penises in exactly the same way formal males do: in heterosexual intercourse, urination, and in rules about modesty and exposure. However, the *fa'afafine* are not male, and their penises are not male sex organs. They are *fa'afafine* organs. That is, sex organs, but not ones which define the *fa'afafine* as male. At the same time, unlike male and female, *fa'afafine* is a temporary gender which is abandoned later in life in favour of a formal male gender. The issue of genitals and gendering is important in Samoa, because role maps onto physical aspects of the body distinctive orders of meaning and experience not encompassed by the scientific classification of human bodies as male and female. As I noted in Chapter 1, the question of sexing, gender, and *fa'afafine* in Samoa is the focus of my own ongoing research. While I will restrict my comments here to boys and girls, what I say about male and female bodies

can be applied equally to *fa'afafine* bodies as well.

This shifting of excretory functions away from the centre of the village is an important aspect of

learning how to embody the properties of good and proper space. In Chapter 2, I described the conceptual layout of Samoan villages, where the core of the village, most often the *malae* or sacred green, is the

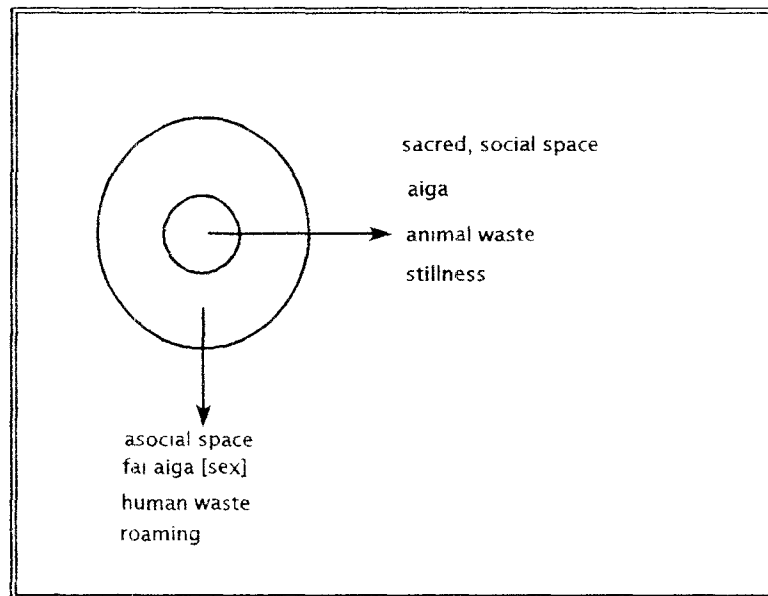


Figure 3.2.1 Space and Body Substances in Samoa

most dignified space. The further one moves away from the centre, the less the dignity, and the greater the danger. [Figure 2.7 - Chapter 1, page 40, in this copy].

This slow shifting of excretory functions into the undignified periphery of village space is an example of how intimate daily practices generate and sustain this very important distinction. Figure 3.2.1 illustrates the physical layout of these associations. In this, one can see the gradual embodiment of the world around the child through the way the child begins to engage different aspects of space with its body. The child learns early into its childhood years that what it does with its body is both determined by, and determines the nature and quality of the space in which it is moving. Space becomes an extension of his or her body, and

associations of propriety, gender, dignity, and danger, become fundamental aspects of the landscape within which the child moves.

Excretory functions, along with the emergence of the entailments surrounding sexing, are one way through which children begin their embodied transition to fuller personhood. The gustatory functions, combining appetites and the process of digestion, is another. Infants, and very young children, are fed on demand, because Samoans understand that impeding appetites, and their satisfaction, risks injuring the still developing digestive organs of young children. By age three or four, children's demands for food are often ignored. While little effort is made at this point in children's lives to prevent them from finding food on their own, caregivers stop being sources of food whenever the child demands it. Even the youngest child will eat with its family at the regularly scheduled meals, although no great attention is paid to bad eating habits in the very young. Midway through the *aso fa'a tamaititi*, the childhood years, discipline begins to be applied to appetites with increasing vigour. Children learn to wait until adults have taken their portions, to eat only when told they may, and to share their food whenever asked.

Hunger and thirst are important aspects of the organic body, markers of body processes present in all human experience. People in all societies deal with these primal urges in some way. For Samoans, hunger expresses emptiness since nutrition is understood as deriving from having sufficient food in the body at all times. Faeces is not what is left after the body has removed what it needs from

the food it takes in. Instead, faeces is food being pushed through the digestive system by new food, by the movement of the body in work and, as Albert put it one day, "because everything falls down sometime, Douglass." Satisfying hunger involves putting sufficient food, softened by chewing, into the body to sustain this reservoir of material for the body to use as it is needed. The formal phrase for digestion is *fa'a malū / le puta*, which combines the three senses of *malū*: to soften, fishing weir, and storage basket. Literally, the phrase combines 'to cause fat to be softened', 'to catch fat in a net' and 'to put fat in the basket'. My informants would often refer to digestion as 'carrying fat' and link the presence of fat on the body to digestion. Layers of fat are part of the stomach's normal storing function.

In infancy, because the body is still forming, it is difficult for this reserve of food to remain in place. Infants need to be fed, and overfed, in order to ensure sufficient nutrition at all times. During the early years of childhood, when children have now developed the physical ability to retain food, the habit of eating in excess has often become engrained. There is considerable tolerance during this period for immoderate, and on demand eating by children. Slowly, however, children learn about the properties of food and its relationship to their bodies, and it is during this period that they also learn restraint. However, this should not be mistaken for something as simple as postponement of gratification. It is tied to biology, on the one hand, and to increasing social awareness on the other. Children come to understand that hunger is not an alarm, or a signal of distress

Instead, hunger tells them they will need to eat again, not simply that they need to eat now. The body holds food, it does not absorb it, and hunger simply indicates that the body will soon need to be refilled. The social awareness, written out in the way they deal with hunger, relates to an understanding of the nature of social support among Samoans. "There is always food here because everyone helps everyone, so no one can starve" I was told, " but children do not know this, not for a long time. Children think about food like something that might go away, might never be there. Only later do they know there is always food." In learning to postpone the satisfaction of hunger, children are learning, with their bodies, core principles of Samoan sociality, in particular the value of sharing and mutual support. They are learning their bodies need food, the language by which their body reminds them they need food, and also that there is always food. Hunger, they learn, is a reminder of the basic character of community concern, support, and sharing.

One sees this series of lessons most poignantly in the practice of auto-constipation, especially among middle aged [5-7 years] children of very poor families. I did not fully understand the biology of digestion as storage until a mother told me about problems she had had with her two sons when they were about 5 or 6 years old. Because of serious disputes within their *'āiga*, and the loss of the household's only cash job, the family had experienced a long period when food was scarce. During this time, both her sons became very ill, and when examined by a *fofō* [Samoan healer], it was revealed that they had intentionally

not had bowel movements in several days, in order to prevent what food remained in their bodies from being evacuated. A kind of community based family counselling, in which the two boys were reassured by all members of their village that they would always have enough food, along with massage and a purgative, were needed to correct the boys' physical problem, and to help them learn these fundamental body lessons.

Weight loss and weight gain follow closely monitored patterns in young children. After passing through the first year of life, a child is expected to begin to lose weight such that by age 6 or so, Samoan children are often quite small and wiry. Average weight of young children, as well as average rates of growth beyond infancy, are well below the median for such averages found among American children [Bindon and Zansky 1986:227]. Parents explain this as the result of children's need to run about and to be constantly on the move. Children, I was told " have not learned to be still [*manava*, which is also 'to breathe'], because they still do not know everything about the village and their family" and so "they become small because they are always running. They will learn to be still later."

This pattern of weight loss is enforced through surveillance and comment on the state of children's weight. A fat 6 year old child is the object of either scorn or concern, is called *le puta* [the noun form of fat], and his parents and caregivers are often queried by other family and village members. Is the child sick, they will ask, or is he arrogant, having adopted an adult body style

prematurely, or is he not learning the proper manner of Samoan children, that is, learning restraint and orderly eating? Not only adults reinforce this concern. The most common form of name calling among children refers to obesity. Children's insults are an interesting source of information on the acquisition of cultural values and ideas about the world. While I did not collect data on this area of children's interactions systematically, I did note a pattern to children's insults and criticisms of other children, which focusses almost exclusively on the body. Along with obesity, children also comment critically on the cleanliness of their peers, and on their lack of strength.

Gradually this process of weight loss is reversed, so that by the beginning of the *tama* or young person phase of their development [about 12-13 years], boys and girls begin to put weight back on [Bindon and Zansky:244-247]. This begins earlier for girls than boys, explained by girls' greater need for additional mass to allow for the proper formation of the breasts. In both girls and boys, this weight gain is understood as part of their transformation into reproductive adults, fat acting as a buffering and warming protection for the internal organs, or the internal spaces, where reproductive substances are formed, stored and, in the *fa'aautagata*, combined in the foetus. This pattern of weight gain and loss is illustrated in the photographs on the next several pages [Figures 3.2.2 - 3.2.8].



Figure 3.2.2 A healthy six month old infant [*tamameamea*] is fat, alert, curious, and active.



Figure 3.2.3 By four years old, Samoan children have lost their infant fat, and rate of growth has slowed.



Figure 3.2.4 The eight year old, on the left, is typical of older Samoan children [*tamaititi*] in being thin and wiry. His twelve year old brother, in white, has begun the transition to adolescence and is beginning to gain weight once again.



Figure 3.2.5 A young man and woman in their early twenties. Young women begin the process of weight gain earlier than young men.



Figure 3.2.6 A *tulafale matai*, speaking on behalf of his *ali'i*, seated, in the white shirt. The *tulafale* is around 45 years old while the *ali'i* was 66 at the time of this photograph. Note the differences in size of the two men, reflecting different stages in the life course.



Figure 3.2.7 The 59 year old wife of an important *matai*, she is typical in weight and stature of Samoan women at this age.



Figure 3.2.8 A 78 year old woman, once a robust 200 pounds. This photograph was taken several months before her death from "old age".

It closely parallels increases in dignity and status as Samoans mature and grow older. Adolescent weight gain is gendered, girls gaining more weight than boys, but by the time of their late twenties and early thirties, both men and women begin to gain weight in comparable amounts. By their mid to late 50's, both men and women have average weights of close to 80 kgs [Pawson 1986:262]. This weight gain is likely a result of the connection between status over the life course, and eating practices. Samoans are remarkable eaters. They consume monumental amounts of food everyday. This food is heavy in starches, such as taro and rice, and also has a high fat content because so many dishes are prepared using beef tallow. At the same time, as a person matures into their 40's, they are expected to do less and less physical labour. The normative status which attaches to maturity means that middle-aged Samoans supervise manual labour, rather than participate directly in it. A combination of an increasingly sedentary lifestyle and a high fat, high carbohydrate diet, results in mid-life obesity in almost all Samoans. This is more an intuitive observation, than a nutritional one. Hanna, Pelletier and Brown note that "attemp[s] to link daily food intake to obesity . . . have not been successful [1986:295]. Samoan's own perception of the material causes of weight gain are, as one man put it, " the respect a person should have when he is a mature and important man."

While Pawson's data on the morphology of adult Samoans, noted above, does not control for titled or untitled status, there appears to be a relationship between weight, and holding a matai title. However, it is a relationship of relative

massiveness. That is to say, *matai* were, from my subjective observations, usually the largest men in a village. However, almost all men in the villages I worked in were very large by their

early 50's. Adult sons of *matai* are also, subjectively at least, larger than their peers, a subject which my informants often commented on. Many felt that the sons of *matai* were too arrogant and immodest, "acting like they are princes, and not just our brothers."

Some of the *matai's* sons,

themselves, were aware of this disparity, commenting on how lower status men should be small because, in one man's words, "they are the smallest of all the people in *fa'a Samoa*". Relative weight has become a marker of class distinction for some Samoans. However, while titled and untitled status does not currently define a fixed class for most Samoans, the question of class in Samoa is changing. The extension of suffrage to all adult Samoans, in 1989, has generated a conflict between *matai*, and the untitled members of their *'āiga*. A small, but vocal, group of *matai* are agitating for a repeal of the legislative amendments which granted universal suffrage, on the grounds that only *matai* have the moral and cultural authority to enact political decisions. This authority does not extend

Average Weight Gain By Gender [Source: Pawson 1986:261-267]		
MALES		FEMALES
75.9	25-34	70.4
77.9	35-44	74
79.4	45-54	77.3
81.1	55-64	78.2
75.9	65-74	70.3

to imposing decisions on their untitled family members, since political decision-making remains a process of consensus among all *'āiga* members. However, the dispute over suffrage has planted some very tentative seeds of fixed distinction into this relationship between consensus and the authority to act, and many Samoans are expressing an increasing dissatisfaction with what they see as an increased arrogance on the part of *matai* as a group.

" They are trying to take all the power of *fa'a Samoa* and pretend that only they own it, which is a lie only *matai* would tell," one pro-universal suffrage *matai* explained. The possibility exists that physical markers of an emergent class status may become more important in the future, as this controversy over suffrage and authority continues. While detailed discussion of the changes in the relations of authority and power in Samoa is beyond the scope of this text, it is useful to note that the body may play a key role in the way these changes develop over the next several years.¹

I could see no observable difference in relative size among wives of high status, and of lower status husbands. Samoans expect all adults to grow in weight throughout their lives, and enquire after a person's health if they feel they are too thin, or too fat for their age. Later in life, both men and women lose weight, which was explained as the slow degradation of the body's ability to draw energy and strength from food. Adolescence is the only time in a Samoan's life when the size of his or her body is directly related to gender.

Sexing is also implicated in other changes in the gustatory functions, that

is, in the practices surrounding nutrition and eating. This area of cultural enactment has been described by Kahn [1986], and Meigs [1983], for two societies in New Guinea, addressing issues of gender, power, and spirituality in practices surrounding the growing, preparation, and consumption of food. However, Meigs, for example, locates food, both in its meanings and its practices, at the heart of an imperfect recollection of traditional culture among the Hua, arguing that it is "an ideology as it is remembered . . . by a group whose culture is now in decline" [1983:xv]. In contrast, I am arguing that the relationships between eating, food, and the good and proper body, are indivisible particles of a vibrant and ongoing enactment of tradition and culture in Samoa. This discussion of eating, sexing, and the meanings of food, is based on in depth interviews, and on detailed food intake data collected over a 28 day period in a sample of 18 households in six villages on Upolu.

Girls and boys have similar capacities and needs for food. However, eating habits begin to diverge during the middle period of the *aso fa'a tamaititi*. Gradually girls learn to chew their food more thoroughly than boys, because girls' nutrition is based on the ability of food material to pass into the blood, while boys' involves food material being taken up in the denser tissue of muscle and bone. At the same time, girls learn to allow boys to eat first when they are fed together, while boys learn to leave the best portions of dishes for their sisters to eat. Boys get more while girls get better. In part, this is an expression of the complex relationship of respect and deference which exists between brothers and sisters,

but in part it is an expression of an emerging sense of a gendered biology as well. Girls require finer food for their blood, which is a finer substance, but boys require greater bulk because boys move more, more quickly, and for longer periods of time than girls. This is not simply a matter of different roles, however. Girls have slower, though not weaker, muscles than boys because of the dominance of blood in their physical makeup. Boys on the other hand have faster moving muscles, though again, not necessarily stronger muscles than girls. In this division of food, and in acts of deference and the orderly sharing of food, children are engaging in an embodiment of meanings about how bodies work and how sexed bodies work differently.

At the same time that children are learning the biological distinctions between boys and girls, and their relationship to food, digestion, and genitals, they are also beginning to learn about food as an embodiment of principles of status and authority. Food, whether traditional or imported foodstuffs, is ranked not only in reference to its nutritive value, but also by colour [white and not-white], the manner in which it is cooked [boiled, fried, or roasted in the *umu* (earth oven)], and by rules about who may, or at least should, eat this particular food. During infancy and the earliest period of the *aso fa'a tamaititi*, children are served the highest status food available, white and boiled food. This most often takes the form of rice, the status of which is enhanced by the fact it must be bought with cash, and is considered a valuable imported *palagi* or European food. As a child progresses through its childhood years, a gradual shift in diet occurs.

While sustaining the white and imported association all the way through to adulthood in the use of *saimin*, packaged dried noodle soups imported from China and Japan, children also begin to eat a wider range of foods, and to learn the status associations between kinds of food and the parts of foodstuffs. For example, boiled food such as bananas and taro, which are ideally prepared only by men, are among the highest status everyday foodstuffs in the Samoan diet. By their middle childhood years [age 4 to 6], children are fed these foods less and less often, although they are encouraged to ask for them. This combination of encouraging requests, and consistently refusing them, teaches the child the importance of these status associations. Other food is reserved exclusively for adults. Palusami, a pudding of coconut cream baked in young taro leaves, is almost never eaten by children, or even untitled adults, so precious are the leaves in which the pudding is cooked. Likewise, fish is rarely served to children, being defined almost exclusively as adult food. On special occasions, and these are indeed quite rare, children will be given servings of *pisupo*, tinned corned beef. This is treated as a special gift, and the child is warned to take its small portion and no more, because *pisupo* is not food for children. Finally, portions of food, such as the parts of a roasted pig, or the parts of a fish, are associated with particular statuses. The head of the fish, along with the relatively meatless rib portion of the pig, are defined as the *matai's* portion. Very young children will often ask for servings from these portions, usually from their titled grandfather or uncle. Depending on the mood of the *matai*, he may indulge the child with a scrap

of skin or fat, but in every instance I witnessed, the *matai* would first explain that this was *matai* food, and that the child should not ask for such things. During the hundreds of meals in which I took part, I never once saw a child over the age of 5 or 6 even ask for a serving of the *matai*'s portion. When I questioned older children and young adults about the distribution of food at meals, they were unanimous in their attitude that it would be extremely insulting and ignorant for anyone except a *matai* to accept (let alone ask for), any part of these portions of the animals. I received several explanations for the associations between parts of the roasted pig, for example, and the people expected to eat them. The guest portion of a roasted pig is the ham, the meatiest and most substantial portion of the animal and expresses generosity and respect to visitors. The *matai*'s portion, the ribs and back, express several different associations. The ribs are "like the house posts where the *matai* sit in meetings and remind us of this". The ribs also encompass the *manava* of the pig, the sacred core to the body, and by eating the rib portion " we learn about how the *matai* is the core of our family and our village."

Embedded in this ranking and classification of foods are complex rules of order and authority and rank, something noted by others working in Samoa. Mageo [1989b], for example, uses a detailed symbolic analysis of a Samoan song to link questions of eating and speaking behaviour in Samoa, to learning about delinquency and obedience. While my focus here is on how eating behaviour, and ideas about food, affects the experience of the body, this dimension of

socialization through the body is worth noting. The child, as he or she becomes more and more a full participant in mealtimes, rather than something to be fed, learns these rules literally on the end of its fork, or the tips of its greasy fingers. The association between food and the good and proper order of status and authority cannot be avoided, even in something so mundane as quickly eating an evening meal. Children are learning and practicing principles of strength, authority, dignity and modesty, not only in the way they learn to endure hunger by revising its meaning into something positive rather than something alarming, but in the way they begin to relate kinds of food to the needs of the body's growth and development as a strong and proper body. They learn the differences in strengths between the strength of the *matai* expressed in his repose and humility, and the strength of the young men able to carry loads of coconuts over several miles without complaint. They are learning about the importance of steadiness and endurance as components of the Samoan model of strength, lessons reinforced by their craving for food appropriate to generating strength. The meaning of the body, and the way the body is made meaningful, becomes attached, inexorably, to the meaning of food and the practices of eating. Eating taro enacts strength, while a *matai* eating the head of a fish embodies the power and authority attached to his status.

Mealtime enacts another form of body learning, that involving movement and posture. Very young children are fed with the rest of the family, but they sit to the side, and slightly behind the parent or caregiver who is feeding them. Food is

passed to them, either on a plate or leaf, or cut into chewable single mouthfuls. Behind their feeder, the child is often rambunctious, noisy and fidgety. Little attention is paid to this movement and noise, unless it becomes so disturbing as to interrupt some important family conversation.

By the time the child reaches the age of about 4, however, he or she begins to take a place in the family circle, sitting beside a parent or caregiver, and taking their own portions of food from the plates of goods delivered by older children. They are chastised if they are noisy, or move about too much, and they now begin to have their posture corrected. All Samoans, when sitting on the ground, sit with their legs crossed under their torso. To sit with your legs extended, or oriented in any other way, is considered rude because, in traditional dress, to sit any other way makes exposure of the genitals or buttocks a very real possibility. Even in shorts or trousers, children by about age 4 are being taught to sit cross legged, that is, to "sit like a human being and not a dog." One man scolded his married daughter for not yet teaching her 6 year old daughter how to sit properly and on several occasions both the mother and daughter were ordered to leave the family meal, and take their dinner 'with the dogs down by the river.' Rudeness is not the only consideration however. The cross legged posture also restricts movement. It must be entered into, and extricated from, slowly. Once sitting, apart from waving your arms about, movement is severely circumscribed. This closing in of the body into an attitude of stillness is an aspect of embodiment which children learn in several ways, but it is in the family circle at mealtime that

they receive the closest and most detailed lesson. During mealtime the person eating becomes like the still heart of the village, around which activity circulates, but does not intrude. In this posture, the child is learning a lesson about doing and being still in which the conceptual landscape of the village is embodied in postural language.

This lesson of proper bodies, properly still in some centre of social activity, is not only learned during meals. In their everyday play, they also learn about the appropriate meaning of different forms of space. Very young children play around their household compound, and on the *malae* or public area of the village. Play is not sexed until very late in a child's development, when girls learn to refrain from extremely rowdy play, and boys beginning pursuing such often violent and intense games as rugby. Throughout childhood, and sometimes up into the early teens, but prior to the development of secondary sexual characteristics, children play together irrespective of sex, the only caution being to keep the genitals covered.

Gradually, however, children learn to restrain the noise and commotion of their play in the central areas of the village, and to reserve rowdiness for the periphery. It is not unusual to see children returning from school chase each other, laughing and calling loudly as they come along the village road. As they approach the *malae*, or its equivalent, they become quieter, and move more and more slowly, not stopping their game, but restraining it, only to explode into laughter and running as they move away from the *malae* and into the household

area. Whether it is the nature of the space that restrains their bodies, or their embodiment itself which transforms the space as they move into and through it is a moot point. I have been stressing that the two can never be analytically separated into cause and effect. Body and space become each other and create each other, whether in the slow walk of the children through the *malae*, or the soft speech of women walking at night, speech which erupts into laughter as they move deeper into the periphery of the village.

Hunger, bowel movements and children's games, posture and the social meanings of food: each of these, and the other things the body is engaged in, form the complex web of practices I am defining here as embodiment. Each is both an effect of the body, and has an effect on the body. Watching four year old Heston play around the windows of my house in the late afternoon sun - watching him take several stones and roll them around each other, singing softly to himself, then suddenly stand and look around before dashing behind a bush to pee against the stoop, I was watching what was little more than a charming scene, during the first months I spent in Samoa. After I left Samoa, the full and rich analytic complexity of that tiny scene became clear to me. In those early stages I was doing what Samoan parents do during those first crucial months of an infant's life. I was recognizing the body in front of me, Heston's tiny body, as some object worth noting. I was recognizing it, but I was not understanding it. I was not seeing what Heston himself was doing, acknowledging his the meanings and implications of his presence as a body in the world.

The process of attention, then, has shifted from the simple act of someone observing a thing, such as parents watching their infants bowels, and drawing meaning from it, to a more subtle process of attention, in which the observed thing, the child, is attending to its own being and, by doing so, making itself, and the world meaningful and observable.

Attention has shifted in other ways as well, from the ego-object focus of the infant on its own body alone, to a wider focus on the relationships between things in the social field. The child's body is no longer the centre, but is, instead, a component in the complex machinery of connected things. The meaningful body of the infant, whose features and qualities were measured and standardized, becomes, in the process of learning to be a body, a shifting thing requiring constant attention, vigilance, and re-interpretation. Faeces, for example, is necessary and good. It is evidence of a good and proper body. At the same time it is being moved further and further away from the visual core of the village into the asocial and *lāga* space of the bush. Strength, that ability to run long and hard, which is expressed in childhood play with all its rowdiness and noise, is also improper, immodest, and inappropriate depending on the space body is in. Genitals, once solely the site of bodily needs, or simple pleasure and games, remain so, but with an additional mapping of other genitals with other obligations, prohibitions, and consequences. Hunger, that gross appetite for satisfaction which is never denied or prohibited, has become encompassed by considerations of status, propriety, and power, as well as trust, obligation and restraint.

What I have been describing here is, perhaps, the least special, and also the least observed aspect of being in the world. It is transparent, but its transparency is part of its effect. Behind the self evident presence of Heston deciding where to urinate, the complicated web of attention and action which is the core of embodiment is carried out both in, and on, the world.

Heston lay across my bed, asleep in the deepening darkness of a very rainy night, just hours before Cyclone Val struck the north-west coast of the island of Upolu. We had been preparing for the cyclone for three days, tying hoardings around the *fale* which sits behind my *palagi* bungalow and trying to herd together the family's pigs into a sheltered area which we hope will remain above the rising flood waters of the blocked Gasegase Stream. From somewhere in the distance I hear a woman calling someone's name, but with the tricks of the wind, and the constant battering of the rain against my tin roof, I can't quite make out who she is calling. I draw back the canvas covering we had secured earlier that day on the windows along the front of my house, and shine my flashlight through the rain, trying to pick out where I think the voice is coming from. As I do, Heston wakes up and crawls across the bed, reaching over, and pulling himself up onto my back, so he can see what I am doing.

"Aiku?", he asks.

"Sione. I think she is calling Tagilima."

"Sione not aiku."

"No, stinky Heston is aiku."

" You aiku, Doug. You stinky too, stinky *palagi* aiku with big feet."

" And a big mouth that is going to eat you up if you don't get off my back and go back to sleep."

" No eat Heston, Heston too little."

" I like little things, they're easier to chew."

" I eat big things, big taro and big pig, and then Heston eats you, Doug, eats you because you are too small, you eat lady food, you eat like a girl, only small things like a girl. Heston gets big and stinky from taro and pua'a, and eats the little soft girl Doug."

I was just a soft, stinky, girlish, *palagi*, with big feet. Heston, with his bad jokes, constant questions, and his embodied Samoan common sense, knew this. He was a four year old child, trying to make a joke with a man ten times his age, in a language, and in a universe of concepts and anticipations, that he understood because he enacted them everyday. At the time I thought of Heston as a precocious and charming child. It was only later, on reflection, that I recognized the complex accomplishment Heston enacted with his silly, embodying jokes.

The central issue I have raised in this chapter, is that ultimately and finally, the body cannot be said to exist at all, until it is attended to. Deciphering the how, and the what, of attention, is one route into the generation of a comprehensive model of embodiment: that is, a model of those practices and experiences, which Heston does without thinking, and with aplomb, as he moves

through his childhood, enacting attention on his body, and on the world

From four year old Heston making sense of the world, I want to turn, in the next set of linked chapters, to issues of the orderly deployment of disciplined bodies, in order to explore the process of embodiment at a different point in its continuous enactment. Learning a proper body, as an act of being a body in the world, is only one aspect of this process. It is the ground on which all other action is made possible, and I want to look at some other kinds of enacted bodies that flow from this primary site of attention.

Endnotes: Chapter 3.2

1. I want to thank Mike Evans for raising this issue, and sharing his understanding of the question of class in neighbouring Tonga, which has helped to shape my understanding of how, and why, this issue is becoming so important in Western Samoa.

Chapter 4.1

The Body Enjoyed: Pleasure, Play and Power

Foucault, in Discipline and Punish, writes of the "policy of coercion that acts upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gesture, its behaviours . . . a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it" [1979:137]. The body, for Foucault, is a "political anatomy" and a "mechanics of power" [138]. The objective of this micro-physics of body constraint is docility, a body rendered visible in a field of power and social imprisonment. The body is abjected by the orders of power that surround it.

These insights point towards a dynamic tension which exists between the embodiment of experience, and the orders of social stability and meaning within which this experience is carried out. In these next two linked chapters, I will explore some of the sites and practices in which Samoan bodies are deployed. These chapters are about pleasure and discipline, compliance and disobedience, and about how the body is implicated in the process of creating an orderly and meaningful everyday life.

In a society where ranking and status are as formalized as they are in Samoa, every member of a community stands in relationships of discipline to almost every other member of the community, extending not only through the

person's *'āiga*, but throughout the entire country. This question of who must obey who, under what circumstances, and to what extent, is a constant in everyone's life. There are two issues which attach to the question of obedience, surveillance, and the nature of submission to authority, that I want to explore first:

misunderstanding commands, and the range of people to whom any given person has a relationship of respect and obedience.

Obedience is *fa'alogo*, which means, literally, to hear or pay attention to. To obey is to hear and understand what is being said. As such, very young children are not expected to obey, because they have yet to learn the meaning of words and speech acts. Once a child can speak and understand, it is obligated to obey. However, rules of speaking, and in particular rules ensuring that you are understood, leave a space around commands where misunderstanding can be manipulated as a strategy of refusal. In Samoa, persons of higher status are, by virtue of their status, not expected to initiate what linguists call clarification sequences [Ochs 1988:128-144], speech acts in which speakers engage in strategies through which an initial utterance is restated, explained, or enhanced, to clarify its meaning. At the same time, persons of status lower than the speaker are culturally prohibited from requiring clarification by the higher status person. Inversely, it is inappropriate for a person of higher status to require a person of lower status to repeat what they have said since, to admit failure to hear would be an admission of immodesty. When Samoans engage in clarification sequences they adopt what Ochs calls the minimal grasp strategy, deliberately

'pretending' to not have heard anything the speaker has said in the hopes the speaker will repeat him or herself [1988:132]. They avoid the other common clarification sequence, the expressed guess strategy, in which the hearer repeats to the speaker what he thinks the speaker has said as a way of triggering clarification since, as Ochs notes, to do so would be to presume in a public way to be able to see what the other person is thinking or feeling, something Samoans avoid doing [see also Gerber 1975; Clement 1974]. The affect of this dispreference for seeking clarification is a space of misunderstanding which can be used as a strategy in itself.

Direct manipulation of misunderstanding is one strategy through which obedience is deployed as a contest rather than as simple submission. The other is the wide web of persons to whom any given person has a relationship of either authority or obedience. A command from one authority can be superseded by a command from another, and obligations to one powerful figure can be overruled by obligations to some other. As such, obedience in any context is premised on a calculation of how accepting the authority of person X relates to, and effects, conditions of obligation and obedience to persons Y and Z. This web of potential sites of command and obedience also opens up a wide field of strategic disobedience.

Obedience in Samoa, therefore, is an open ended mechanics of negotiation, rather than a simple submission to authority and domination, because of the rich structure of allegiance and compliance in which each Samoan

finds him or herself, and because of the embodied principles of rank and hearing which locate discipline and obedience as something done with and through the body, and not as something simply done to the body [cf Foucault 1979]. Other work on Samoa [eg. Freeman [1983] and Maxwell [1969] before him] makes the exact opposite case, arguing that Samoans are profoundly submissive and so, are constantly frustrated, and potentially very dangerous. This misunderstanding on the part of other scholars is not so much a failure of evidence, as it is a result of applying an insufficient theory of power, as well as an inadequate model of agreement to obey. Understanding obedience as submission misapplies the Samoan concept of *nofopologa*, to live as a slave under the domination of an illegitimate and immodest ruler. Samoans reserve that concept for special circumstances such as their pre-European enslavement by Tongans. In all my conversations, and in all the interactions I observed between people of different statuses, I can think of no single example of this model of obedience being applied. Even imprisonment by the courts, as Shore [1977,1982] notes , is practiced as a negotiation between who has the authority to command and how those commands relate to the webs of obligation, and negotiated compliance, in which the commanded person lives. Both the commanding person and the person being commanded participate in these negotiations. Each side understands that the successful and legitimate sentence reinstates a proper understanding of, and balance between, an individual's multiple connections of obedience. "It is good that I go to prison" one man told me " because [my punishment] makes my family

a full family again, makes it alright for me to go home into my family again."

Samoans rarely give in, they give over, selectively and strategically.

Within these conditioning practices and strategies, Samoans engage in processes of discipline and pleasure, compliance and collaboration. The body is one locus of these processes.

COOPERATION AND SURVEILLANCE

Early in my stay in Samoa, I sat one morning on the stoop of my house, after a night of nausea and pain. Louisa, who, I learned later, was my aunt, came by my house with a small bundle of flowers. Before she could say anything I vomited noisily. As she reached over to wipe my face with the hem of her *lavalava*, she said "*mālō le pua'iga*", which, I found out from someone later, meant literally "well done the vomiting." This is an example of a *mālō* exchange, which have the form of 'well done [the action]' said by an observer, answered with *mālō le tapua'i* [well done the support] by the actor. This form of encouragement, of a kind of shared responsibility or cooperation in everyday life, is a key aspect of Samoan interaction [Ochs1988:207-8]. Cooperation is important in all activities. It is a cooperation which makes the spectator a participant. Encouraging a young man chopping to pieces the huge breadfruit tree, which had collapsed across the road in front of my house during a cyclone, is as important a form of support and joint effort as taking up an axe, and joining him in the actual hacking.

Samoan action is a complicated tangle of collaboration, sympathy, mutual assistance and encouragement, and obedience and deference. In a sense,

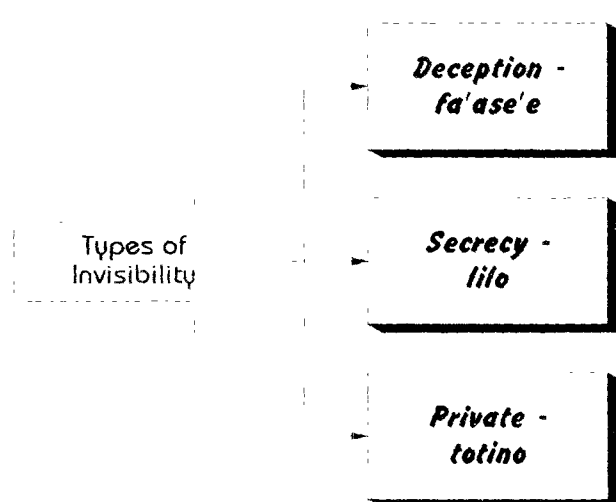
Samoans never do anything on their own. This is exemplified in *mālō* exchanges. Driving a friend between Apia and the airport, I drove carefully around some badly damaged tar seal, avoiding the worst of the potholes. My friend turned to me and said '*mālō le fa'auli*' [well done the driving.]. My Samoan father returned from attending a funeral in American Samoa. As he got out of the taxi, his oldest son called to him '*mālō malaga*' [well done the journey] to which Sei'a replied '*mālō le fa'amuli*' [well done the staying behind]. In these exchanges, which form an idiom of everyday talk, Samoans enact their experience and understanding that all actions are connected in a mutual relationship of support and responsibility.

The *mālō* exchanges embody a connection between humility and cooperation, with no actor taking all the credit, and no spectator ever completely absolved or removed from the actions he or she witnesses. "Well done the tree climbing" enacts recognition of a job well done, while "well done the support" recognizes that no action is possible without *tapua'i*, that is, without support. Obedience and deference, taken together with this sense of interpenetrating cooperation, concatenate and combine all bodies, and all actions, in a single network of common purpose and responsibility. Whenever you meet someone along the road, the convention is to say hello, the form of which is simply *malo*. The link between this form of *malo* and the supportive form well done [*mālō*] was understood by my informants as a form of contraction of the long vowel form. *Malo* is an abbreviated form of *mālō*, a constant and inescapable reminder of the

links between all members of the community.

It is impossible, therefore, to grasp obedience in Samoa without recognizing this intersubjective web from which no act can be extricated. In the connection between watching and joint responsibility, the spaces of good and bad behaviour connect in the constant vigilance and cooperation of day to day life.

In my discussion of village layout in Chapter 2, I made the point that village design involves a 'sacred' open space [*malae*] surrounded by the household lots of village members. All important social activity takes place on the *malae*, in full view of all village households. In the wall-less traditional households, all the activities of daily family life are visible to the entire village. In circles of decreasing dignity extending around the *malae* and household ring, surveillance and sociality also decrease until, at the civilized fringes of the bush, the locus occupied by *aitu* and dangerous animals, social visibility is conceived of as almost nil.



However, in speaking of the visible and invisible in Samoa it is helpful to distinguish different kinds of privacy, because in each case a different kind of invisibility is being enacted. Deception [*fa'ase'e*] refers to things done to trick and harm someone. This

includes actions done away from view such as stealing. It also includes actions

committed which impersonate good action in order to mask a harmful one, such as claiming to be a relative when one is not, or impersonating a *matai*. In contrast, secrecy [*mealilo*], refers to things which, legitimately, others should not see or hear, such as ritual secrets surrounding the investiture of *matai*. Finally, the word for privacy [*totinō*] connects the word body [*tinō*] with such concepts as kinship, intimacy and propriety. It refers to such things as sex, intimate conversation, and other close, personal interactions.¹

These three types of invisibility apply to different areas of social life. However, they have undergone a significant transformation in Samoan's perceptions of changes in their society. In traditional villages, surveillance was extensive. That is, it took in the entire range of seeable activities as a web of related actions. Every individual action could be seen in relation to all other actions in the village, and the individual actor was not so much the focus of surveillance as he or she was a component of a wide ranging and all encompassing gaze [Keene 1978]. Changes in village layout, and in particular the development of isolated household compounds, and the fragmentation of the *malae*, have made surveillance in village life more ambiguous. While villages have retained their conceptual geography of dignified and undignified space, physical changes have located asocial or dangerous acts in the village core. The peripheral, dark spaces have been compressed inward into the village centre by population pressures, which have swallowed up plantation land between villages. Ruth, an older woman, once told me that when she was a girl " lovers doing sex

was funny because we would see it in the bush sometimes after evening church and we would throw stones at them and laugh, and no one would get angry, but today people want to stop all the things boys and girls [teenagers] do because now it is here beside us, beside where we eat and pray." The periphery and the core are now less readily distinguished. As a result, there has been an increase in what I call intensive surveillance, which, echoing Foucault, applies to all acts

a micro-penalty of time [lateness, absences, interruptions of tasks], of activity [inattention, lack of zeal], of behaviour [impoliteness, disobedience] of speech [idle chatter, indolence] of the body ['incorrect attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness], of sexuality [impurity, indecency] . . . making the slightest departures from correct behaviour subject to punishment. [Foucault 1979:178 cited in Synnott 1993:229 - brackets in original]

Older Samoans often mention increases in gossip, increased interference by family members, and an increased awareness of being scrutinized. One man, frustrated because our conversation was continually interrupted by people wanting to know who I was, told me that

there is no time for intimacy [*fa'auō*, referring to actions between close friends] today because everyone is looking in your doors to see what you are doing. Before you would walk through a village and know what was happening without looking, without even seeing, but now it is too noisy and there is too much looking and asking. The village has become a place for gossip and spying . . . everyone is always staring inside at everyone else.

Many Samoans feel there has been a significant decrease in privacy in what, on the surface at least, appears to have been the most open and immodest social geography imaginable, a circular village of houses without walls. Walls have created smaller and smaller intimate spaces, because they have brought

increased the range of private spaces and brought activities, once reserved for the dark, periphery right outside the front door. The fact that today roads are differentially defined as *aga* - socially good - and *lāaga* - bad or dangerous - depending on what is being done on them, and by whom, makes the meaning of social and private space not readily observable from the evidence of the space itself. This complicates surveillance, and intensifies the controlling function of the social gaze at the heart of village life. However, the modern Samoan village is still a carefully modulated geography of visibility and invisibility. However, the changes in village layout, while retaining the traditional conceptual frame, have altered the way that frame of surveillance is experienced, and have rendered it more ambiguous and stressful. This is not simply a function of population density, or increased proximity, caused by the concentration of more and more households in the centre of villages. It is apparent from comments like "I know longer know where it is good to shit" that the source of the stress is not only the presence of more and more villagers, but the fact that social space has become difficult to define in the new village layouts. As such, bodies deployed in the village space are constantly shifting and changing as the nature of the space they are moving in shifts and changes. On this ground, framed by formality, cooperation and obedience, and the ambiguity of private space, Samoans deploy their formal bodies in play and work.

FIGHTS, GAMES, AND WORK: ASPECTS OF CO-OPERATION AND SUPPORT

A fight broke out at the Lalaga Night Club in Fugalei, one of the 11 contiguous villages which make up the formal Apia town area. Boys from the village of Vaimoso chased a group of boys from the village of Matautu out into the bar's small parking lot where a melee ensued that left three people with broken bones, a car on fire, and several windows in the bar owner's house broken. I was woken in the middle of the night by the sound of the Vaimoso boys returning along the main village road, talking and laughing, walking behind a pickup truck in which one of them lay unconscious, and bleeding from a gash on his thigh. A soft voice whispered my name from outside my window. I lit the hurricane lamp beside my sleeping mat to see several faces peering in at me.

" Douglass, can you bring some medicine to tie up Tone's leg, he has a cut", a voice asked through the window of my bedroom.

"A bad cut?", I asked, thinking quickly about my St. John's Ambulance training 20 years earlier.

" No, Douglass, a good cut, a good strong cut."

The rest of the night was spent applying compresses to Tone's leg and listening to the now sobering boys tell, over and over, the story of the fight with the Matautu boys, and the preservation of the honour of Vaimoso. It turned out Tone had been drinking heavily through most of the evening and was extremely

drunk by the later hours of the night. He had stumbled against a table at which a group of Matautu residents, both male and female, had been sitting and in the act, had knocked a large pitcher of water over on to one of the women's laps. The men at the table had risen to confront Tone, but the press on the dance floor directly beside them had swallowed him up. Sometime later, a smaller group of Matautu boys saw Tone sitting slumped in a chair at a deserted table. They surrounded him, and kicked him to the ground, shouting that Vaimoso boys were animals who did not know how to behave in front of their sisters. The Vaimoso boys who had been with Tone, saw this from across the bar and moved, as a group, to surround and then chase the other boys out of the bar. The fight ensued.

"You never kick someone who is drunk, do you?" one of the boys asked me.

"And Matautu is a pig path, not a real village. They said we did not know how to be with our sisters, when they fuck their sisters every morning before they fuck their pigs", another added.

" Matautu boys aren't Samoans, they are all Tongans with pig-shit on their penises and dog-semen on their faces", the youngest of the group added.

The vitriol the Vaimoso boys expressed during that night was the most intensive example of expletive language I witnessed during my time in Samoa. While I found the sexual content of the images the boys used interesting, what was most striking to me about this fight, and the days that followed, is that the

fighting and the injury were understood as fun and a part of being friends with the boys from the other village. It was part of a friendly competitiveness between the boys of Vaimoso, and the boys of Matautu, in the cross island rugby tournament which was being played over the weeks in which this fight occurred.

Rugby is the national sport of Samoan men, taking over most villages in the hours just before the sun goes down. It is the one group activity which takes place on the malae without the direction and supervision of adults, and is considered by many to be an important training ground for the development of strong and capable bodies. It is a rough, and often very aggressive game and injuries are common, though rarely very serious. In this game specific objectives of both endurance and cooperation are embodied. The ability to play long and to run almost constantly over the course of a game, which may take several hours to play, is the mark of both a good rugby player, and a good healthy Samoan body. A good rugby player needs to be able to move the ball, to run longer and faster than members of the other team, and to know the fundamental value of teamwork. In playing well, the Samoan boy is not trying to excel personally, but to enhance the overall excellence of his team. One effect of this is that players with particular skills at scoring or passing do not try to perfect those skills, and are not assigned roles in the games related to their special skills. The game is shared. It is not unusual to see a team's finest ball handler pass the ball to another player, even when he has a clear and easy shot on the goal himself, because, as one boy explained "Asovali has not had a try in too many games". That Asovali

misses the goal, or is perhaps not even in a good position to score, is less important than the fact that, as a team member, he needs to be given his due opportunity to contribute.

Inter-team competition is framed by this internal cooperation, and so, inter-team competition is not simply about winning over some other group of boys. In the cross island rugby competition the co-operative qualities of the teams are pitted against each other. This intersection between the competition between teams and the co-operative character of team work conjoins in fights such as the one I described above. Fighting is a levelling strategy which constitutes cooperation and competition on the bodies in the fighting groups, in the same way that it is constituted in the rugby match. What is being enacted in the fight is a form of co-operative understanding about the nature of the teams as single connected units. In fighting, the boys are negotiating and enacting, with bruises and broken bones, a relationship of collusion between the two groups which constitutes the competitive relationship of the tournament as part of the more central co-operative processes which govern the teams arrayed against each other. The Vaimoso boys were both deploying and defending the honour of Vaimoso as a 'true community', by directly confronting the Matautu boys, as a group, and reinforcing the importance of their own co-operative support. This fight, although disturbing to the owner of the bar, was not about antagonism and hatred, but was an enactment of the collaborative nature of embodiment as it is enacted in play. Like the rugby game itself, the fight was not about bodies butting

up against each other as separate entities. It was about bodies colluding as parts of a unit which, in their engagement in the fight, re-asserted and enacted anew, that unitary cooperation.

In contrast, fights between individuals are defined as fundamentally *lāaga* and are heavily sanctioned, in the same way that showing off in a rugby game or other endeavour is sanctioned by insult or shunning. The strong body arrayed against some person or thing as a singular act of violence is an inappropriately strong body, and the teamwork of rugby, like the teamwork of legitimate group fighting, sites this distinction as central to the emerging development of the boys' good and proper sense of their bodily presence in the community.

Fighting as part of a group, and team play, each enact two concerns: one for demonstrating strength, and the other for enacting and reinforcing the quality of each boy's commitment to group membership and group identity. As the Samoan proverb says, "first friends, then broken heads." Team play, and fighting between groups, engages the boy's bodies in the combined pursuit of humility and strength. These precepts legitimate the deployment of fighting or competing bodies in what are closely circumscribed spaces for such activities, because who and where play occurs is part of this process of appropriating space and enacting the cooperative obligations of *fa'a Samoa*.

Earlier, I described the rings of decreasing dignity which form the conceptual geography of the village. The central space, the *malae* or its fragmented equivalent of internal village roads and paths, is the most dignified

space of the village, and as such, it is also the most social and safe. The *malae* is the site of play, and other activities, which are social in their orientation. Figure 4.1.1 illustrates the relationship between body deployments in play, and other activities, and the dignity of socially ordered space.

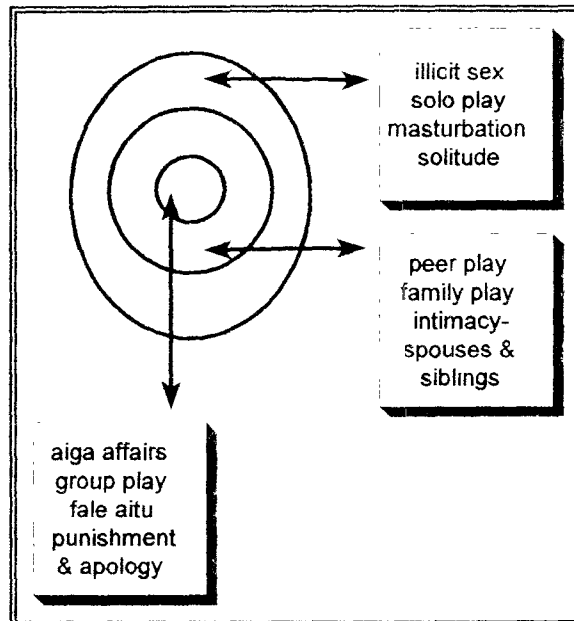


Figure 4.1.1 Space, Dignity and Activity in Samoan Villages

The outer ring, the space of invisibility, is the space of solo play, away from the eyes of the village. Games like "truck", in which young children build ramshackle contraptions of sticks with *pisupo* tins for wheels, are something commonly played in the roadways around the plantations. Children will quietly push their trucks up and down the roadways, singing to themselves or telling themselves jokes. They even spend long afternoons on the plantation roads with their trucks talking to themselves about events in the village, about episodes in their households, or about their day at school. Another favourite activity while playing with their trucks is to practice their English, away from the correcting presence of adults. Older boys will practice with their rugby balls by themselves, and older girls will often spend time in this 'solo' space weaving plaits of palm leaves into vague doll figures. an activity I never once saw anyone do in the village. In the household circle, the ring within the

periphery in which, either physically or conceptually, the households are arrayed around the *malae*, play in the form of either dyadic peer play, or play among siblings, is most common. Children will play together with their trucks, or chase each other around their houses, laughing and shouting. Older young persons will gather in small groups of three or four peers to sing or play guitar. Adult men will spend their evenings playing the national card game, *suipi*. Women get together in small groups in each others' *fale*, to weave sleeping mats, or to talk. On the *malae* proper, games are group events, team oriented and co-operative activities complete with supporting spectators and, as I described above for the rugby teams, unified corporate teams enacting and reinforcing their relationships of support.

The closer to the *malae* one comes in observing village play, the greater the sociability and dignity of the playing bodies present. The bodies deployed in the periphery are individual, disconnected bodies. As one moves deeper into the core of the village, the individual body begins to disappear, replaced by bodies arrayed in relationships of either communal pursuit or cooperative effort. Finally, on the *malae*, the bodies deployed are invisible as singular entities, replaced by their part in the cooperative whole. There is an intensification of connection, from the random and individualized disconnections of bodies in the periphery, through the intimate connections of spouses, parents and children, and siblings and peers, in the household circle, to the self-effacing web of connection among all members of the community enacted on the *malae*.

A similar pattern is apparent in the kinds of work which are carried out in the various rings of dignity in the village. Plantation work is highly individualized, depending on individual qualities of strength and endurance. It is carried out by crews of workers, but these are crews of workers performing their duties singly, extending their individual bodies into the management of the gardens. As we move into the household circle, we still find activities performed based on specific qualities, but now in terms of generic qualities such as gender. Women weave mats and men boil the white food. Women clean the house, while men clean the *paepae*, the roughly paved area around the family house. Added to this, however, is a cooperative or joint component as well. Groups of cooperating individuals carry out the work in the household circle, the single working body of the boy in the plantation replaced by linked bodies functioning as a unit in the pursuit of tasks. At the border between the household ring [*'aufale*] and the *malae*, the work of greatest dignity is carried out. For women, this work is the weaving of *ie toga*, the fine mats exchanged between *'aiga* at special events, such as weddings and funerals. This work is reserved for the oldest and highest status women, and is a major point of connection between the deployment of their labouring bodies, and the system of rank, authority, and cooperation within which village life occurs. Men's most dignified labour is in the form of the *fono*, the meetings of *matai* to discuss village and family affairs, which usually take place in the meeting house of the paramount *'aiga* of the village. The *fono* is the most observed and open of formal communal activities, with non-*matai* villagers often surrounding the

meeting house to watch, and listen to the proceedings.

The connection of bodies in conjoint efforts is not the only aspect of embodiment implicated in this pattern of activities. Movement, a key aspect of deployment, is also involved. Proper movement in Samoa is slow, steady, and stately. Rushing, extreme exertion, and frenetic activity, are avoided, because they are seen as showing off. The deeper one moves into the village proper, the more restrained movement becomes until, at the point of connection between *'aufale* and *malae*, movement comes to a complete stop, exemplified in the rigid posture of *matai* in meetings, or women sitting crosslegged weaving mats.

This combination of the embodied Samoan as someone who works according to roles and obligations, and the embodied Samoan as someone who plays within these same rules, comes together most explicitly in the *fale'aitu*, comedy performances put on by village groups on the *malae* on weekend evenings. The *fale'aitu* is a carnivalesque space of inversion, where authority is made the subject of jokes, and where the lowest in status are accorded the power to criticize, and make light of, the fundamental ordering principles of *fa'a Samoa* [Bahktin 1984]. *Fale'aitu* take the form of skits performed, in costumes, by villagers. The content of the skits is often ribald, and is always insulting toward the figures of authority in the village or district. Men take on women's parts and women take on men's parts. Costumes, which do not disguise the performers, often exaggerate the physical qualities of the person being lampooned. A favourite costume is meant to make fun of Malietoa, the current Head of State,

whose sexual pursuit of young women is one of the most common subjects of gossip throughout the country. It includes a floral cod-piece of great complexity. Another, impersonating the current prime-minister who is, even by Samoan standards, a very large man, is so big it often takes two actors to manipulate.

The performances take place on the *malae*, and everyone in the village, as well as people from surrounding villages, attend and join in, calling comments to the performers, adding their own insults and jokes to those levelled at the people being mimicked. The performance space is usually directly in front of the ranking *matai*'s home. They not only attend, but will add comments of their own to insults directed at themselves. In the *fale'aitu*, as Mageo notes in discussing the role of the transvestites [*fa'afafine*] in these performances [1992], the bodies of the actors, if not of all the villagers, are elided, and a geography of play is mapped over the geography of formal roles. The body enacted in the performance becomes a body simulating some other presence, taking the sacred and powerful status of the people depicted, and inverting it, transforming it into play and criticism. Dignity is inverted, the sacredness of the *malae* replaced by the carnality, and even the danger, of the periphery. *Fale'aitu* means, literally, ghost house, and for the length of the performance the sacred heart of the village becomes, instead, a space in which danger and asociality are confronted.

Mageo [1992] suggests the *fale'aitu* gives release to the frustrations of living in a ranked society such as Samoa. From the perspective of embodiment, however, the inversion of work and play, sacredness and carnality, and the safety

of the village centre and the danger of the uncivilized periphery, enacts on the bodies participating in these performances, a pervasive and subtle reinforcement of how space is created by the manner in which bodies are deployed. Bodies in the *fale'aitu* become, at least momentarily, some other kind of body, which reminds and re-enacts the experiential distinctions of appropriate space which are integral to Samoan sociality and embodiment.

SEX AND OBLIGATION

Working and playing with the body are combined in matters surrounding the appropriate deployment of sexual bodies as well, again within this geography of dignified space. Information about sexual activities is based on personal interviews with close Samoan friends, and on more than 50 detailed sex history interviews conducted with both men and, most often, older women. It is reported and discussed here with the full permission of the people who talked to me about these things.

One of the major points of contention raised by Freeman, in his critique of Mead's work in Samoa, was the portrait of easygoing sexuality, which Mead had described [1983: 226-253]. Freeman, and others working in Samoa, have noted that Samoans are often reticent to speak of sexual matters [for example Fitzgerald 1989:40-41 *passim*]. At the same time, most work on Samoa, with the exception of Freeman's, also notes that Samoans are expressive and very sensual in their sexual pursuits [for example Shore 1981; Mageo 1992]. I believe the source of this apparent contradiction lies in the presence, in Samoa, of two

linked, but separate, modes of sexual practice.²

Samoans enact two different kinds of sexual body. These are keyed to their relationship to the levels of dignity which attach to the space within which sex occurs. At the heart of adult sexuality is *fai'āiga*, the legitimate sexual intercourse of husbands and wives. *Fai'āiga* is "sacred, it is the thing that is about families and making strong and big families" one woman told me.

It is funny to think about, but it is not a funny thing like what the boys are looking for on the roads at night. No, to do *mea lēaga* in the house is to be a husband and a wife and not a child anymore playing with their things like that baby there. It is a sacred thing, Douglass, because it tells that story which is about being in a family and making a family for you and for your *'āiga*.

It is this sexuality that Samoans demur from speaking about, and this which makes Samoans look repressed and modest in their erotic life. So much is at stake in this area of sexuality, including not only the commitment made between a husband and wife, but also commitments and obligations to the *'āiga* and the community as a whole, that speaking about it is troubling and difficult, not forbidden.³ It is especially troubling because it involves what Samoans see as one of the most difficult to control appetites of individuals, and the most important aspect of Samoan adult sexuality - making a family by making children. The husband-wife relationship depends, for its success, on the control of *loto*: those behaviours which are the most resistant to social conditioning, of which sex is the most intransigent. The husband-wife relationship is infused with tension and distress, because sex is vital and actively pursued, and ambiguated by

deference and modesty.

This tension collides directly with the brother-sister relationship. As I described in an earlier chapter, the brother-sister relationship is about mutual respect, support and protection. What it is not about is sexual desire. So strong is the prohibition against incest, that Samoans consider marrying anyone with even the furthest cousin relationship to be *lāaga* [Shore 1981]. However, sex is so deeply engrained in the family space that brothers and sisters are confronted with it daily. Husbands and wives have sex in their homes, at night, surrounded by other sleeping family members. This makes sex a regular and readily observable activity

At the same time, young men told me how important it was to never appear as a sexual person in front of their sisters, while young women were adamant in their determination that their brothers must never see their sexual parts, because this would invite incest. The result is a combination of tension and deference in this relationship. Joking between brothers and sisters is often brutal and demeaning, sisters calling their brothers dogs and pigs, while brothers joke about their sister's sexual immorality. These are jokes of displacement, followed by apologies and explanations [She is my sister, I am allowed to say these things to her], a repeating pattern of release through which their embodiment as sexual beings, a central aspect of their development through young adulthood into maturity, can be sustained in an environment where the deployment of sexual bodies is closely circumscribed and formalized. Husbands

and wives, the most intimate dyadic relationship for Samoans, are quiet and respectful toward each other, in comparison to this often brutal and antagonistic engagement between brothers and sisters. So solemn are the connections between husbands' and wives' bodies that they themselves, while willing to talk in detail about sex in general, will refuse politely to speak of their own bodily connections. So formal, constrained, and important is the embodiment of family in *fai'aiga*, that while sexual joking about others forms a key idiom in conversations between sex segregated groups of men and women, even the slightest allusion to a member of the group's sexual relations with his or her wife or husband can lead to enmity, which may last years, and in at least two cases of which I am aware, to murder.

Where *fai'aiga* is a source of concern and embarrassment, *ta'alo* [literally, play or fun], is a mode of casual sexuality which is both approved and encouraged, and is often the subject of jokes and playful insults. Play in this sense is the pursuit of illicit sex, the one sanctioned space for individualized bodies in the Samoan social field. It is in this distinction that the core of Freeman's attack on Mead, in which he argues that Mead was misled by her informants, evaporates [1983:240, 289-90]. It is not, I suggest, that Mead's informants duped her, while Freeman's older female informants told him the truth. Rather, because sex, sexuality, and sexual morality, are tied to the constitution of status, dignity, and appropriate space, which varies over the life course, both sets of informants were telling the truth. However, it was a truth which was contingent

and changeable. If the experience of the body in Samoa is ineluctably connected with such culturing issues as the meanings of space, and the pursuit of dignity, as I have been arguing here, then the apparently contradictory assertions of these informants makes simple, cultural sense. They were telling the truth about two different things.⁴

Children are expected, though not openly encouraged, to engage in sexual play. Masturbation by boys is not discouraged until late adolescence, when most people feel that boys should have found more appropriate sexual outlets. Nevertheless, it is not allowed in public from even the earliest years of childhood. A boy caught masturbating will not be told to stop, however. Instead, he will be told to 'go into the banana patch' or 'go behind the cook-house', spaces of relative invisibility. From the earliest moments of sexual exploration, boys enact in their sensual play an emerging sense of appropriate space, and of the obligations surveillance imposes on behaviour.

Sexual exploration, and sexual education flourish in adolescence. Average age of first heterosexual intercourse for boys is around 13 and for girls, around 16. As well, by age 6 or seven most boys will have formed a particularly special relationship referred to as either *soa* or *pa'aga*, a close and intimate partner who shares circumcision, tattooing, and sexual education. The importance of this relationship for men cannot be overstated. There are four fundamental relationships: parent- child, and *matai-'āiga*, which are mimetic extensions of each other, the first private and the second public, and husband-

wife and brother-sister, which are inversions of each other. The first is sexualized and complementary and the second, anerotic and often antagonistic. The *soa* partnership combines features of all four in the complex of activities *soa* partners pursue together. In this partnerships, boys explore and experience all aspects of deference, sharing, support, and authority, enacting in the intimate relationships of their youth, all the kinds of bodies they will be and encounter throughout their lives.

There is no convention of prohibition against homosexual sex among young men in Samoa, although attitudes which moralize homosexuality have certainly been adopted by some Christian Samoans. However, these religious restrictions are applied almost exclusively to adult homosexuals, when they are applied at all. Boys are expected to have some, even extensive, homosexual experience in their adolescence. Punning on the word *soa* can be quite ribald, and draws upon associations with the authority and deference structures, expressing the conventionalized, and generally positive nature of these relationships. A boy may refer to his partner as *sua*, meaning a vessel for holding liquid, an unabashed reference to the sexual acts boys engage in, or, *sua*², which means the special food prepared for and presented to a *matai* at important functions. The sex between *soa* needs to be understood as both *ta'alo* [play], and an important form of support and generosity. The punning on *sua*² incorporates this aspect of the *soa* relationship quite tellingly. Such partnerships also incorporate the mutuality of deference and support because the sexual

relationship between *soa* partners, like the relationship of partnership in tattooing and circumcision, is not unilateral, but about mutual presence in each other's actions.

Boys are also expected to have considerable heterosexual experience. This is seen as a way of learning about sex, rather than courtship *per se*. The pursuit of heterosexual partners by adolescent boys and young men is play and fun and a way of mapping out relations of desire and obligation. However, while the foregoing sounds idyllic and liberated, it is tied inexorably to the fundamental geography of space and dignity.

Ta'alo, that is, sexual play in all of its rambunctious forms, is relegated to the undignified and asocial space of plantations and gardens and even, for the brave at least, to the *aitu* occupied bush. This circumscribes sexual behaviour as rigorously as repressions in more articulately regulatory societies, but it does so through a different mechanism, that of creating kinds of space through what bodies do in them.⁵ You can see this mapping of restriction in the flow of semen as it relates to different sites of dignified space in Samoa. As I noted in Chapter 3.1, Samoans do not have a formal and restrictive semen distribution complex such as that found in some areas of Papua New Guinea. Semen, for Samoans, is meant to circulate and be distributed, rather than hoarded and recycled. Indeed, a distinction between extensive and restrictive semen distribution appears to be one of the distinguishing features in comparing Melanesian and Polynesian societies. However, like in sexual matters, the absence of repressive restrictions

does not mean there are no restrictions at all.

The extent and path of semen distribution is determined by the nature of the space in which it is used. Within the village and the family circle, semen is closely restricted. It must circulate, and is expected to circulate often, but only along a path between husband and wife. Beyond the village however, semen circulates in multiple paths, between close male friends, between boys and girls who form many serially monogamous sexual relationships, and between the boy and his own body, in the form of masturbation, where he demonstrates his potency and the proper volume of his semen in an act of both physical and self gratification. This is not to suggest, however, that promiscuity is random, although it is at times quite casual. At the same time that boys are circulating their semen in casual sex, they are calculating and enacting embodied relationships between themselves and the girls, some of whom may be potential wives. As one boy put it, " I leave my semen in many villages, but there are some where it cannot go and I know this. Those are the villages where I might have sisters or where I should find a wife." Incest prohibitions, and concern over behaving sexually in front of a 'sister' extend to choice of casual heterosexual partners because in their pursuit of sexual victories [and the boys I interviewed saw this as winning something from the girl], they are also pursuing and inscribing, in very intimate ways, the rules and relationships of kinship.

There are many restrictions on specific sex acts, although there are few restrictions on sex itself, at least for adolescents. Most restrictions involve male to

male relations and refer to such things as the posture of the participants, such as boys should not lie down together in a manner which mimics the sexual posture of men and women. There are also restrictions on certain acts, such as fellatio, which should only be performed at night, while mutual masturbation between males can take place during the day. Finally, male to male body to body rubbing [frottage], feminizes both participants, because it mimics heterosexual intercourse, and is avoided. The frequency of either heterosexual or homosexual acts is not restricted, and there are no restrictions related to menstruation or any ritual or spiritual restrictions. Semen which is discharged on the skin should be washed off because its properties of triggering the growth of tissue could cause growths to develop on the skin. There is no restriction on consuming semen, but no special value is attached to it. Finally, some sex acts are restricted by age. For example, fellatio and cunnilingus are considered inappropriate for older men and women, but not for moral reasons. The posture required to perform these acts puts the active participant, who is, generically at least, ranked equal by virtue of age and assumed accomplishment, in a position of servility in relation to the body of another, which is considered embarrassing.

A different issue relates to sex acts between men and *fa'afafine*. *Fa'afafine* are physically males, as I noted in Chapter 3.2, but they and their bodies are not conceptually male or female. They are something distinctive, a third somewhat transient gender. I say transient because, as I mentioned in that chapter, traditionally, *fa'afafine* become formally male by their late 20's or early 30's,

marrying, and fathering children, as males. Many informants noted, however, that in recent years more and more *fa'afafine* are sustaining their *fa'afafine* gender into middle age and beyond. What is distinctive about sex with *fa'afafine*, beyond the fact it cannot be called homosexual, whatever the sex of the other partner, is that it is prohibited in the village, but is not prohibited or wrong in and of itself. The *fa'afafine* is the legitimate sex partner of young men learning about sex, and in some ways the *fa'afafine* allows young males to learn about appropriate sexual relations with women since only *fa'afafine* may engage in passive anal sex. Many young Samoan men described this aspect of their relationships with *fa'afafine* as 'learning to be with a woman'. The *fa'afafine*, as a woman-like substitute, avoids some of the dangers and problems of determining incest relations because there is no kinship prohibition on sex between young men and *fa'afafine*, as there is none between boys and their male peer partners. The *fa'afafine* exemplifies a kind of embodying strategy, where the apparent substance of the body is elided by its enactment, becoming some other body, whatever the apparent similarity between males and *fa'afafine* physically. That this ambiguation of morphology is relegated to the dark periphery should not be surprising, because not only is it an aspect of the fundamental ambiguities of gender and sexuality in Samoa, it is also not easily reconciled with the de-sexed, but persistently sexual space of the household, where the *fa'afafine*'s ambiguous sexual nature contradicts the restraint and decorum of the household as a sexual space. *Fa'afafine* are not excluded from any village affairs, can at least theoretically become *matai*, and

participate in all family and village discussions and decisions. However, it is possible, as Besnier [1994:560n47] has noted, to over-romanticize the positive position of the *fa'afafine* in Samoan society. The recent effort by Mageo [1992] to disentangle a history of the role and meaning of the *fa'afafine* has been disappointing because the *fa'afafine* is conceived, in her argument, solely in terms of what the *fa'afafine* means to Samoan males and females. At the same time, to paint the *fa'afafine* as an always positive member of the community ignores the very real tension in the *fa'afafine's* position as a butt of jokes, as a disposable sexual outlet and as an object of occasional violence and brutality. I am primarily interested here in the *fa'afafine's* penis and semen, because they look and behave the same way as men's, but are not, conceptually or practically, male genitals. Unravelling the nature and role of all genders in Samoa is beyond the scope of what I am describing here. It is an issue which has been inadequately dealt with in the literature on either Samoa or on gender in Polynesia, a situation improved recently by the publication of a volume of papers on third genders [Herdt 1994]. This is an issue which I am exploring, in ongoing work on *fa'afafine* and their experiences in Samoa.

The male Samoan body in sexual play is, in its substance and its parts, a different body from the body in work, or the body constrained by deference and dignity in the village centre. The penis, and semen, are deployed differently and are, both substantially and conceptually, different organs, and a different substance, depending on the space in which they occur and on who is deploying

them, men or *fa'afafine*. The male sexual body is a strategy of embodiment, that is, a manner in which body and space conjoin in creating each other.

Making sense of the deployment of bodies is central to making a model of embodiment sensible and comprehensive. What needs to be taken into account are the connections which are enacted between appetites, obligations, privacy and selfishness. In Samoa, play and work are two such sites at which these issues are enacted in the constitution of meaningful bodies engaged as strategic dispositions. Through these enactments, bodies and space, along with values, principles, and expectations, become coterminous, whether in the body returning from the plantation, or lying with its girl-friend under a palm tree in the crepuscular midnight of a South Pacific full moon, or pushing a rickety wooden 'truck' along a lonely dirt road, singing.

In discussing the disciplines of play and work, and of sex and sexual behaviour, I am arguing that even the most mundane of acts of pleasure are an inextricably tangled skein of meaning, and the creation of meaning. What I am also arguing is that what is being enacted on, with, and by the body, is always about discipline. Even in the darkness of the periphery, control and observation are being enacted on, and by the bodies which are deployed and engaged there. Through the bodies in the dark, the dignity of the centre encompasses all social space. This ordering of bodies is exemplified in matters of formal discipline, and the engagement of bodies in ritual and punishment. It is these issues I will explore in the next chapter.

Endnotes: Chapter 4.1

1. Another word, *fa'auo*, was used by some informants to describe intimate conversations and activities. The word, which literally means the way or path of friends, embeds the importance of friendship dyads in Samoa, and links these to issues of privacy, as well.

2. I will not explore, in detail, the content of Freeman's criticisms of Mead's work. Some of his arguments are about her methods, and these have already been successfully addressed by Holmes's restudy of Mead's informants in the 1950's and the 1980's [Holmes and Holmes 1992]. The main thrust of Freeman's argument with Mead, however, has been over the theoretical orientation of cultural relativism, a perspective with which Freeman disagrees. For my purposes here, the issue is not which of these two authors is right in their characterization of Samoan sexuality, because, I am arguing, they are both right. They are simply talking about two different things.

3. That *faleaitu* performances are often intensely sexual in their content bears this out and supports Mageo's suggestion that one of the things *faleaitu* accomplish is a release from the stress of obligations and restrictions which surround aspects of everyday life in Samoa.

4. As I have noted throughout this text, conversations between men and women on issues which are private or embarrassing, are closely circumscribed in Samoa. I have indicated some of the limitations this imposes on my own data. What remains a fundamental mystery to me is Freeman's assertion that we treat the evidence of Mead's informants, a group of young women talking in private to another young woman, as duplicity, while we accept the absolute veracity of his data, reputedly drawn from conversations between older women, and a man. By his own admission, this kind of conversation contravenes fundamental rules of propriety and modesty in Samoa. I am convinced this aspect of Freeman's criticism of Mead is insupportable, not only on the evidence of Freeman's own description of modesty and cross sex relations, but from my experience dealing with these areas of privacy and embarrassment with my own informants. Discussing these sorts of issues with Samoans produces complex, and occasionally contradictory, evidence. It is scholarship of a most peculiar kind, which simply dismisses these contradictions as either lies or jokes.

5. This parallels Davenport's [1965] observation that the absence of articulate repression of sex and sexuality in a society does not preclude regulation of these practices being strict, and even onerous.

Chapter 4.2

The Body Enjoined: Discipline and the Embodiment of Control

As the previous chapter suggests, discipline, pleasure, and obligation cannot be disentangled from the deployment of social bodies in Samoa. The implications of embodiment are always, whatever the mundaneness of the action, a connection between the body, and the wider processes of authority and obedience. At the same time, the ambiguities of "hearing" commands, the complexity of each individual Samoan's network of relationships of obligation, and the different levels of dignity and restriction which apply to kinds of space, mean there is ample room for transgression and manipulation. In the acts of pleasure and cooperation, dignity, discipline and responsibility are performed both on and through the body. In this chapter, I will describe some of the more formal locations and practices in which constrained and disciplined bodies are enacted in Samoa. I will deal in turn with the ceremonial deployments of the 'ava [kava - *piper methysticum*] preparation and distribution ceremony, tattooing and circumcision, and punishment and apology, exploring the link between discipline and the embodiment of proper space.

Discipline in the mundane sense of punishing wrongdoing or error is, to be blunt, brutal and immediate in Samoa. In infancy and earliest childhood, there is

little if any discipline, rarely going beyond whispered admonitions of 'aua or soia, both words generally used in speaking to animals, and both translating as 'stop that'. In the early years of childhood, caregivers will begin using two different admonitions. The first, *uma*, which means enough, this is finished, entails a different mode of control. The child is learning that some part of its life is now finished and that it has completed passage into another state of social presence. The other, the exhortation "oo-ee", for which there is no written equivalent, is a marker of shame. To have someone call "oo-ee" in respect of something you are doing is to be told what you are doing is shameful and, with *uma*, "oo-ee" becomes the most common register for indicating displeasure to children aged around 5 or so [Ochs 1988:153-155]. In later years, the use of "oo-ee" directed at an adult is considered a way of telling the miscreant to stop behaving like a child.

At the same time that social responsibility is being encoded in expressions of displeasure, physical discipline becomes harsher and more violent. It is not unusual for children, aged 6 and older, to be severely beaten. The intensity of these beatings increases with age. By adolescence discipline can be as serious as hanging by an incensed parent.

Discipline is tied to what a person should know, that is, what rules a person should be aware of. "When a baby shits on the *malae* it is stupid, like a pig, but when a boy shits on the *malae*, it is *lāaga* and he should be beaten, he should be reminded and he should learn." Discipline is *pulega*, the application of appropriate authority and power. *Pulega* is not power imposed, but authority

anticipated, and, as Shore [1982:158-160] has noted as well, punishment is almost universally acknowledged as good and proper, most specifically by those being punished. Punishment is also finite. A punished person is almost immediately reintegrated into his or her family and community following a beating or other punishment. The act of punishment, *fa'a sala*, is the path from a mistake, the ending of an error, and the direction an offender takes back toward communal participation. The physical act of punishment does not avenge the offense, it reminds the offender of the way out of the mistake and back into complete and responsible sociality. Samoan *justice*, *āmiotonu*, is an agreement on proper behaviour, and not an abstract principle of right. It is restorative and not retributive [Shore 1982:116-117].

I want to make clear, however, that compliance in Samoa is, at least in part, a function of fear about injury and pain. This makes the body a primary site in calculating the risks of disobedience as well as a primary site in restoring propriety and sustaining authority. The atmosphere of social control in Samoa is one in which real violent penalty is a constant which needs to be accounted for in all action.

Coupled with this awareness of the potential for violent penalty is a different recognition, that wrongdoing is not just about individual offenders. A murderer or a thief or a rapist, in their acts, implicates their entire family, sometimes drawing everyone in their *'āiga potopoto*, [the largest form of the extended family], into the process of punishment. Blame is distributed through

the network of relations a person has, and restitution, including sometimes the imposition of violent punishment, is extensive rather than intensive. The entire *'aiiga* may be punished for one person's bad actions. In accepting punishment, everyone including the actual miscreant, is participating in a process where discipline is applied to relationships as much as it is applied to individuals. As such, the ground on which bodies are disciplined and punished must not be seen as populated by finite, isolated bodies. It is a collectivity of multiple bodies, jointly responsible to each other, and to the community as a whole.

MAKING CORRECT BODIES: THE FONONO AND THE 'AVA CEREMONY

Formal bodies in Samoa are most often those bodies, marked by rank, engaged in the special activities which attach to their rank. Duranti [1992], for example, describes how the welcoming speeches of *matai* at important *fono* [meetings of *matai*] are part of a process which acknowledges the status which defines their bodies as legitimate sites of important village decisions and actions, while Schoeffel [1979] discusses how the Women's Health Committee, and the Samoa mother's organization, engage female bodies in constituting the formal power of female status through rituals of leadership and deference. I want to consider two aspects of the formal embodiment of space in Samoa: the ceremonial distribution of *'ava* [piper methysticum] at meetings of *matai*, and the seating of kinds of bodies in these meetings.

The formal *'ava* preparation and drinking ceremony occurs as the opening event of all major *fono*. In it, *'ava* is prepared and ceremonially distributed to the

attending *matai* following a strict set of rules of performance and status. It is a solemn and quiet moment in what are often boisterous and rancorous meetings. Through it both the *aga* [social appropriateness], and the *sā* [sacredness], of the meeting are constituted in the disciplined deployment of particular kinds of bodies in the meeting house.

The 'ava ceremony may come either before or after the ceremonial greetings which establish the preliminary ordering of status of the participants, but there is no agreement among *matai* I spoke with as to the proper orders of business. Of all the formal *fono* I witnessed as an observer, the ceremony took place after the ceremonial greetings, and the assignment of seating positions to the attending *matai*. An older and very senior *matai* explained that "once they are seated where they must be seated, then it is time to tell them this is an important day and they should behave with importance toward it." The ordering of seating in

the *fono* is a map of status and rank, as this diagram illustrates [Figure 4.2.1]:

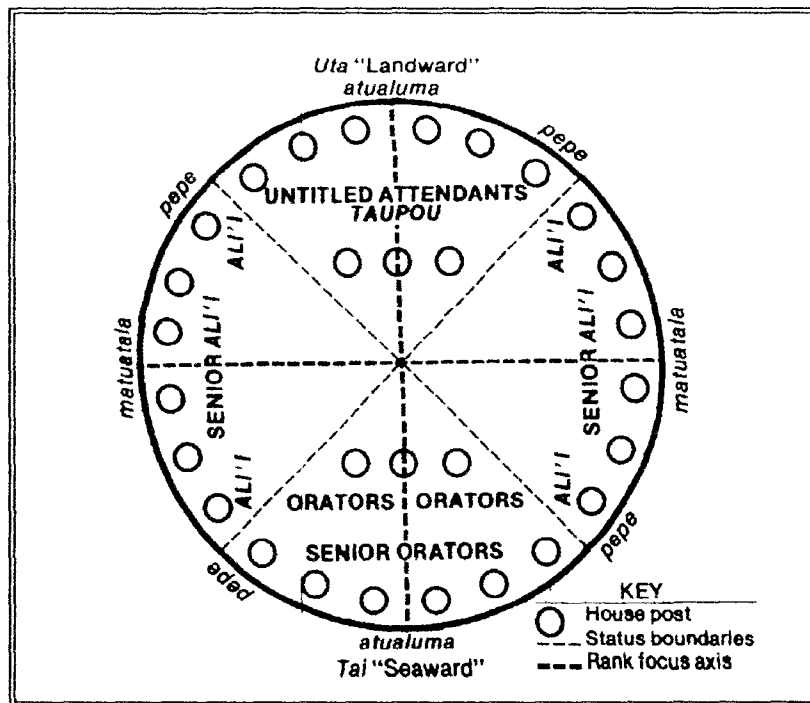


Figure 4.2.1 Map of Rank Locations in a Samoan *fono*
[Shore 1982:80]

The layout of the *fono* is oriented to the front/back distinction I described in Chapter 2. The designations *atualuma* [to be in front], *pepe* [sides of a house], and *matuatata* [centre posts], are points on a compass of status. Seating around, and within, these areas of the house, are indications of relative rank between participants, although Shore notes that while

status distinctions suggest a clear binary opposition, those of rank are appropriately graduated allowing for the expression of subtle and gradual rank distinctions. While such a scheme theoretically permits a precise indication of rank, the tendency is for ranking distinctions to be left relatively ambiguous, with the extremes of centre posts and no post as the only clear indices of rank. This tendency suggests the reluctance of Samoans to be explicit or rigid

about ranking in any but a very general way. [1982:80]

Location in the *fono* is negotiated, and occasionally argued over. It shifts according to the nature of the meeting, or the presence of different *matai* whose relationships among themselves require a different orientation in ranked space.

The *ali'i*, the focal point of rank and status in an *'aiga*, are located around the central house posts, with the *tulafale* arrayed at the front of the house. Behind them sit the lower ranking *tulafale matai* and other quests. In front of them sit the ceremonial *'ava* attendants. This orientation suggests to many Samoans a form of body, where the *tulafale* are voice of the body, the *ali'i* the head embodying the authority to act, and the attendants and lower ranking *matai* the arms and legs and digestive system, the parts of the body which sustain the rest. While Shore discusses the array of *matai* in the *fono* in terms of the embodiment of authority [the *ali'i*] and the voice of that authority [the *tulafale*], in his analysis of the circulation of political power in the *fono* [1982:241-244], I am aware of no other discussion of the body-*fono* homologue in the literature on Samoa.

The ceremony begins with a silent and seductive dance by the *taupou*, the ceremonial virgin, who is most often the daughter of the most important *matai* attending the *fono*. This dance is described as a way of arousing the communal attention of the *fono* by focussing on the sensual beauty of the pure virgin. The attendants seated behind her, a group of untitled young men from the many villages represented in the *fono*, hold the *'ava* roots which have been brought by the various *matai*, sometimes singing softly, or quietly beating on small drums.

When the dance finishes, the *taupou* sits crosslegged in front of a large wooden 'ava bowl and is handed portions of root which have been chewed by the attendants behind her. She takes these portions and raises them above her head, the traditional gesture acknowledging receipt of a gift, indicating that the receiver of a gift is literally under the obligation of the gift, and at the same time, not worthy of the gift received. Once the quality of the gift is acknowledged, and there is often considerable dispute over the size of the roots each *matai* has brought, she places the portions in the 'ava bowl and, mixing them with water, begins to process the chewed root by straining it through bundles of coconut fibre until, after repeated straining and squeezing, and the addition of several more portions of chewed root, the drink is considered ready to be distributed.

The *taupou* takes the first cup of 'ava to the ranking *tulafale*, who examines and tastes it. He either approves it, or returns it for additional portions to be added or for it to be better strained. If the drink is deemed acceptable, a long process of calling out the cup names of attending *matai*, which names are included in the formal genealogies of *matai* [*fa'alupega*], begins. As each name is called, the *taupou* takes a cup of the drink to the named *matai*, who drinks it, and exhorts the crowd with a cry of "*manuia leilei*", roughly translating as excellent health. This process proceeds through the entire assembly of *matai*. The order of distribution establishes the ranking pattern appropriate to the particular *fono* such that "an implicit weighting or ranking of "voices" is clarified in the order of service . . . thus . . . fine-tun[ing] the decision making process" of the meeting.[Shore

1982:303n1].

The ceremony is usually, but not necessarily, repeated at the end of each sequence of speeches by *matai*, and the order of distribution may change significantly between one ceremony and the next, in the course of a single meeting. A major difference is that in later ceremonies, the *taupou* is usually replaced by one of the untitled male attendants who, by serving as the 'ava preparer, is at least momentarily defined as a virgin.

In this ordering of bodies in the *fono*, several axes of embodiment coincide. The first relates bodies as statted objects to the status map of social space, the seating of the *fono* a physical manifestation of rank and power in which the arrangement of the bodies literally arranges space in terms of embodied power. The process of seating the *matai* enacts status through the siting of the bodies in the *fono* house. In this way, both the ranked ordering of space, and the status entailments of the bodies of the *matai*, are created simultaneously.

At the same time a second axis of embodiment is enacted in the relationship between the seating of the *matai* and the 'ava servers on the front/back locus. This enforces a distinction between action and stillness, the servers movement marking the *saofa'i* [the right to sit and talk] of the *matai*, and creating the code of disciplined action and immobility which attaches to good and proper bodies.

Simultaneous with this embodying of front as formal and still, and back as

active and labouring, the array of server and served are mutually necessary, since the *fono* cannot legitimately function unless the untitled facilitate the exchange and consumption of 'ava. This enacts in and through the bodies deployed in the *fono* house the mutuality of authority and compliance which is the core of Samoan power.

Finally, the performance of the *taupou* or the male 'ceremonial' virgin, engages the embodying order of kinds of sexual and gendered bodies. The sensuality of the *taupou's* dance, the grace of the 'virgin' boy, and the obeisance of the act of serving the 'ava to the attending *matai*, becomes an instance of sexual tension, in which sexual bodies collude in a representation and enactment of the virtues of both constraint and eroticism. The ritual of service, like the ritual of seating the *matai* in appropriate spaces, disciplines the several bodies of the Samoan social field into the orderliness of a ranked and circumscribed world, by incorporating those bodies many sides and features. The 'ava ceremony, and the *fono* it constitutes and permits, are formal sites of bodies being experienced through constituted in the multiple orders of meaning within which bodies act, are enacted, and are acted upon in Samoan society.

CREATING DISCIPLINED BODIES: TATTOOING AND CIRCUMCISION

The bodies deployed in the *fono* are public bodies enacting the public geographies of embodied order. There are also private, individualized sites of embodied order. For women, these sites include pregnancy and birth, discussed in chapter 3.1. For men, they include the connected practices of circumcision and

tattooing, as well as the ritually secret practices surrounding their bodies when they are installed as a titled person. I will deal only with circumcision and male tattooing, because I attended only one such investiture, as a peripheral observer, and my understanding of this practice is limited.

Tattooing is a site at which discipline and the body are connected in social practice. My discussion of tattooing, tattoo designs, and tattoo interpretation is based on my own interviews with tattooists and their subjects, observations of tattoos being done and the comprehensive catalog of tattoo designs in Forsyth [1983]. However, while Forsyth is interested in cataloguing the semantics of tattoo design, I am interested in its grammar as an act of embodiment.

The traditional male tattoo in Samoa is a dense pattern of closely drawn designs which cover the body from the midriff to the knees. All parts of the body between these limits are tattooed, except the penis and scrotum. Pubic hair is shaved, however, and the tattoo designs in some cases continue right up to the base of the penis itself. The designs included in these full body tattoos, which when completed look like a very tight fitting pair of shorts, are meaningful, but their associations in a given tattoo are more often aesthetic than narrative. The tattooist chooses designs based on which he feels would best suit the shape and size of the body of his subject. There is a tradition of certain designs which symbolize or stand for, generically, fish or kinds of birds or types of waves, being associated with particular *'āiga*, but there is no formal prohibition on the tattoo of a person from another *'āiga* including these designs. Tattoo subjects can also

request specific designs, in order to show respect to particular *matai* to whose *'āiga* the design is closely associated, to mark a special friendship with either their tattoo partner [*soa*] or some other friend, or for aesthetic or erotic reasons. One man, showing me his still healing tattoo, explained that a particular design on his thigh was a token of respect for the *matai* of a neighbouring village who had helped his *'āiga* after the cyclone of 1989, one on his stomach was the design of the family of his closest male friend and the design around his penis was chosen to make his penis look like it was flying above his body. In contrast, *siapo* [barkcloth] designs are owned by *'āiga*, and even by specific family lines within *'āiga* and are associated with the female line of descent. No other *'āiga* can legitimately use these designs on their bark cloth, a material which is used today only in formal exchanges between very high ranking *matai*.

The tattoos are created by a specialist known as a *tufuga*, the same name applied to the circumcision specialist. Tattoos and circumcisions may be carried out by the same man, but this is not the rule. Quite often a *tufuga* will specialize in one process or the other. As well, *tufuga* may be noted for their particular skills in producing certain designs and chosen because of this. In pre-European Samoa, the *tufuga tatau* [tattoo specialist] may also have been an important advisor to the paramount *matai* of his family or district [Franco 1991:128-134]. Today there are very few *tufuga* in Samoa, although in recent years their number appears to have increased, as more and more younger Samoans seek 'traditional' tattoos. Contemporary tattooists are respected for their skills, and no longer serve any

other function with relation to *matai*.

Samoaan Body Tattoos

[Illustrations on this and the following page: Handy and Handy 1971 [1924]]

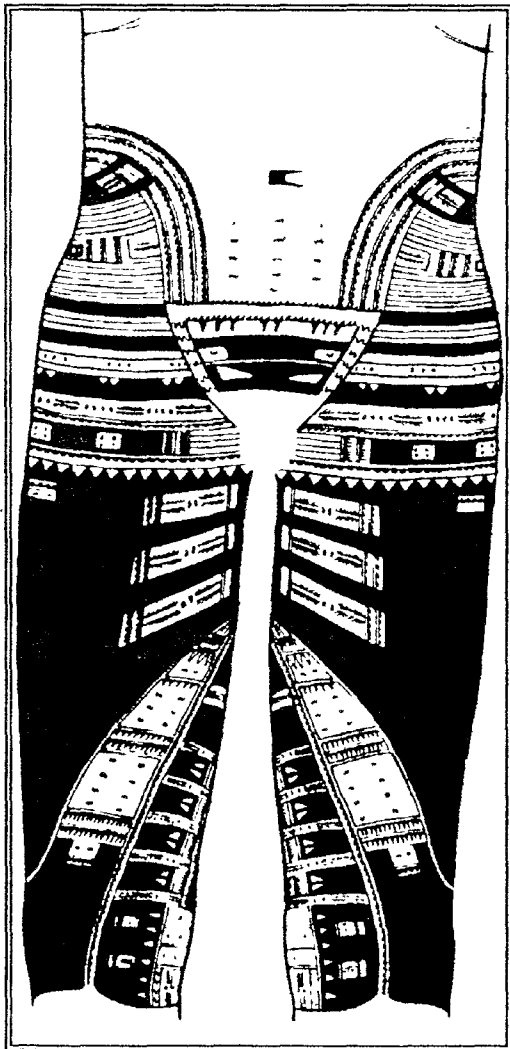


Figure 4.2.2 Male Tattoo: Front View

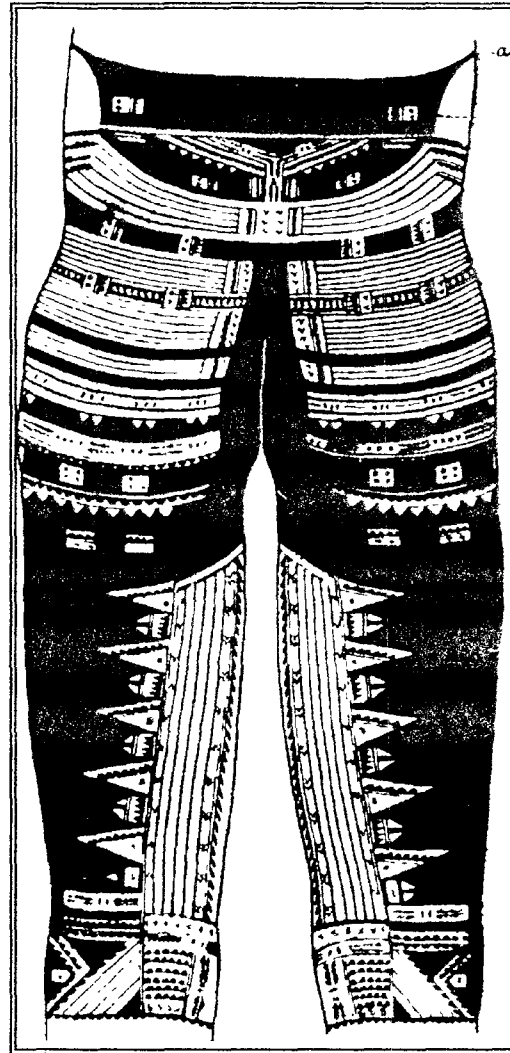
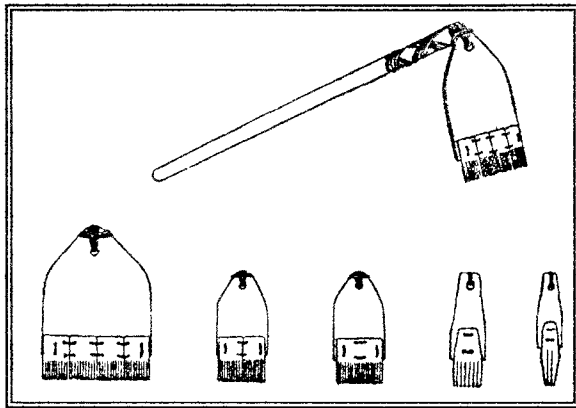
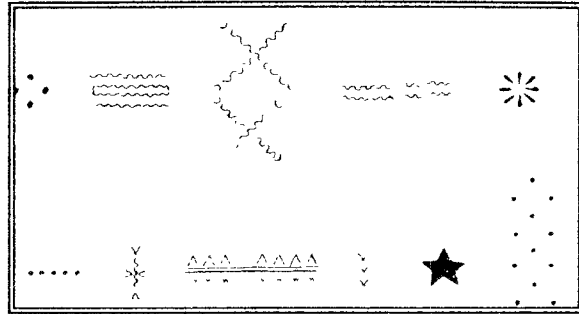


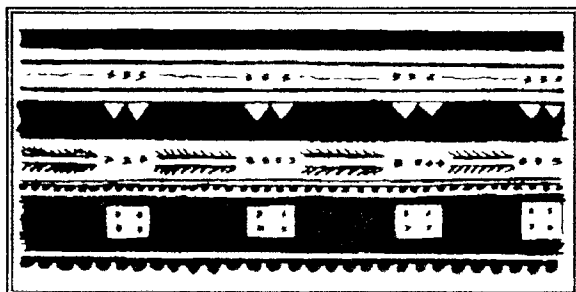
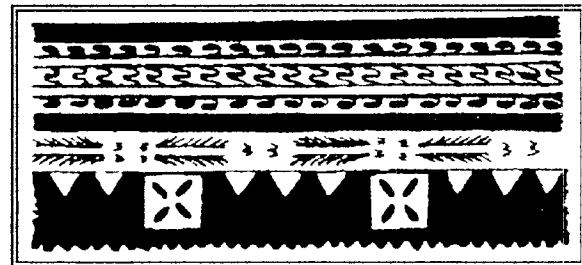
Figure 4.2.3 Male Tattoo: Rear View

The tattoos are created by hammering ink made from coconut charcoal into the skin with a set of up to six various sized mallets, made from bamboo sticks to which are attached combs of varying sizes, edged with pigs' teeth or bits of human bone.



discarded. The entire process, from outlining the designs, to the final filling in of the patterns, can take as long as a week, depending on the stamina of the

Today some *tufuga* use shards of glass, or small pieces of razor blades or other sharp metal in their combs, although combs made of pig teeth or human bone are highly prized. The mallets are not sacred objects, and should one break, it is simply



subject, who determines how much of the design is completed at each session.

This is a painful process, in particular in the marking of designs over bones close to the surface of the skin. The persons being tattooed, most often *soa* [circumcision] partners, are also accompanied by other close

Tu'ufau, mai ali'i ē!
'A'o le tu mai ea a le vavau.
Te saga oi oe, 'a e pese a'u:
E tupu le fafine fanau,
E tupu le tane tā le tatau...

Relax, O Sir!
This is an old time custom.
You groan continually, but I sing:
The woman must bear children,
The man must be tattooed...

friends who assist in the process, holding the arms and legs of the man being tattooed to prevent slipping, and telling stories or singing songs to amuse the men undergoing the process. As well, villagers will often come and stand outside the house in which the tattoos are being done, voicing encouragement and approval as the designs emerge, or as the young men successfully complete the more difficult and painful marking of complex designs.

The self reported objective for receiving a tattoo is to demonstrate and produce strong bodies.

Enduring the tattoo process

Figure 4.2.4 Tattooing is a public event, in which friends of the person receiving the tattoo participate.

shows to the people watching, and continues to show throughout the person's life, that he is able to tolerate pain because a key aspect of Samoan strength is the ability to withstand long term physical discomfort. At the same time, the process of tattooing creates strength in the individual being tattooed by teaching

his body its limits of endurance and tolerance. Finally, through his body, the tattooed man constitutes the value and pursuit of strength for the people around him.

This is one aspect of the embodiment of discipline. Another relates tattooing to the structures of authority within which Samoan bodies are deployed. A formal body tattoo is most often initiated by the subject's father, always a *matai*. The father presents the idea of the tattoo to his son, who has the right to refuse without explanation. If the son accepts, he is acknowledging a formal position of service to *matai* authority, through a public expression of service to his father's title and, through that, to all *matai*. After acquiring a full tattoo, the son adopts certain patterns of submission and restraint. He becomes a kind of specialist servant to his father, the *matai*, carrying out his orders, acting on his behalf as a 'ava preparer at important *fono*, and comporting himself in sexual matters with dignity and constraint. While not in fact a virgin, he is in significance one. His sexual or erotic body becomes split from his adolescent, exploratory, body, strategically emerging, when appropriate, as one or the other. At the same time the tattooed body becomes a signifier of discipline itself, such as when a man raises his lavalava to expose his tattoo as a signal to a group of boys misbehaving on a village road of the authority that attaches to the *matai* and those who serve for him.

The tattooed man is a body enacting the disciplines of humility in the presence of authority. There is dignity in his comportment while receiving the

tattoo and, afterwards, a new modesty, because once tattooed, the body is figuratively, and literally, never again naked. This painful and selective act of embodiment, although changing in contemporary Samoa, still retains its disciplinary effect, and the willingness and ability of any person to undergo tattooing is afforded great honour and deference. As one elderly man told me, "to receive the tattoo, and to show it proudly, is to remind us all what is the truth of Samoa."

As I noted in Chapter 2, tattooing may have been related to chiefly status in a very direct way, in pre-European Samoa. All *matai* are said to have had full body tattoos, and indeed, early accounts suggest one could not be a *matai* without a tattoo. The principles of service and humility which the tattoo enacts were the same, but they were more directly linked to the ultimate acquisition of chiefly status in Samoa. Like all historical reconstructions, however, this is tentative and speculative. Today, many Samoans find the use of a tattoo as a device for claiming authority, troubling, and inappropriate. "A man who has a tattoo so he can be a prince", one man told me, "is covering his body with a very bad tattoo. Tattoos make you strong, and make you humble, and they remind us that to be a good Samoan is to be strong and humble and to serve your *'āiga* and your *matai*." Unlike mass, which I suggested in Chapter 3.2, some *matai* may be appropriating as a way of marking their distinctiveness as members of a fixed class, tattooing has been appropriated by younger, and mostly untitled, Samoans, explicitly as a means, for many, of indicating their commitment to traditions of

service and propriety.

Where tattooing is a special form of disciplined body through which docility and strength are enacted, circumcision [*tafao*] is a generic form of body discipline which every boy is obligated to undertake. Girls, however, do not undergo any form of organized scarring or body modification as they grow up. As one woman put it to me, "is *mai masina* [menstruation] not enough for that."

Circumcision is initiated voluntarily by boys anywhere from the age of 6 onward. With his *soa* partner, the boys will approach their mothers to ask them to make arrangements for the *tufuga* to visit the village to perform the ceremony. One of the mothers would then contact a specialist in circumcision. Gifts of food and fine mats are given to the specialist, although this is not a payment, and may be refused. Rather, it is a gift for a gift, fine mats given in exchange for the *tufuga* giving back to the mother a strong son. Today, while a small percentage of circumcisions are performed by *tufuga*, most are performed by a travelling clinic staffed by a Western trained doctor, which visits each village at least once a year. Young boys who have requested *tafao* are then circumcised together in a group.

On the day of the circumcision, the boys say goodbye to their fathers in the early morning hours and spend the remainder of the day with their mothers. Today this can be quite a large group of mothers and their sons. The boys are bathed thoroughly in fresh water, and provided with new *lavalava*, which they do not yet put on. They are taken by their mothers to the *fale* where the operation will take place, naked and laughing boisterously. Usually the highest ranking boy

will go first. From the moment he enters the house, the other boys become quiet, only occasionally talking among themselves. The procedure today involves the complete excision of the prepuce, without the aid of anaesthetics and usually without post operative suturing. It takes a few brief moments. The physician, who now replaces the *tufuga* in almost all cases, makes two simple incisions in the foreskin, cutting between them with surgical scissors. Traditionally, the foreskin was not removed, but only cut, two slits perpendicular to the glans, which cause the foreskin to completely disappear when the penis is erect. Some young men still have this form of *tafao*, and one adolescent boy from a village where I worked showed me his "real Samoan *tafao*" with great pride.

During the procedure, and following it, the boy is silent. After the excision is complete, he walks with his mother from the *fale*, and sits with her to one side of the group of waiting boys. After the final boy is finished, the entire group travels, either on foot or by truck if necessary, to the sea. Here the boys bathe repeatedly in the salt water. While their first venture into the ocean is somewhat quiet and apprehensive, the bathing soon turns into a boisterous game, the boys racing each other in and out of the water. At the end of this bathing, which can last all afternoon, the boys are handed their new *lavalava*, which they now put on, tying them in the front knotted manner in which men are expected to tie this garment, in contrast to the side knotting manner in which women wear theirs. From this point on they are required to always wear their *lavalava* in this way. While visiting an outer village I witnessed an older *matai* stopping several young

boys in *lavalava* knotted to the side and, with a stick, lifting their dress to see if any had already been circumcised. Only one boy had, the others still too young, and his family was fined a small amount of food for the boy's transgression.

On the boys' return to the village, people will call congratulations as the boys walk by. The boys are treated to special food, including portions or dishes usually reserved for *matai* or for high ranking guests, before retiring early to rest. No other special treatment, other than repeated individual ocean baths, is given to the healing of the remains of the foreskin. Infection is surprisingly rare given the tendency of sores to suppurate in the tropics.

When asked why they had decided to ask for *tafao*, most boys told me that they felt it was now time to begin to become strong. The act of circumcision, in which no effort is made to ensure comfort or to minimize pain, is a marker of an emerging transition in a boy's body, from the condition of relative weakness and softness in childhood, to the strength and endurance associated with adult bodies. It is also a trigger which begins a new phase in the boy's growth, marked by increasing concern with his ability to demonstrate his strength. Following circumcision, he does not take on new duties, but now, when he carries out his work around the household, he is expected to do so with the same stamina and vigour as boys twice his age. So strong is this association between *tafao* and strength as a virtue of full personhood, that the single most offensive insult you can pay to a man is the epithet "*kefe*", the informal pronunciation of the vulgar word *tefe* [circumcision], which translates as 'get circumcised'.

Circumcision, like tattooing, locates the body in a field of discipline and service. By altering the body, in both private and public manners, the boys are engaging in the process of creating with their flesh the principles of endurance, responsibility, obedience, and propriety, which are the hallmarks of the disciplined Samoan body. Like the array of bodies in the *fono*, and the service of the *tāupou* in the 'ava ceremony, the bodies of recently circumcised boys engage in a lived experiential way the constitution of these principles. Bodies are enactments of culture in their movement and postures, their alterations and sensations. The boys bathing in the sea are feeling and doing discipline and order in the sting of the salt water in their proudly acquired wounds.

CORRECTING BODIES: POSSESSION AND PUNISHMENT

Wounding the body is also central to formal acts of punishment and discipline in Samoa. The abjection of the body, the denial of its humanness, and the infliction of often severe injury, are characteristic of formal forms of punishment and discipline. I mentioned the potential brutality of physical punishment of older children at the beginning of this chapter. I want to consider some more formal aspects of punishment and discipline now.

There are several different sources of punishment in Samoa, including *matai* or the *fono* as a whole, parents, church leaders, the police and courts, and *aitu*, the malicious spirits who are everywhere in Samoa. I will only consider the embodying implications of two here, *matai* and *aitu* because these are the most common forms of discipline and punishment in everyday life.

Aitu are either spirit beings in their own right, or the spirits of dead ancestors, or the hand servants of the spirits of dead ancestors.¹ The most dangerous class of *aitu* are known as *teine*. *Teine* are vicious female *aitu* who are associated, most often, with bodies of water on the islands. They are notorious for seducing young men in their sleep (the evidence of which is the evidence of nocturnal emissions) and for possessing young girls. Saumaiafe is a particularly mean *aitu*. I witnessed her interference with two girls in my home village in Samoa. The girls in question first became listless and disobedient, and refused to rise from their sleeping mats in the morning to perform their chores, or care for their younger siblings. A few days after this began, they were seen walking through the village with red earth smeared in their hair. Red is the colour of Saumaiafe, who delights in sitting in the highest limbs of trees, holding her head off her shoulders, and combing her long red hair. This red earth in the girl's hair signalled to everyone in the village that Saumaiafe was at work and steps were immediately taken to deal with her presence. This involved bringing in a possession specialist, a *taulāaitu* or medium, adept at speaking with Saumaiafe, in order to determine the cause of this possession. The girls were examined and their families interviewed. In each case a social cause, the malfeasance of another family member who had offended the *aitu*, was determined to be the reason for the possession, and, after the offenders made public apologies, both girls recovered.

In another case of possession, one in which I was actually called upon to

help rid the girl of the tormenting *teine*, it transpired that the girl was being punished for having sex with a boy who was too closely related to her. Finally, Saumaiafe was implicated in the death of two young women, and the disfiguring injury of a young man, when she caused a small four wheel drive vehicle to overturn on a winding cross island road. In the weeks that followed the accident, it emerged that the girls had been involved in a scheme to steal from a church after the regular Sunday collection. Because the church was in a village adjacent to the sliding rock pool where Saumaiafe lived, she had become incensed at the young people, and had killed them.

Aitu punishment is usually not as dramatic as these incidents. More often it involves injuries caused by falling, or minor illnesses, both caused by the *aitu*. It is also not necessarily enacted on the specific offender in a family. As often as not, *aitu* will attack some other, usually weaker, family member, including unborn children. Significant birth defects, such as Down's Syndrome, dwarfism, or improperly formed limbs, are often attributed to *aitu* attacks as a form of punishment of one or both of the parents, or of some relative close to them, who has offended an *aitu*. This choice of victim in *aitu* punishment reinforces the mutuality of blame and responsibility in wrongdoing across a wide network of particular people. *Aitu* occupy and police the dangerous space of the bush, and the secret places in the village where offense and crimes may take place. They are an important source of discipline and punishment, attacking the body as an exercise in social control.

The human-directed forms of punishment are also primarily focused on the abjection of the body. Banishment is the most serious form of punishment, short of capital punishment, which is rare. A man, and his immediate household, are stripped of almost all of their possessions, and forced to leave the village. Because of patterns of obligation between nearby villages, the family are forced to wander, *ta'a*, the animal condition of aimless roaming. In some instances of banishment, the family has perished because they were unable to find a new village to live in not obligated to the authority of the banishing village. Today banishment is illegal in Samoa, but it is still practiced, occasionally resulting in the members of the banishing *fono* being charged in criminal court, and punished as well. I am familiar with three cases of banishment in which the court punished the *matai* who issued the order of banishment. In each case, the family did not return to the village from which they had been shunned. When I spoke with members of two of the banished families, I was told that they felt the decision was fair and just, and that they would abide by the order, no matter what the police did to the *matai*. Indeed, one man from a banished family went so far as to appear at the trial of one of the *matai* who had banished him to plead with the court to not interfere with the *matai's* decision.

Other forms of physical punishment also denature the body and render it less than human. A man can be trussed like a pig and burned in an open umu, in the manner in which pigs are cooked prior to ceremonial exchange. Being tied in the area beneath a house where pigs sleep, or being tossed food scraps like a

dog, are other formal forms of physical punishment, combined with beatings, having small bones broken, being stripped naked and forced to walk through the village, and being made to smear your body with pig or dog faeces and then lay prostrate on the ground begging forgiveness. Early in 1994 a *matai* was killed by members of his *'āiga*. All the members of his extended family entered his house and several shot him. This happened because of his failure to fulfil his duties as the family's head, his mistreatment of family members, who he had used as free labour in his business, and his misappropriation of ceremonial exchange goods for his own use. While there is a general code of crime and appropriate punishment, the application of a given punishment is determined, not by the abstract nature of the crime itself, but by the constellation of events, relationships, and obligations in which the offender and the offended are located. It is not likely that a person would be executed for stealing a pig, but it is also not impossible for this to occur.

Punishment can be avoided, or suspended, if the offender takes the initiative and abjects himself in a ritual known as *ifoga*. The head of a family charged with some serious offence, such as the theft of pigs or murder [Shore 1982:19], presents himself on the *malae* of the village of the offended person, and lays prostrate on the ground before the *fale* of the offended *matai*, draping himself in fine mats of special quality and value. At regular intervals he calls out from beneath his sheath of mats to be allowed to come forward and plead forgiveness. This can go on for several days before his presence is

acknowledged by the *matai* of the offended family. In some cases, the *matai* performing *ifoga* will remain through the night, but most often he withdraws, never showing himself from under his pile of mats, to return in the morning and repeat the process

In *ifoga*, the body of a high ranking person is completely subsumed by the web of obligation and allegiance embodied in the fine mats beneath which he cowers. All the attachments of authority and power which his body instantiates in other circumstances evaporate in the air that carries his abjected plea for forgiveness and reintegration. *Ifoga* is the site of the greatest danger in restoring social order in Samoa, because in the degradation of the *matai* beneath his mats the entire structure of Samoan authority, as it is enacted in the presence of the body of the *matai*, is imperiled. Ultimately, *ifoga* works because, as several *matai* explained after having accepted the apology of a man whose three sons had gangraped a young boy, to refuse the apology of a *matai* "would destroy him and maybe then it would destroy us. It would be showing off to refuse to say that you [the offender] must now come back inside the house." At risk in *ifoga* are the entire panoply of associations between dignity, authority, co-operation, and the body, which are the key components of Samoan humanness.

Disciplining and de-humanizing the body are inseparable qualities of Samoan social control. The prison explicitly treats the inmates as animals, providing them with none of the comforts of humanness, from the abysmal quality of the food to the filth and lack of excretory privacy of the cell areas. Insults, such

as telling someone they 'fuck like a dog', or the epithet *kefe* [get circumcised], with its implications that the body of the insulted person is a weak, animal body, and not worth human consideration, also contribute to the everyday abjection of the social body in discipline and punishment

What this produces is a body protective of its humanity. It is a body which strives to enact the signal qualities of dignity, humility, and strength, which are central to embodiment in Samoa. This is not a docile and submissive body, but an active one, actively pursuing recognition as truly human and as fully Samoan. Abjection is something one guards against and something, when it happens, one accepts, and acts to overcome. The body punished is the body denied good and proper social meaning. It is a body mortified and then revitalized in apology and forgiveness.

Foucault's docile bodies on the assembly line, or in the prison wards, are not the same bodies one finds in the surveilled and abjecting arena of formal social control in Samoa. The Foucauldian objective of discipline, a body seen in all its aspects, and restrained and denied, is not the Samoan objective of discipline. Where power travels downward from the panoptic gaze of Foucault's mechanisms of power, in Samoa power travels through the field of embodiment like an energizing current, sustaining the body as a site and cause of propriety. In enacting discipline and punishment, as in pursuing sexual partners, or feasting to excess, or playing rugby into the early hours of night, Samoans do not submit to power, they participate in it, in the manner and form in which their bodies are

invented and deployed in the field of responsibility and obligation. In shifting focus in the next chapter to questions of illness and health, I want to continue this exploration of the issue of bodies, and the disciplines of responsibility in Samoa.

Endnotes: Chapter 4.2

1. Gilson [1970] and Goodman [1971] provide detailed discussions of the role of *aitu* in all aspects of Samoan life, including their religious significance in pre-European Samoa, and Handy [1927] is a comprehensive comparative review of religion in Polynesian societies, including the importance and function of spirit beings to these societies. While I am restricting my discussion here, and in the next chapter, to *aitu*'s importance in punishment and illness, the significance of *aitu* in other aspects of *fa'a Samoa* should be noted. *Aitu*, as either ancestors or their representatives, maintain a Samoan's kinship ties beyond death, and as such, have important implications for analysing what is and is not a body in Samoa.

Chapter 5

The Body Endangered: Illness, Healing and The Embodiment of Peril

I assert...that "disease" does not exist. It is therefore illusory to think that one can "develop beliefs" about it or "respond" to it. What does exist is not disease, but practices.

Francois Delaporte
Disease and Civilisation [pg. 6]

Pita lay on the sleeping mat, rocking restlessly in his sleep. Occasionally he would moan softly, and his mother would reach over and wipe away the sweat on his face with edge of her lavalava, now stained from several hours of this constant duty. Around the mat were his two brothers, an aunt, the wife of the Methodist minister, and a Samoan healer, who sat holding a bible in one hand, and a bundle of bright green leaves in the other. Every several minutes she would take the leaves and rub them over Pita's stomach, reciting a portion of the Christian Lord's Prayer, in English, as she did. Then she would sit back on her heels and bow her head, praying silently.

The day before, Pita had been walking along the main road of the village of Vaimoso, on his way home from buying his mother some tea bags at the local village store. A loud blast of thunder over the mountains startled him, and he turned suddenly to look in the direction where the storm was gathering strength as it passed over the island. In turning he fell, knocking his head with a harsh

impact on a recently fallen coconut. He had lain there, no one knew for how long, until a man and his children, coming along the road, found him and carried him home to his small green house in the banana patch behind where I lived. Through the storm darkened gloom I saw the group coming along the road, could hear them talking in hushed tones, but barely paid attention, turning back to my computer screen and the transcription of an interview I had completed earlier that day with a man about to leave for New Zealand for coronary surgery. I managed to finish one more paragraph before Charlie, Pita's brother, was suddenly outside my window, breathless, asking if I would drive him to a nearby village to bring back a *fofō* because Pita was dying, he was being killed by an *aitu* and Mafo'e, Pita and Charlie's mother, could think of no way to stop it from happening.

Injury, like illness, is not simply something which occurs. They require explanation, because they engage the frailty of the enacted body, and render opaque the connected practices of embodiment which conjoin consciousness, cultural, and the lived sensory experience of our bodies. Questions of discipline and punishment, propriety and appropriate presence, and the multiple lines that connect the complexes of good and bad, are important processes where the body is understood and enacted. With illness and injury, perhaps, the greatest work of embodiment is carried out, because it is in illness and injury that everything the body is, and does, is directly threatened and undermined. The body in pain is a body at the heart of the dissolution of the very world that the body has created [Scarry 1985].

In this chapter I will explore some of the ground on which illness is recognized and dealt with, as a final exploration of the Samoan geography of embodiment. Much of what I understand about the Samoan body, in both health and illness, comes from months spent talking with 11 traditional healers, and more than fifty of their patients; from 23 diagnostic events I personally witnessed, followed by interviews with participants; and from 67 illness event interviews in which informants were asked to recount the progress of an illness they had experienced in the year prior to the interview. Four monographs on the professions of Samoan health and healing have also helped shape my understanding of these aspects of *fa'a Samoa*. MacPherson and MacPherson [1990] not only provide a detailed description of contemporary Samoan healing techniques, their reconstruction of the history of healing in Western Samoa in the 20th. century, has been instrumental in helping me to understand the nature of medical expertise in Samoa. In particular, their discussion of the flexibility of Samoan healers, and of their willingness to take advantage of 'introduced' ideas and techniques, is a valuable corrective to the image of traditional healers are secretive and protective of their special status. Forsyth's [1983] discussion of healing and tattooing directly links diverse body practices into a single model of health and strength, while Kinloch's [1985] description of the importance of talking about illness, as an aspect of diagnosis and curing, has contributed to my understanding of how Samoans monitor health and disease. Finally, the papers gathered together in Baker, Hanna and Baker [1986] provide detailed bio-

physiological data on Samoan health, and especially on issues related to the physical attributes of the good and proper Samoan body. What follows is an outline of the Samoan theory of health practice as it implicates the persistent concerns with dignity, humility and strength which underlie all Samoan practices of embodiment.

From these interviews, observations and other sources, I have constructed a model of illness events [Figure 5.1] which will frame the discussion in this chapter. I examine this model in more detail later in this chapter. I will also discuss Samoans ideas about the qualities and characteristics of their anatomy and biology.¹ I am not contrasting this biology to some other, more

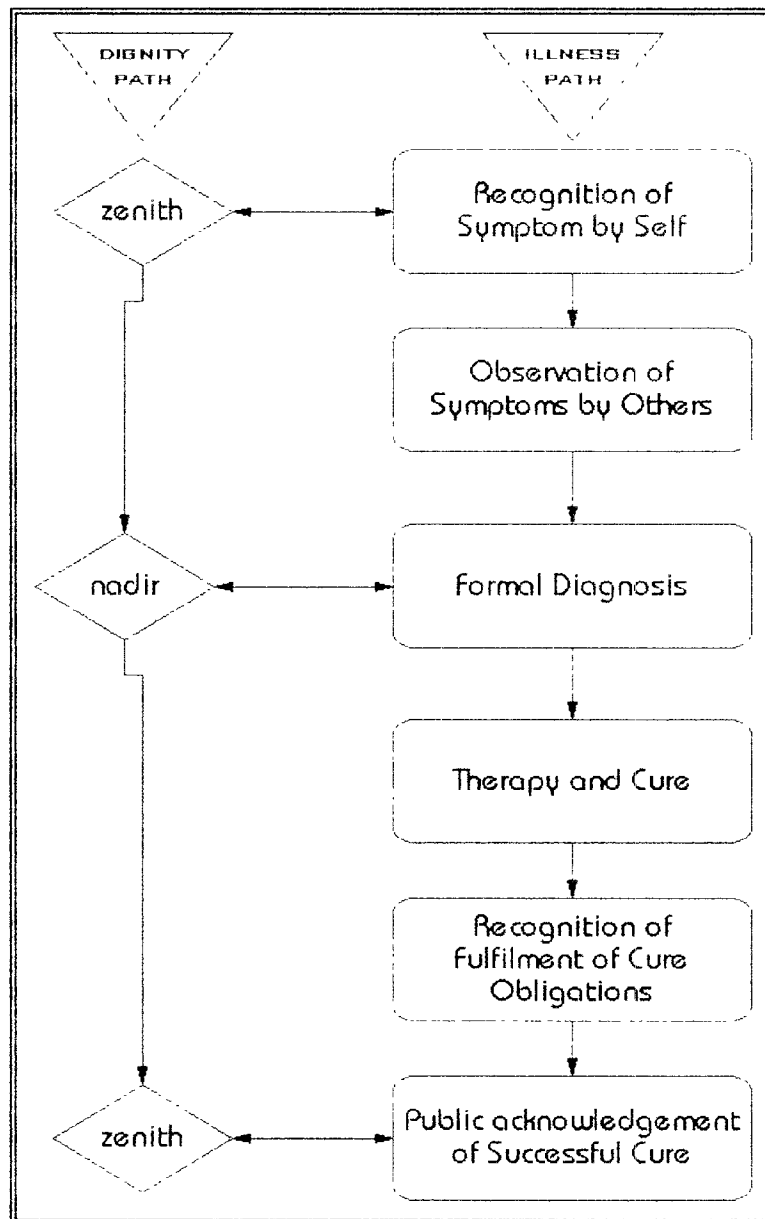


Figure 5.1 The Path of Illness in Samoa

accurate, biology. The biological model Samoans have is neither less nor more accurate in terms of its reliability than the model we, as Westernised bodies, apply to our own experiences. However, Samoans have, as a result of their experiences and understandings of their bodies, different organs than what might be found, for example, in the bodies of North Americans. In the study of embodiment, biology needs to be approached from the point of view of these models, and not solely from the perspective of scientific anatomy. More important than what the body is as an organic object, the body needs to be understood as being 'what we do with it', as well.

A critical model of embodiment needs to avoid the pitfall of contrasting social and biological realities [Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987]. This approach, as I discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, dominates much of medical anthropology. The risk such an approach takes lies in leaving implicit the subtle, evaluative aspect of these comparisons. Local biologies are often implicitly measured against scientific biology in terms of accuracy, reliability, and validity. While such approaches can provide important insights into health practice, as well as helping to explore how the introduction of new models of anatomy are adapted by local communities [for example Frankel 1989], what is lost in such analyses is the effect of local understandings on the lived experience of the body itself.

At the same time, a model of embodiment needs to explode the clinical encounter analytically, in order to deconstruct not only how the body is

manipulated in illness, but also how expertise itself is constituted. It needs to clarify the relationship between expert models and other body cultures which may co-exist in a given society, through a more thorough ethnographic account of the notion of expertise itself.²

In Samoa, expertise is about skill and not knowledge. That is, the healer [*fofō*], like the *tufuga* [tattooist/circumciser] and the *matai* themselves, are expert by virtue of the skill they bring to bear on their tasks. The knowledge of illness meaning and curing practices is general knowledge, the healer recognized and respected solely by skill and past success. No one is a medical expert in Samoa in our sense of having specialist knowledge. Instead, the expert is the most successful, and not the most knowledgeable person, a distinction which needs to be borne in mind when thinking about clinical relations in Samoa [Moyle 1974:158; Koskinen 1968: 11-12]. Like the *matai*, whose knowledge of the *fa'alupega* is secondary to his manipulation and re-representations of that knowledge to the advantage of his *'āiga*, the *fofō* is not a repository of information, but a history of skilful manipulations of that information in actual clinical experience. All participants in the clinical encounter in Samoa are presumed to have the same basic information, but different levels of skill. This, I feel, is a key issue in understanding how Samoans enact illness, because experts do not dominate the process of defining an illness into existence. Rather, expert and patient collude in the process of making symptoms meaningful, and drawing the meaning of the illness from the evidence of the world around them.

An ethnography of the body needs to account ,not only for illness events, but also for the overall process of living within, and watching, the body in which illness occurs. It needs to address the fact that the body is a lived experience, of which illness is only one facet, and that illness and health are part of a single process of observation and accounting. Few areas of the practiced body offer access to this process of enactment, through which body, being, and experience are conjoined. Desire is one, punishment another, and illness yet another. Kirmayer captures the issue of how illness enjoins us to focus on the multiple aspects of the lived ground of embodiment when he suggests we "[c]ompare: [1] feeling sick; [2] being treated as sick by others; [3] being told you are sick by a doctor; [4] finding your temperature elevated on a thermometer" [1992:324]. My focus here is on how being sick, and the lived enactment of the body in its other aspects, are inseparable and ongoing.³

SAMOAN ANATOMY: BODIES AS MOTION

I have been arguing throughout this text that the body needs to be understood as a potential for meaning, a potential which is realized through experience. Anatomy needs to be understood, not only in the scientific-classificatory-clinical sense , but also as a practice through which the structures and processes of the body are enacted into meaningful existence in daily life. In describing Samoan anatomy then, I am not contrasting folk theories against some truer biological model, in the form, for example, of assertions like "Samoans believe the heart digests food". Rather, in what follows I am adopting a different

posture, one which takes Samoans at their word, and accepts that for these people in this place at this time, the heart is a part of the digestive system, and the lungs are water filters.

Samoans divide the body into three components: the interior, the boundary, and things outside, but connected to, the body. Each of these aspects of the body stands in a relationship of symbiosis with the others, such that the core of the body and the environment of physical and social relationships which encompass the body are part of a single organic unity. Like villages, these

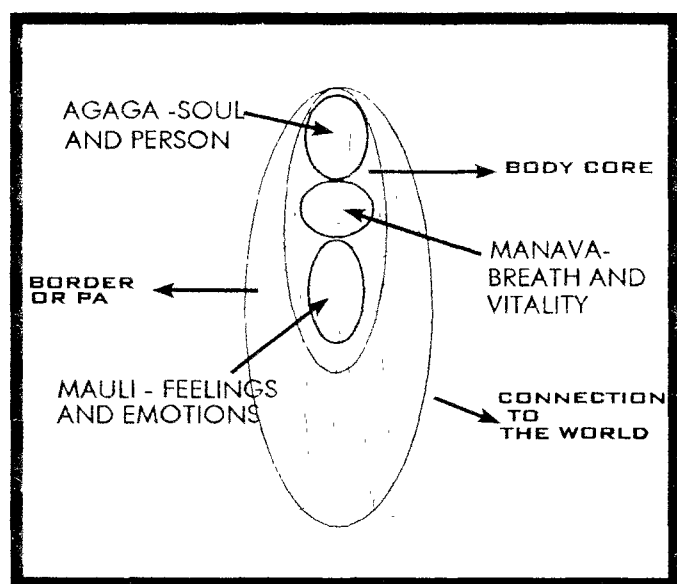


Figure 5.2 Body Segments

components decrease in dignity and sacredness the further one moves from the core. Like villages, the danger of illness is most perilous in its effects on the interior of the body. Figure 5.2 illustrates this dividing up of the body and its connections to the world.

There is an element of ambiguity about the borders between the peripheral organs and limbs or *pā* [boundary or border] and the world around it, which is separate, but connected to the body as part of the body process. As well, these body spaces need to be understood not only as locations, but as sets of relationships between different

organic aspects of the body. They enact relationships of connection, flow, and motion rather than simply serving as places where body parts and body processes occur. While I will not discuss the issue of *mana*, the trans-Polynesian concept of energizing power or efficacy [see Keesing 1984, Shore 1989], this is because, in general, this concept was rarely brought up in my conversations with Samoans. However, as Shore notes [1989:138], *mana* needs to be understood in relation to the Polynesian dispreference for defining things in terms of essential qualities and characteristics. *Mana*, therefore, is a state of energy, rather than an energy itself, and in Samoan anatomy is reflected in the properly mapped body standing in a state of health-ful readiness to act. The Samoan word for readiness or 'ability' [and also for beautiful], *manaia* translates as 'being energetic' rather than as 'having energy'. The healthy body is a condition of *mana* and a fluid state of readiness.

Internal organs, both in the central and peripheral sites of the body, have two collateral qualities which define them as good and proper: location and process. The geography of the internal organs is a key component in the body's proper functioning. Organs have a proper location. Organs also have the tendency to move, or to be shifted, from their proper place, and this is a common cause of illness. Organs do not move wilfully, however. Instead, they are moved by either physical activity or by the interference of *aitu*, who can kick organs out of location or who, in the case of women, may actually enter the body and physically move organs about.⁴

Process, the other quality, relates to how organs are connected in the movement of substances or forces throughout the body. All organs are implicated in the flow of body substances, such as food, blood, water, air, faeces, semen or bile. Organs are experienced as conduits through which substances move, the organ in some instances, such as the liver, effecting some change in the substance by adding to it or taking something from it, and in other instances, such as the testicles, serving a muscular function which causes the expulsion of semen in ejaculation.

In general, Samoans have the same organs as those we would recognize, but with important differences. The most obvious is the fact organs move in the viscera, which means the liver can actually end up in a part of the body where we would be unlikely to look for it. Another important difference is the linking of organs into single units. The heart and lungs [*fatu*, a polite word for blood, and *māmā*, the formal word for lungs] , for example, are connected as one single multi-component organ, rather than two distinct organs, in the organ/space referred to as the *manava* [breath and stillness]. The heart forces blood in and out of the lungs where it is moistened through breathing, and also settled to avoid its becoming too hot and agitated. Paths between organs are also distinctive. The *manava* is linked directly to the stomach, through which food, blood, and air are conjoined in the stomach's food storing process

A final difference is the presence of organs which are not found in our own bodies. The most important is the *to'ala*, an obscure muscular organ which

serves as a conduit for energy throughout the viscera, and which is normally located just below the sternum, in a healthy person. The *to'ala* is the most troublesome organ for Samoans because of its tendency to shift position very readily, causing strangulation or blockage of other organs including the blocking of the *fa'aautagata* [womb place], which can result in either barrenness, difficulty in delivery, or deformity of the foetus through pressure or other distortions. The *to'ala* is the most common target of *aitu* attacks on the organs and, I was told, has the potential of actually being expelled from the body accidentally.

In speaking of their bodies, my advisors and informants would often speak in terms of the movement of substances through the body. A good and healthy body is full of all the common substances we recognize, such as urine, blood, bile, and saliva. To be healthy, these substances need to be in constant flow throughout, and then, out of the body. This steady stream of body fluids is an important diagnostic feature of illness recognition, and it also defines for Samoans a manner of movement in the world which recognizes that things enter the body and must leave it in good time and in appropriate volumes. The qualities of these substances as they leave the body are scrutinized for their relative health. For example, faeces should flow easily and should have a soft, though not watery consistency. Menstrual blood, I was told, should be very bright red, and not black or discoloured. Saliva and semen are related fluids, and should be ample and have a gum like consistency when exposed to air.

Illness substances such as pus or other discharges from wounds or sores,

vomit, bile, and diarrhoea, are understood as a means of ridding the body of unnecessary or foreign substances which impair the internal organ's function. This process of ridding the body may be in the form of excess male or female body part substances, which each sex needs in only limited quantities. It may also be excess in other substances such as water or certain kinds of food, which again the body needs only in restricted quantities. The manifestation of these substances may be the result of a back-up in the flow of substances through appropriate channels in the body, causing them to flow either backwards, as in vomit, or to flow explosively when finally released, as in extreme cases of diarrhoea. Finally, these substances may be foreign matter hazardous to the body, which the body incorporates into other substances and then expels.

The anatomy of the body is understood by my informants in terms of ranked sites within and around the body, and of the steady flow of substances into, through and out of the body. The body is like the village. It has a sacred core, where the most important processes of organic life occur. It also has a functional ring of connection through which the body is tied to, and makes use of, the world around it. Body processes mirror activity and dignity at the village level, where work and labour sustains the sacred core of both the body and the village, and where the dangerous and undignified detritus of this sustenance are moved out of, and away, from the dignity of both. In experiencing their bodies, Samoans experience, in miniature, the fundamental principles of their socialized universe.

SYMPTOMS AND SIGNALS: READING THE BODY FOR DANGER

Symptoms, in Samoa, are both evidence of improper functioning, and signs the body is healthy and proper. While it is possible to distinguish between signs of distress and signs of propriety, it is important to be aware that Samoans do not only attend to their bodies when there is trouble. They are attentive, watchful, and alert, not only to signs of danger, but also to signs of propriety and appropriate function.

There are two issues which need to be raised at the outset. The first relates to the Samoan word *ma'i* which is normally translated as illness. *Ma'i* encompasses everything from cancer to anger to drunkenness to not attending church to paranoid schizophrenia to spirit possession. The English word cannot cover all these conditions and behaviours, and so, using illness to translate *ma'i* requires we qualify ill to mean 'in the Samoan sense of some disturbance in proper behaviour, body function, or social relations.'

That is the first problem in approaching Samoan illness and symptomatics. The other is in distinguishing symptoms from causes. In what follows I will be talking about body signs as "meaning" illness. This is a convenience rather than an analytic posture on my part, because symptom and cause are often conflated in Samoan illness practice. To questions about whether anger causes illness, is a symptom, or is caused by illness, the most common answers I got was "whose illness" or "which time would that anger have happened". Anger is both a cause and effect of illness, depending on the circumstances and the type of illness. As

Albert once put it to me, half joking because he always accused me of taking my questions much too seriously, " you ask if sadness can make me sick. I have to ask you what day of the week was that sadness I had, and maybe what time was it, and then I have to ask who was I sitting with, and maybe I would just ask if you had asked me for my last Vailima [the local beer], and I gave it to you when I was thirsty myself." In describing symptoms and their readings here, I am imposing a kind of stylistic formality on what is often a very fluid and changeable system of reading body signs as a part of enacting bodies.

Samoans experience symptoms from a pool of body signs. This symptom pool describes the range of signs the body makes, but does not necessarily assign them negative or positive connotations. Rather, the principles of this symptom pool establish the criteria for treating a sign as a symptom of illness or of health. There are four basic categories of signs which make up this pool of readable body properties: signs of the movement of substances or their obstruction, mobility or its impairment, emotional propriety or deviance, and the condition of the skin. Both MacPherson and MacPherson [1990:158-189], and Forsyth [1983:123-141 *passim*] distinguish body signs by where in the body the symptom is located, because in each case they were focussing on what is physically done to the body in the healing process. My discussion here focusses on the principles of proper body function, which are implicated in symptoms, and so, differs from, and adds a new dimension to, these previous descriptions.

The healthy body is a body through which substances flow freely. Blood,

urine, sweat, menses, and phlegm are scrutinized as signs of either good health, or impending illness. Bowels should be free, urine should be expelled in considerable quantity and with great force, phlegm should be easily coughed out and should be of the consistency of normal saliva or semen, and blood, either in menstruation or from injury, should flow easily, and be consistently bright red in colour.

Mobility of limbs, and of the torso, is also important in Samoan health, the healthy body being fluid in movement, with no pain associated even with strenuous exertion. Limbs and the spine are observed for their flexibility, and painlessness of movement, and for changes in the shape and orientation of the limb when at rest.

The meanings of emotional or behavioural signs derive, in part, from the concern Samoans have with propriety and humility. Expressions of extreme emotions, even in situations of extraordinary stress, are avoided. The healthy person is a calm one. Intense emotional outbursts are punishable, if not associated with illness.⁵ From the age of three or four onward, children learn to be restrained in their emotional expressions, and to be cautious in admitting to heightened emotional distress [Ochs 1988:145-168; Gerber 1875:157-163].

The final core focus in this physical vocabulary is the boundary of the body with the world, the skin. Healthy skin is skin which sweats freely, and is clear of blemishes and staining scars, other than those voluntarily imbedded such as tattoos. It is warm to the touch in infants, and cool in children and adults, with a

clear even colour. Skin is permeable, and substances can pass both into, and out of the body through the skin. Any indication of impairment of this aspect of healthy skin is understood as a symptom of illness. Indeed, so important are skin signs, they are the most elaborately developed category of symptom in Samoan diagnosis. While MacPherson and MacPherson [1990:163] suggest the skin's importance is a function of its vulnerability, because of exposure to injury or the elements, many of my informants commented that skin is important because, in one man's words, "everything a person is doing is on his skin for me to see."

Within this pool, symptoms are defined based on what they tell the observer about the functioning of the body. In the case of illness, there are a limited set of parent symptoms, from which child symptom sets are then elaborated [Figure 5.3]. This image was suggested to me by a Samoan healer, who, in describing a person's illness to me one afternoon in the National

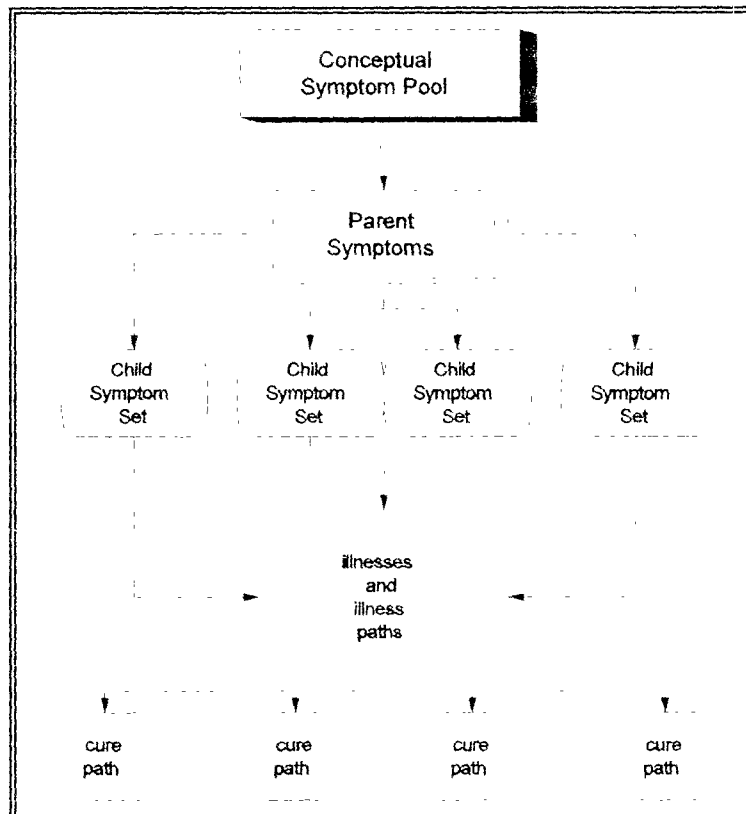


Figure 5.3 Parent and Child Symptom and Illness Paths

Hospital, commented that "the pain in his head, that was the father of his death, but it was the children, his heart and his bowels, they killed him at last."

These parent symptoms include, among many others, the following:

- laboured breathing and the absence of phlegm
- fever and discoloration of the skin
- impaired bowel movements or painful urination
- skin eruptions or discolorations not accompanied by fever.
- pain in limbs, either of the bone or muscle or joint, all of which are the same kind of pain conceptually
- pain in the head or in internal organs such as heart or liver pain

Unlike Western medicine, the range of symptoms is relatively simple. They are classified in terms of the four conceptual foundations of body signs - movement and flow, appropriate expression, spatial orientation, and the condition of the skin as a link between the body and the world. My informants were remarkably economical in their explanations and rationalizations of events in the world. As well, the absence of a specialist healer class in Samoa, and the Samoan concept of expertise as being about success in practice rather than about information or specialized knowledge, has meant that healers are not in a position to develop elaborate models as an exercise in specialization or secrecy. Since medical knowledge is also common knowledge, there has been no legitimate intellectual space available for the development of an elaborate and specialized system of medical explanation [see also MacPherson and MacPherson 1990:101].

However, there is also substantial richness in Samoan understandings of body function and symptoms. For example, fever has many causes and effects, reflected in the several different explanations of fever in different illness cases:

- movement of internal organs blocks the flow of fluid in the body, trapping it in the skin where it overheats.
- fluid becomes overheated by becoming blocked around an organ, the heat then passing through to the skin.
- organs become overheated when effected by disease, and pass this heat through to the skin.
- fluids themselves have a property of heat which becomes agitated during overexertion, during illness and because of some malfeasance or minor crime
- fluids in the skin pass heat from outside the body to the organs which take on the heat. A diseased organ or an organ not in its proper place cannot take up this heat which then remains in the fluid passing by the skin.
- the body has a limited capacity to cool itself. Fever is an effect of a body whose cooling properties have been affected by illness or by being in the sun too long [exposure to sun was often cited as a cause of fever]
- finally, connected to this is the relationship between fever and cure. Fever was described as the process whereby the excess heat from the organs effected by disease was passed out of the body, where urination and sweating are either inadequate or impaired.

While the pool of available symptoms is simple and quite general in character, the range of things these symptoms explain can be quite extensive, and even vigorously disputed, by people involved with an ill person.

Parent symptoms, simple in general outline, are complicated by their collation into what I call child symptom sets. These are clusters of symptoms defined both by their associations with each other, and their order of appearance in the patient. These child sets establish the kind of illness, can be queried in order to determine the source of the illness, and to indicate, in a preliminary way, the path the illness will likely take. For example, a combination of fever, headache and vomiting can, in different order, be evidence of different diseases. A fever followed rapidly by a blinding headache and then vomiting, is a disease of the head, in which over exposure to the sun is the most probable cause. Vomiting,

fever, and the slow onset of a steady, but low grade headache on the other hand is evidence of heart failure, or the collapse of the *manava*. Death is likely, as breathing finally collapses from the combination of insufficient food, and the inability of the body to cool itself properly. Finally, a headache of sudden onset, followed by vomiting and fever, is a cluster associated with thinking bad thoughts about ancestors.

All diseases are considered in terms of the cluster of symptoms which appear, and each symptom is evidence of a particular obstruction or malfunction. The disease is defined by these combinations, and not the individual attributes of symptoms alone. Indeed, symptoms can be completely ignored during diagnosis, either by deception on the part of the patient, or by misdirection on the part of the *fofō*.

However, this also sounds more formal than it is in practice. It is better to think of child symptom sets as an available catalogue of possibilities, rather than a formal and fixed classification of illness signs. So much of the evidence of these sets of symptoms, from their severity, to the order of their onset, is open to either direct manipulation or to misinterpretation, that it would be inaccurate to think of this as a single, formal, catalogue of illness attributes. The interpretation of these symptoms is never inexorable or pre-ordained [MacPherson and MacPherson 1990:193]. Symptoms are signals, whether signifiers as in skin eruptions, effects following from impairment of organs, such as breathing difficulties or headaches, or the manifestation of organ obstruction or organ movement, as in visceral

pain, constipation, or the inability to ejaculate. Within the framework of the conceptual pool of body signs I described above, illness signs can be read, misread or ignored, making the classification and fixed definition of symptoms analytically difficult, if not impossible. Table 1 [next page], gives some examples of illnesses by general class and symptom cluster, but with this warning in mind.

Class of Illness	Parent Symptom	Examples, with symptom progression
Heart and Blood	Ma'i fatu - impairment of blood and breath flow through the lungs, heart and stomach	Uauamini [varicose veins] - pain in legs, swelling, emergence of discoloured veins Ma'i oso [stroke] - confusion followed closely by headache and then collapse, paralysis and "stupid muscles"
Skin	Lafa tane - marks on the skin	Ma'i sua [sick sore] - pain then reddening of a point in the skin, emergence of boil, explosive expulsion of pus latolo [sores on infant's head] - crying, tossing of head, development of non-pustulant sores, scabbing and a spread of sores
Viscera	Manava -impairment of steady flow of food, substances through gut	Papala [ulcer] - loss of appetite, cramping, crippling pain, bloody vomit Ma'i ate [liver disease] - cramps, loss of appetite, crippling pain, bloody vomit, discoloration of eyes, dark urine

Table 1: Some Samoan illnesses and their associated symptom clusters.

Illness in Samoa is, in most people's perceptions, endemic, and is a constant concern. Government statistics list the most common cause of death as pneumonic influenza [about 60% of all reported deaths in 1985 - Western Samoa Department of Statistics 1990 Annual Report]. Although Baker and Crews do not analyze cause of death data from Western Samoa, because of its unreliability, they compare Western Samoa with American Samoa, and suggest the leading pathological cause of death in the Samoas is cardiovascular disease [1986: 98ff]. However, my informants felt that the leading cause of death was simply old age. "The person wears out, has no more strength left and so she dies" I was told. The average age at death for reported deaths in 1989 was 72 years for women and 69 for men [per.comm. Western Samoan Department of Health]. For my informants the most dangerous illnesses for adults, both male and female, are, in order of concern, diabetes [*ma'i suka*], aitu attack [*ma'i aitu*], cancer [*kanesa*], and a generic category labelled *ma'i fatu* or heart disease. Many of my informants also expressed concern over hypertension [*toto maualuga* - literally high or proud blood]. They do not consider it a disease, but see it, instead, as a side effect of arrogance. In children the most common illness and cause of death informants reported was asthma, for which they use the English word at all times, and which encompassed almost every manifestation of bronchial distress in children. Similar symptoms in adults are diagnosed as either heart disease or cancer. Infant death is most often attributed to *aitu* attack, the second leading concern being malformed lungs and heart. Samoans are vigilant, carefully watching for signs of

these illnesses in themselves, and in the people around them.

Another class of symptom distinctions, those related to mental disorders, is not extremely well developed in Samoan illness models [Clement 1974]. There are two types of mental disorder. The first, *valea*, refers to emotional and behavioural deviations, including insanity and derangement. The term *valea* is also applied derangements of intellectual function, such as conditions comparable to dissociative disorders, and to normative states of derangement, such as grief. A phrase, *ma'i valea* [and according to some informants *ma'i valea o le aitu* - emotion illness caused by ghosts or spirits] is sometimes applied to longstanding mental derangements. A woman who lived in and around the streets of Apia, unwashed and obsessively cleaning litter and rubble from the streets and roadways, was often described to me as having a "valea [mental derangement] sickness", but the generality of the term's application suggests that mental disorder is not formally codified. Forsyth [1983: 135 ff.] has described in great detail Samoan practices surrounding mental disorder, and her conclusions on the formal classification of derangement parallel mine, to the effect that mental disorder is not readily distinguished from other forms of simple behavioural deviance such as

displaying "crazy", "stupid" behaviour; offending your parents [which] can cause one to feel sad [depression]; failure to respect one's elders [e.g. the *matai*] can cause one to feel guilty [hostility, aggression, anger]; and behaving anti-socially because one has a "sore heart" [anger, hurt, antisocial, manic, depress[ed] [Forsyth date:135]

The other classification of mental derangement is *mea ua l̄ atoa ai le tino* [literally the unwholeness or incompleteness of the body], and is applied to retardation and to physical deformities or handicaps. These disorders are understood to be the result of malformation of the brain and its linkages to the *manava* [heart-lung-stomach] structure which, in fully formed bodies provides the physical material of the brain, and regenerates it on a regular basis. These deformities are usually caused by *aitu* attack. The mentally retarded are treated with deference and even considered to by some to be specially blessed. A school for handicapped children, the *Fia Malamalama* [making light/knowledge] School, was opened in the late 1980's, to accomodate the care and education of moderately retarded and physically handicapped children. While it had about 17 or 18 regular students during my time in Samoa, there was a general sense among Samoans I spoke with that the school was a nice thing to do, but not necessary since families care well for those members too infirm to care for themselves. As one woman explained " maybe they want to make them work like everyone else, but the person with handicaps cannot do that, and others should care for them and not force them to feed pigs or dig taro or weave mats." While the handicapped are not absolved from adhering to rules of proper behaviour, they are not criticized for their inability to perform regular daily work, nor are they blamed for their condition. However, people with *valea* disorders are often subjected to intense criticism, and even punishment, if the cause of their disorder is not determined to be from random *aitu* attack or some socially acceptable form

of temporary derangement, such as grief.

There is another form of psychological distress which is not considered an illness, but a normal, though dangerous, pattern of behaviour: *musu*. There is no English equivalent for this word, or the state it names. Informants would translate the word as either sadness or anger, an indication of the complexity of these concepts rather than the ambiguity of *musu*. *Musu* is a special form of emotion, where the person becomes withdrawn and quiet, tends to avoid all human contact, and often withdraws some distance from the living core of the village, occasionally spending time alone in the bush. MacPherson and MacPherson [1990:194-195] and Freeman [1983:218-219] describe *musu* as a form of frustration safety valve, since sufferers have often recently experienced some disappointment, or other thwarted expectation. *Musu* allows Samoans a socially positive space to withdraw into in order to reorient their emotions and expectations. While the person in *musu* is considered temporarily deranged, he or she is not considered sick. No effort is made to interfere, unless the state lasts longer than one or two days, and the person is not queried about the cause of the event when it is over. However, people in *musu* are at special risk for illness or *aitu* attack, because their attention is impaired, and so, villagers and family members will, surreptitiously, keep close surveillance on someone in *musu*. I found *musu* troubling, and even frightening, because it can occur very suddenly, in one case between one sentence and another in a conversation with a young man who had been telling me about his mother's work for the local Catholic

church *Musu* not only allows a space for frustration to be redirected, it also acts as a break on extreme acts of interference. Because it puts the person in this state in danger of illness, people are aware that they should not put a person into a state of *musu* by their own actions, such as greed, rudeness or anger. This reinforces the practices of deference, respect, sharing, and humility.

Physically, there are four general sites of illnesses in, or on the body. Illness can be sited in the emotions. Emotions reside in the gut and are felt in the gut as disturbances or pains. Illness can also occur in the relationships between the ill person and those around him or her, manifesting social distress in the body of the patient. Illness be located in the limbs, or the peripheral organs such as the kidneys, pain in which is often understood as evidence of anger at someone, for example. Finally, illness can happen in the core of the body, in the *manava* [heart-lung], the *to'ala*, the stomach, and in the brain or genitals. Along with these discrete sites, illness can have one of five causal models. Overexertion or overexposure to sun or heat is the most common organic explanation for illness. Social problems, including, but not restricted to crimes, anger, disobedience or lack of respect, and failure to show proper reverence to ancestors, are the second most common cause of illnesses among Samoans. *Aitu* illness, that is illness or impairment caused by *aitu* attack, can be divided into two forms. One results from socially inappropriate behaviour, and the other from the capricious malice or anger of the *aitu* themselves. Schoeffel [1978:412-414] notes that *aitu* illness is more common among women, something explained by my informants by

the physical vulnerability of the internal organs, which are more readily accessible in women, through the vagina. Samoans also have a limited micro-organism causative model. These organisms exist in such places as the dew laden cloud forests which surmount the central mountain ridges of the islands and enter the body accidentally, usually causing problems in fluid flow or, if there are sufficient numbers, forcing organs from their normal positions. Finally, there are the *ma'i palagi* or European diseases, such as cancer, diabetes or flu, which are caused by germs, a kind of senseless and de-socialized causation which occurs somewhat randomly. I say somewhat, because a predisposition to *palagi* illness is often read as evidence of some social problem, which is at the heart of the illness event.

Illnesses have paths through which the state of the body passes on its way from illness to health again. Depending on the child symptom cluster at the heart of the illness, these paths can take several forms. The most common is an intensification of symptoms, followed by the addition of new symptoms, followed finally by the return to a reading of body signs as normal. In Samoan illness paths, symptoms do not disappear so much as they change. Through the course of the cure, Samoans expect not only an intensification of the symptoms they have presented with, but also expect new symptoms to emerge as signs they are healing. This expectation of additional symptoms as signs of healing is reflected in the sale of over the counter analgesics in Samoa. While tablet forms of most common analgesic compounds are available throughout the islands, most

Samoans prefer analgesics in powdered bicarbonate of soda. I found this curious, because most people who I asked about their drug choices told me they disliked the taste of such products as Disprin, an ASA based bicarbonate compound imported from Australia. However, they went on to explain that they could tell the Disprin was working because it made them belch. The sign of the success of the drug was not the elimination of the headache, which came with time as well, but the other symptoms the medication effected on the body.

The basic path of all illnesses is a return to normal activity and to normal body signs, even though in some instances these signs are impossible to distinguish from illness symptoms on casual observation. Phlegm is one such symptom. While normal phlegm production is considered a sign of health, where normal is understood as easily expelled and meeting certain criteria regarding colour and texture, illness related phlegm is defined mostly in terms of its relationship to some other symptom. It is not uncommon for someone to comment on a phlegmatic cough as a sign the person is very ill, and then to comment some days later on a cough which has, to all intents, not changed, as signalling the person is once again healthy. What has intervened in those several days is a path of healing in which the meaning of signs from the body, and the experience of that signalling body, have been transformed, by the person's progress along a route of cure.

The body, then, is closely attended to within a framework of understandings about how the body works. Illness is not simply an organic event

to which a model of the body is applied so much as it is part of living that model. Illnesses and symptom classes, while generally understood and generally shared, are experiential rather than a priori. Within this framework of possibilities, the processes of diagnosis and curing are carried out.

SEEING THE ILLNESS, MAKING WELL: DIAGNOSIS AND CURE

Understanding diagnostic practice is a cornerstone of much of the work in medical anthropology. In the arts and disciplines of diagnosis, the web of embodiment is at its most crucial and, perhaps, most explicitly complex, because in the process of diagnosis, the entire range of practices through which the body is constituted are enacted in a space of emergency and concern. The imperiled body is not simply an object deformed by disease or injury. As Lewis [1977] has noted, the ill body in many societies is a mimetic dialogue between the organic wellbeing of the person and the social wellbeing of the community. In many societies bodies alone do not get sick: persons, communities, and relationships are implicated in the illness that afflicts the organic body. This is the case in Samoa. Illness is always about a concern for the wellbeing of the community as a whole. "Ken can never be well again" a woman told me after a young cousin was taken to the National Hospital after collapsing while climbing a coconut tree. "His family has a sickness from all their anger, and they need to take this medicine instead if Ken is going to stop being sick." Although their models of illness

aetiology allow for random, unmotivated disease, it is in the process of diagnosis that this determination is made. What is always at stake in diagnosis is not simply the body of the patient, but the body of relations and obligations, which may be diseased as well. The clinical encounter in Samoa is not only about Ken's pneumonia, but about the preservation of society by the protection and preservation of relationships among persons. The clinical encounter in Samoa is an act of profound importance in enculturating the world.

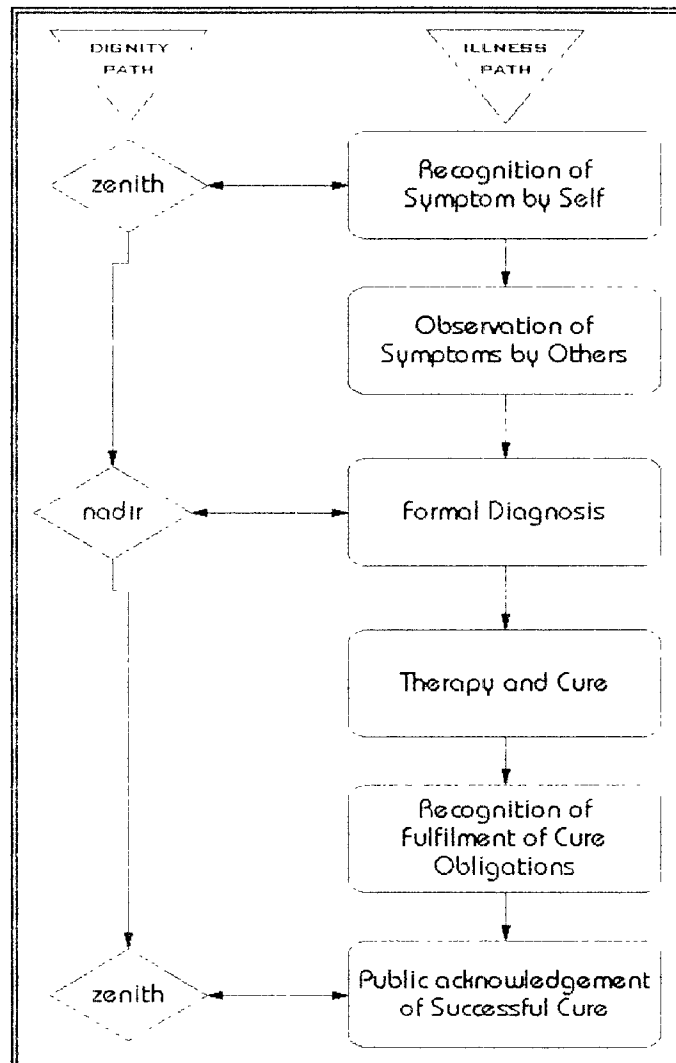


Figure 5.4 Illness and Dignity: The Path from Health to Health

Diagnosis is the third step in the path illnesses take, illustrated in Figure 5.4. Illnesses are first recognized by the potential patient, in their attention to their own body signs. However, because illness may impugn the quality or nature of a person's social behaviour, symptoms of possible illness are often initially

ignored. The second phase, which marks the public start of an illness event, comes with the observation of symptoms by others. Efforts to avoid the observation of symptoms by others cannot be overstressed. Illness can directly, and negatively, affect a family, in their relations in the wider *'āiga*, or village. It is during this phase that self care is often initiated, either with herbal concoctions, or over the counter drugs. There is an advantage in keeping the illness secret, and treating it in silence and privacy. The presence of an alternative, non-blaming healing tradition, the Western hospital and clinic based system, allows for greater secrecy and deception than was, perhaps, possible in the past. Indeed, because most over the counter medications effectively mask symptoms, it is possible to be very sick, and have no one observe this fact. The regular, and extensive use of over the counter analgesics, antihistamines, decongestants, antipyretics, and antitussives, because they can eliminate symptoms, are examples of the masking possibilities which Western medicine has afforded. One man put it quite explicitly when he came to borrow some pain tablets from me. I asked him what was wrong, and he told me he was sick, but wanted no one to know until he had a chance to return the rugby shoes he had stolen from another man's house. Denying illness is an important aspect of the illness process in Samoa. Through denial, or other efforts to hide symptoms, the ill person is seeking to preserve his social integrity and dignity.

An illness which does not respond to this treatment, or which is obviously serious enough to warrant more skilful intervention, is classified as to its cultural

origins, as either *ma'i Samoa* or *ma'i palagi* [European disease], and the patient is either brought to the National Hospital, or local clinic, for Western care, or a *fofō* is called in to examine the patient's illness and social behaviours. Today the presence and accessibility of Western care is less important for its control of infectious disease, as it is, in the eyes of my informants, for providing an avenue of diagnosis and care which avoids the social perils of having a sick person call into question the propriety of a family's social relations. Many of my informants were quite explicit in explaining that, initially, they prefer to treat almost any disease as amenable to *palagi* care, to avoid calling in a *fofō*, whose presence and diagnosis risks family honour and status.

Formal diagnosis by *fofō*, the third phase in the illness path, takes many forms. The first step in all diagnosis involves a close scrutiny of the patient's body, to determine what the outward signs of the disease may be. This may be as simple as examining all parts of the body's surface for illness signs, such as skin eruptions, blisters, or swellings. It may involve an examination of body fluids, including small amounts of blood drawn from the foot or hand, and close examination of faeces, urine, saliva, or menstrual blood. Limbs are often manipulated to examine their flexibility, and range of motion, and orifices may be superficially probed for obstructions or malformations. A more formal kind of physical examination, the exploratory massage, may be undertaken to map the location and size of the internal organs. This massage can be very detailed, and take several hours to complete. At the end of all this, the *fofō* has a complete

picture of the state of the body and its parts.

Throughout this physical examination the healer maintains a running interrogation of the patient, and family members, who offer their own observations on the patient's condition and behaviour leading up to the onset of the illness, and during its initial progress. The clinical encounter is a public event [Figure 5.5 - next page], one in which entire families, and even large segments of villages, may take part. It is carried out in the home of the sick person rather than at some special healing location, although in the case of minor ailments, patients may travel with family members to the home of the *fofō*, out of courtesy to the age of most successful healers.

This physical examination, and organic clinical history, is the first step in what, in most cases, is a two part process of diagnosis. Unless the illness can be immediately determined to be organic in nature, such as those caused by Samoan micro-organisms, injury, or overexertion, the healer concludes the clinical investigation with a detailed cross examination of the patient, and his or her family. The *fofō* inquires about the patient's relations with those around them, about their behaviour toward others, both living and dead, and about any misdemeanours, or more serious offenses, any member of the family may have committed. What is observed and interpreted in the clinical encounter is not simply the actual manifestations of illness on the body, but the connections between these manifestations, and social problems in which the patient is actually involved or at least implicated by relationships with others. From this intensive

clinical examination, the healer makes a preliminary determination of the nature of the disease, and its likely cause, and begins the plan of therapy the patient and family will need to follow. Figure 5.5 [next page] illustrates the findings a healer may make with respect to a disorder of the *to'ala*, the stomach-heart of Samoan anatomy.

What the healer looks for is disorder, not only within the body, but in the social world around the patient. The healer is looking for things out of place which are no longer following the appropriate paths of humility, deference, and communal responsibility. The healer looks for this, not only in the relations of flow and movement within the body, but also in the relations of obligation and compliance around the imperiled person. The other participants in this examination engage in a process of negotiation, and sometimes open contestation, of the direction both of the questions asked, and the diagnosis which is arrived at. Family members will deny or contest assertions of malfeasance on the part of either the patient or other family members, will offer different diagnostic suggestions in response to the *fofo's* clinical observations and, in extreme cases, will actually deny the accuracy of the diagnosis, and seek another healer for consultation. In the Samoan clinical encounter, a complex process of arbitration and interpretation is engaged. The expert cannot impose determinations. The information adduced in the examination is subject to different

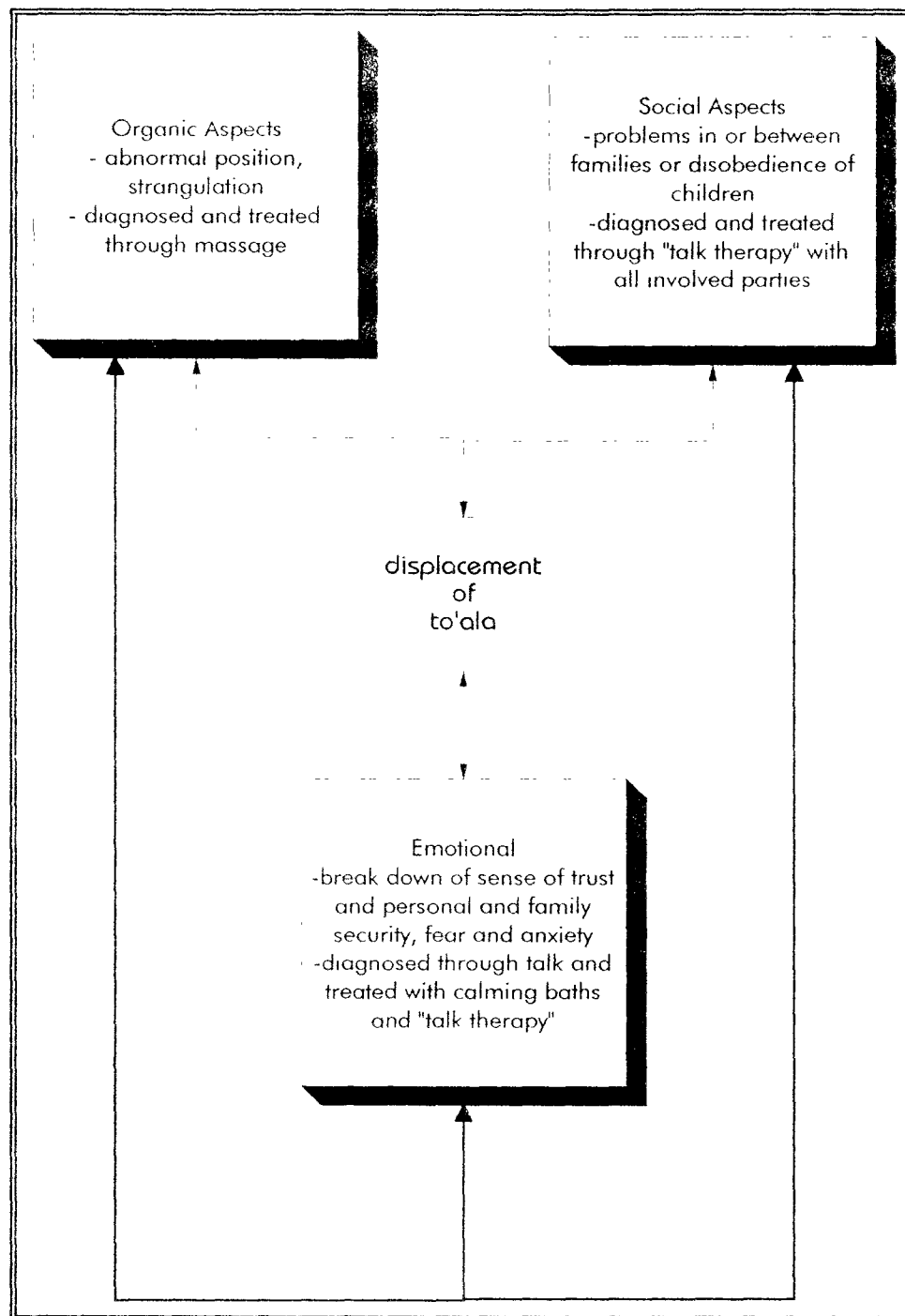


Figure 5.5 Clinical determinations of an episode of *to'ala* sickness.

analyses and readings, and the process of the specific disease is literally invented, and reinvented, in an effort to arrive at a successful diagnosis, that is, a diagnosis with the greatest likelihood of effective cure, with the least damage to the patient and the relations around them.

The process of diagnosis is the riskiest moment in Samoan embodiment. In Figure 5.4 [page 30 in this copy] , I have represented a fluctuation in the level of dignity attached to the body in the illness event. At the point of diagnosis, the body is at its lowest ebb of social dignity, because it, and the people around it, are at the greatest risk. The objective of this entire process is to begin to return the body to an appropriate state of dignity and status, in itself, and in its relation vis à vis others.

Anatomy, symptoms, etiological hypotheses, and surveillance conjoin in the clinical encounter. The observers, both healer and the patient's relations, are looking for changes and extraordinary signs. They are looking for extreme expressions of normal body functions, body motion, and of behaviour. Restraint and not 'showing off', are at the core of Samoan humility, and in a very real sense, the clinical encounter is looking for a lack of humility in the body, that is, a body which is exaggerated in its expressions and substances. The healer is also looking for a lack of strength, because a body that cannot endure the normal rigour of daily life is a dangerous body. It can no longer be depended upon to meet its obligations, and comport itself with modesty and propriety. Healing, which continues the process of clinical investigation while restoring the body to its

humble, dignified, stillness, addresses, in the enactment of the patient's progression back to health, a re-incorporation of these core precepts of dignity, humility, and strength.

Once a diagnosis and cause is agreed upon, the patient and the family begin the process of treatment determined by the *fofō*. Because aetiologies vary, there are several paths this treatment may take, although the objective, the restoration of orderliness and propriety, is the same.

Aitu illnesses, whether organic disorders, displaced organs, or full blown *aitu* possession, require the most detailed form of healing, because not only must the physical condition of the body be addressed, the offended *aitu* must be appeased [Goodman 1971; Mageo 1991]. While there are some formulaic recitations a healer may use in dealing with particular *aitu*, these are quite rare, usually only applied to the more vicious and powerful *aitu* known as *teine*, or to specific kinds of ailments in which *aitu* are always implicated [Moyle 1974:163-177]. Most often the treatment of *aitu*-caused illnesses involves apologizing to the offended spirit and promising not to commit the offense again in the future. The apology may be verbal, and may be either public or private, depending on the severity of the illness, and the danger the *aitu* poses to others. It may also take the form of clearing away weeds from a site where *aitu* are known to live or travel, or cleaning the grave site of an ancestor who has been offended by lack of attention. In extreme cases, regular obeisances, such as prayers, may be ordered for both the patient and their family, along with restrictions on going to

certain places or engaging in certain activities, such as courting or gardening in particular plantations, or sections of bush.

Along with these obeisances and apologies for *aitu* illness, Samoan curing of all types of illness includes two other forms of organic treatment: massage [*fofō*] and herbal cures combined with psychological counselling [*taulāsea*]. Forsyth [1983:151-154] describes these two types of treatments as specialists, but both my advisors, and MacPherson and MacPherson [1990:116-120], insist that the terms refer to types of healing practices, and not to distinctions between practitioners themselves. The term *fofō* is also used as the generic term for traditional healers in everyday conversation, the more formal and proper term *taulāsea* used in formal conversations. No one I spoke with distinguished healers by type of treatment used. Rather, healers were distinguished by the illnesses they were best at treating. While some *fofō* use either massage or herbal/counselling techniques exclusively, this is a function of the illnesses they are best at treating, and not of specialist classes of treatment experts. All *fofō* are versed in both methods, as are most adult Samoans.

Massage has as its objective the restoration of organs to their proper location, and the opening of pathways for substances and energy to flow freely through the body. Massage is intensive and often quite painful, a form of visceral chiropractic, in which organs are moved often considerable distances within the gut. The art of massage in Samoa is very well developed. An experienced healer can massage the uterus or womb in such a way as to prevent pregnancy.

returning it to its normal position when the couple determines to have another child. Samoan massage experts have considerable skill in setting broken bones, in freeing up fluid accumulated in the lungs, and in helping patients to pass gall and kidney stones. Samoan massage, as MacPherson and MacPherson [1990] and Forsyth [1983] note, is recognized by Western trained medical personnel as being remarkable for both the range of conditions it treats, and for its effectiveness. I was told by two doctors visiting from New Zealand that it is not uncommon for *fofō* experienced in bone setting massage [*fogau*] to be flown to New Zealand and Australia to help train doctors and therapists in these techniques. While in Samoa, I fractured a bone in my wrist. I was treated with massage while the injury healed. On my return to Canada, I had my wrist examined by my personal physician, who remarked on both the seriousness of the fracture, and the skill with which it had been set and treated.

The other form of treatment involves a combination of herbal concoctions, the application of leaves or other plants to body parts, and psychological counselling or 'talking cures' [Kinloch 1985; MacPherson and MacPherson 1990:202-203]. The herbal treatments, almost all of which are derived from common plants which require no special skill at harvesting, are for the most part emetics and purgatives of varying degrees of strength [Cox and Banack 1991:147-168]. The healer may bring these ingredients to the diagnosis, and begin preparing them while detailing any other steps the cure must take. They may also simply leave the family with instructions for where to gather the plants,

what proportions and what methods to use to prepare the medicine, and how to administer it. Gathering is usually left to older children, while preparation and administration is carried out by the patient's mother or other close female relative, except for treatments of the male genitals, which are self administered. The progress of the treatment changes as the disease changes, and instructions will be left for what changes to make in the medication during the course of the illness. In most cases, the healer does not follow the progression of the cure, unless called upon by the family during the course of the treatment because of problems, the manifestation of symptoms not expected or, in some cases, for public reassurance that the cure is proceeding properly.

At the same time that the healer prepares his or her medication, or prepares the instructions, he or she begins the process of the 'talking cure' as well. This is most often a kind of lecture on proper behaviour, peppered with questions to the patient, or the patient's family, about what proper behaviour and proper values are. The patient and their family are enjoined to apologize for even the smallest misdemeanour, and to recognize the importance of social responsibilities, even in cases which have a simple organic cause. As one healer explained, "even *palagi* sickness is sometimes a punishment or an attack because the person has been bad". After the initial diagnostic encounter, the talking cure is carried on by the family, who are enjoined by the healer, to remind the patient of their responsibilities and the basic values of *fa'a Samoa*. In some instances the patient and the family may be required to seek additional

counselling from their Christian minister, or to take time during the *sā* [the evening prayer] to discuss this illness, and to remind themselves of the proper way to avoid such events in the future.

The ultimate path a treatment will take depends on the linkages between symptoms and causes, and the progress of healing is closely monitored by the family for the effectiveness of the cure. Quiet, stillness, and a cool space to rest are strictly enforced, and all villagers will endeavour to restrain their activities around the house of a sick person, thus directly participating in the curing process. This participation is not only kindness, but an expression of the interest all community members have in the success of the cure. "When Ioane was ill during the independence holiday, we were all worried because we wondered why God was angry at [our village]" one man told me. "He had hurt the little girl which was his bad thing, but he had done it here, and so it was our bad thing too."

Dignity and order are finally restored when the patient emerges in daily life as a normal and full participant in his or her obligations. The long process of the cure, its slow progression through new symptoms, are all signs of a return of dignity and harmony. The family, and even the entire village, return to a state of propriety, with the return of the patient as a healthy functioning body deployed with modesty, decorum and strength. The patient is not isolated, and there is no secrecy surrounding the illness and its progress, once it has been publicly recognized. There is no special kingdom of the sick in Samoa [cf Sontag 1978].

Illness in Samoa is about protecting, preserving, and restoring good and

proper bodies, individually and in their social relationships, through surveillance and discipline. In Samoa, illness is also talk. The most common topic of conversation, even with almost total strangers, is the state of one's health, or the health of the people you know. Illness talk, wide ranging and unrestricted, maintains the body by the discipline of its questions and comments. Illness talk makes the healthy body a disciplined, surveilled body, as readily and actively as banishment or toilet training or learning the appropriate meanings of food.

CONCLUSION: HEALTH AND THE WORK OF PROPER BODIES

Health and illness in Samoa are practices of vigilance and discipline. They entail on all bodies a rigorous, though never rigid, set of obligations and expectations about how and why the body works the way it does, and how these aspects of the body's functioning connect with obligations and responsibilities at the heart of social life. Health is a strategy, a form of deployment, and a process of attention, in which the body enacted is also the body queried and examined. As such, health is a form of fundamental awareness in which the practices of embodiment are implicated at the very core of participation in the world.

Health and illness in Samoa are part of a larger, and always evolving concern for the fundamental precepts of dignity and humility and strength. Illness diminishes dignity, renders the body special and immodest, and saps endurance, depleting the body's ability to move with good and proper authority and honour. In linking the practice of healthy bodies to the wider concerns of appropriate space, and the proper deployment of reverent still bodies in the social field, illness

empowers each member of the Samoan community to directly effect the proper course of society, and to sustain and strengthen the social whole through the process of strengthening the body, endangered by illness and injury.

Pita recovered very slowly, following intervention by three *fofō*, each with special skills in different aspects of the *aitu* attack which had debilitated his body, and threatened his life. Over the days which followed his attack, members of his *'āiga* spent long hours examining their relationships with his mother and his brother, offering apologies and gifts as signs of concern and consideration. A cousin who had delighted in accusing Pita of being a *fa'afafine*, because, he said, Pita's muscles were too soft and weak, presented him with a new pair of rugby shoes, which cost him almost three month's wages. The Methodist minister exhorted the families of Pita's *'āiga* to show special care in all their relations. Pita's mother and brother visited relatives, bringing small gifts, and making apologies for any slight they might have inflicted. Eventually, Pita emerged from his house, thinner, and physically weaker, but, socially, he was stronger than he had ever been in his life.

Endnotes Chapter 5

1. MacPherson and MacPherson [1990], provide a detailed and very comprehensive catalogue of ideas about anatomy held by Samoan healers, models which they note are generally shared by most Samoans. My own data, based primarily on interviews with patients, confirms this observation.
2. See, for example, Friedson [1970] and Stein [1990], for analyses of the sociology of medical expertise in the United States.
3. Perhaps the closest previous approaches to the body come to collapsing this fragmentation can be found in psychoanalysis, since it proposes that each person is persistently engaged in their own psychoanalytic surveillance and evaluation. The professional psychoanalytic encounter is thus only one kind of psychoanalytic field, one which taps into the overall flow of invention which psychoanalysis seeks to clarify. See for example Freud [1989] and Anzieu [1989].
4. *Aitu* can also enter the body through the armpit and the mouth. They rarely enter women's bodies through the underarm, however, since the vagina is an easier passage. However, in some Samoans' understanding, *aitu* enter men's bodies through the armpit because the underarm area 'mimics' the pubic region of women's bodies on the bodies of men. I heard this explanation often, but it was one of the more hotly disputed ideas about anatomy. Most people told me the underarm is a particular easy passage into the body, because the skin is weak in this region so that sweat can easily flow out of the body. Most people also agreed that the *aitu* rarely use the underarm to enter women's bodies.
5. One exception is weeping at funerals, by both men and women. This is considered reasonable since mourners are understood to be, at least temporarily, mentally deranged, and incapable of control.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light

A serpent swam a vertex to the sun
- On unpaced beaches leaned its tongue and
drummed.
What tountains did I hear? what icy speeches?
Memory, committed to the page, had broke.

"Passage"
Hart Crane

During the first week of my stay in Samoa, I became ill from drinking untreated water. I spent several painful days vomiting and passing out before my body finally accustomed itself to the organisms present in the water. This experience, so early in my fieldwork, had important consequences for the direction I have taken in this text. When, during those first few days, I lay sick in my house, I was being drawn into a set of practices which rendered my body unknowable by the standards I had brought along with my notebooks and computer and questions. When Pai, my late Samoan mother, brought me undercooked eggs and tea to treat my nausea, she was initiating me, without knowing it, into a spiralling confusion about what something as simple as curing a stomach ache could mean for understanding culture.

Of course, I did not know that at the time either. As I lay there wondering when I would vomit again, I knew exactly what was going on. I knew what Pai's eyes meant when they twinkled at the news my bowels were once again working, and I knew what the tea and sugar was for. I understood why Sene, my ten year old Samoan 'brother', kept asking me if I was sad. It was only later, as I reflected on those long days, and what my Samoan friends had told me about their own bodies, that I realized everything I thought I knew was either insufficient or wrongheaded. The pain, interests, and care I had experienced were veiled by a way of relating to my body, and to my experiences, which was often completely at odds with what those around me were doing to my body and what they assumed I was experiencing. It was not simply a matter of having different information, or even different expectations, which was certainly true enough. What I came to realize was that we had different kinds of bodies altogether. The very nature of the body my family and friends were watching and treating was different from the body I was allowing to be watched and cared for. We were both bodies in the world, but we were in the world in different ways.

Later, Charlie would sit with me at night, answering my questions, and probing my reasons for asking them, making me rethink them even as I put them to him. Then he would simply stop me short and ask me why, if I really wanted to know, I didn't just do it. He was being practical. It all made sense to him, from the strengthening I would experience if my mother had taken me to be circumcised as a boy, to the dignity I received and expressed each time I ate the guest's portion

of a pig at a formal meal or *fa'alavelave*. I took a long time to understand that asking questions about Charlie's acts of intimacy and friendship toward me removed me from understanding that when he lay his head on my lap and told me filthy jokes about pigs and the minister's wife, he was engaging me and my body in a web of connection, support and meaning. It is that web of contact and complicity that I have explored in this thesis.

Intimacy, participation, and collaboration: those are the things I was being initiated into with Pai's painful cure of for my nausea, or Charlie massaging my foot when I told him that sandals made my toes hurt. My body made perfect sense to them. It took me a lot longer. For a long time my body was engaged in a kind of conquest, trying to render down and contain the bodies around me with a common sense that did not fit. In the process of being engaged as a meaningful body by the Samoans I lived and worked with, I was being enticed into a different order of sense, pleasure, and obligation. I was being made to see, feel, and understand my own body in a different way. This thesis has been an attempt describe how this difference is accomplished in the practices Samoan's use to create their bodies in the world. The complicit presence of my own body, as I argued in Chapter one, can never be isolated from the processes of Samoan embodiment I have been describing.

In writing the ethnography of Samoan bodies I have presented here, I have constructed what Boddy refers to as "a kind of allegory based . . . on actual observations of human foreigners, but . . . put together to meet the demands for

cultural coherence which "the author" shares with [his or her] audience" [Boddy 1989:357]. I have not represented Samoan bodies, so much as I have described how those bodies are a process of representation, accounting, and experience. In a sense, I have analyzed Samoan bodies into existence as a metaphor for the process of embodiment Samoans themselves are engaged in. This text is a metaphorical speculation on how Samoans come to have and sustain meaningful bodies in the world, and a speculation on how these practices can be described and theorized.

In these remaining pages, I want to draw together some of the themes which have emerged in my descriptions and reflections on Samoan practices of embodiment in order to outline the preliminary framework for a model of embodiment.

Finding the Body: A Summary of Issues and Themes

In Chapter 1, I outlined what I see as the major problem with previous attempts to theorize the body. In most cases, these efforts have treated the body solely as something which is acted upon by forces of culture. Figure 6.1

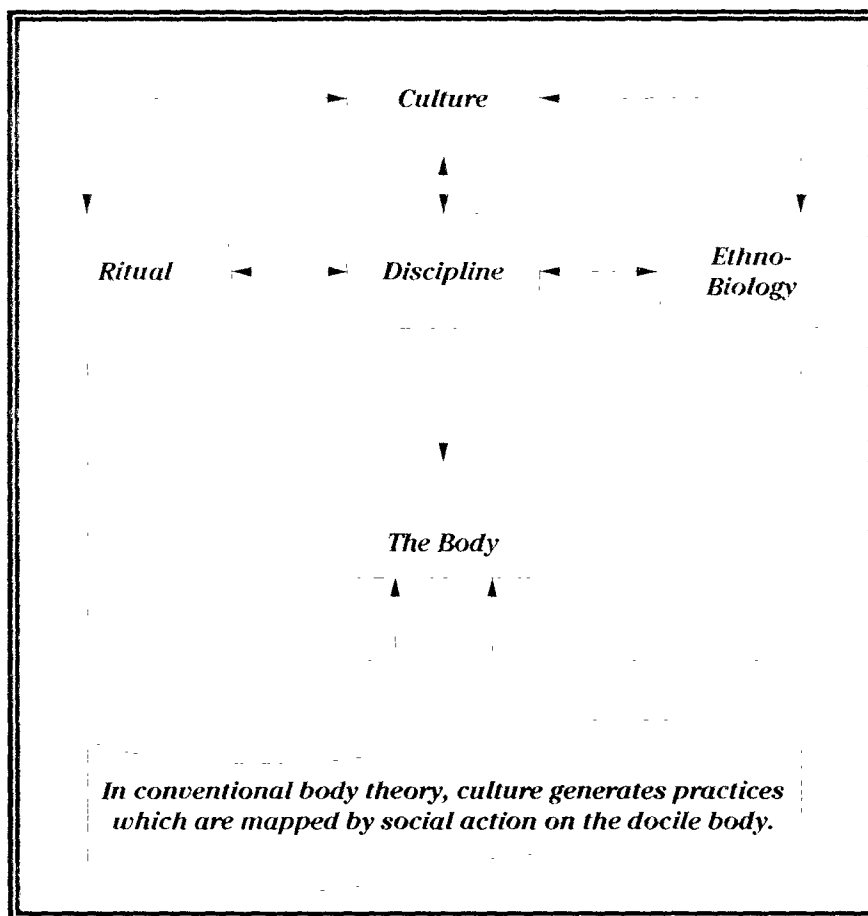


Figure 6.1 Conventional Body Theory sites the body as a thing done to by culture and its forces.

illustrates this tendency. As I argued in that chapter, the problem with such approaches is that it leaves unexamined the question of how, and under what

conditions, the body comes to be meaningful at all. The body, in these approaches, is just another object to be manipulated by culture, ignoring the more basic issue of how objects are made to be present in the world.

I argue that a model of embodiment must take as its focus the process of

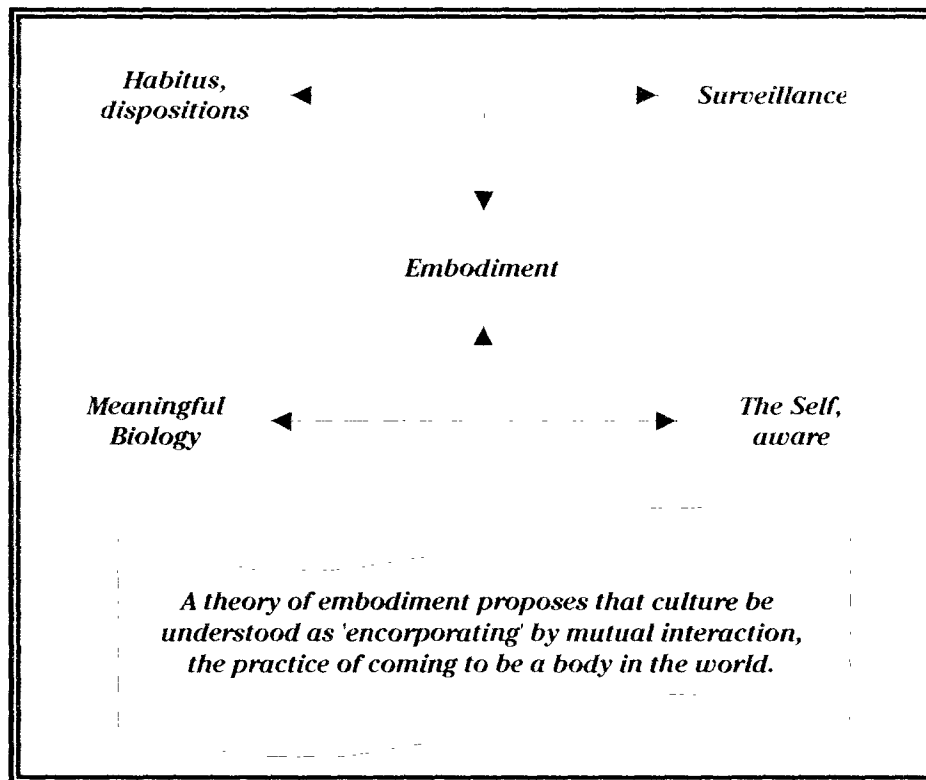


Figure 6.2 A Theory of Embodiment sites the practice, the enactment of the body at the centre of all that culture is, as action, in the social field.

generating a meaningful body through action, as one of the central practices by which culture is enabled and enacted. It combines the formulae "culture makes bodies" and "bodies make culture" into a single tautology: making bodies is about making culture which is about making bodies Figure 6.2

shows the combination of processes and forces which can serve as a preliminary framework of the issues and practices a model of embodiment needs to recover and analyze. It is this combination of processes, practices, and effects which needs to be addressed in the continued development of such a model, because the body is always a basic and unavoidable aspect of culture and action. Through this concatenation of processes, effects, structures, and influences, we can approach the body as a "memoir born of the dialectic between what is given to us and what we make of it" [Jackson 1989:18, citing Nietzsche].

This parallels Stoller's very recent comments, where he argues that studies of the body, such as Featherstone et al [1991], with their consideration of such subjects as

diet, appetite, consumer culture, martial arts, aging, Nietzsche, and human emotions . . . are topics worthy of embodied reformulation . . . [but they] do not take us much beyond the body-as-text, a metaphor that strips the body of its smells, tastes, texture and pain [1994:637].

Culture, I am suggesting, is not a story told with the body. Rather, it is a story told through the body. More importantly, it is a story we tell because of the kinds of bodies we come to have as participants in the active process of constituting the cultured world around us. With Stoller, I argue for rigorous, critical attention to the cultural limits on body sensation, and the culture generating effect of sensation itself. Whether the taste of food, the flash of embarrassment when a brother sees his sister bathing, or the emotional contentment a *matai* feels when he takes his portion of the pig at a formal meal, I argue that moving beyond the limitations of previous approaches to the body needs to take into account that crucial circular

relationship between the body and culture which

governs all forms of incorporation, choosing and modifying everything that the body ingests and digests and assimilates, physiologically and psychologically [Bourdieu 1984:190, cited in Stoller 1994:637].

It is this relationship of interpenetrating cause and effect which demands a model of the body that moves beyond its simple narrative aspects, as one of the many stories culture tells, by siting the body as a sensual centre, in and through which culture is experienced and enacted.

Let me review some of the ground of embodiment in Samoan body practice, but with a reassertion of a key point which has run through this text. Is what I have been describing here nothing more than a catalogue of socializing effects, a set of learned responses which members of a society incorporate in the sense of wiring them unwittingly into their flesh? In the preceding chapters I have assiduously avoided the word 'belief', because I feel the concept of belief dichotomizes knowledge into truth and reality, and obscures the active process of knowing through which the world is rendered sensible. Belief is a judgement of truth, and a test of reliability and value. It may or may not direct or determine action, and it is always a wilful act of evaluation. Knowing, on the other hand, is an understanding, that is, a direct engagement with the world, that experiences and explains it simultaneously. While it is possible to no longer believe something, as in no longer believing in the tooth fairy, it is never possible to "un-know" something. Once understood, the world is inexorably different from what it was, and even as understandings shift and change, the effect of understanding is

always the same. The world is, inextricably, what we know it to be. We can never not know something we have known. My argument in this text has not been an argument about beliefs, but about understanding and knowledge. Samoans do not "believe" in the *to'ala*, they experience and know it. They do not believe that space is ranked according to a measure of dignity and visibility, they experience it as such. Each time they walk or talk, they are enacting this knowledge. To call this "belief" is dismissive and ethnocentric in the extreme. There is no test of truth against which knowing can be measured, because knowing is not about truth. It is about being, and being sensible, in a world we make sensible by knowing it.

An example might illustrate this more clearly. In the final movement of Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata, the main theme is restated in the final pages, played in double time. The physical act of playing this many notes is demanding and complex. It involves the pianist "wiring in" through practice, the necessary movements of her hands, because were she to "think" about the moves required, she would not be able to play the notes at their proper speed. At the same time, she has incorporated into her "wired in" ability to play these passages, assessments of an aesthetic, expressive nature. She performs the sonata, not simply as a series of fast manipulations of piano keys, but as an expressive act. The sonata has become embodied, in the sense of being experienced, through the body of the pianist. She does not believe in the movements needed to make the expressive statement she will make when she performs this piece. She knows it, incorporating an understanding of the aural dynamics of the concert

piano, and the synæsthetic relationships between sound, emotion, and touch, into the deployment of her posture, and the movement and pressure of her fingers. She becomes the sonata in a truly embodied form.

The element of learning, either of the Waldstein Sonata, or the proper way to weave a pandanus leaf mat, is essential to understand how anyone can, physically, do such things. However, understanding that learning process is not the complete story. Living the act of playing a Beethoven Sonata, as an enactment of an embodied experience of the world, needs to be scrutinized as much as the training which makes it possible. Every move of the *fofō's* fingers in examining a feverish child, or children playing in and around their houses in a Samoan village, I have been arguing, is an act of socializing the world by deploying a socialized body in it.

THE BODY ENCOUNTERED

The bodies of infants and strangers are problem bodies, because in the instant of their acknowledgement, they need to be recognized and codified for what they are, and how we can reasonably anticipate they will behave. In the process of pregnancy and infant recognition Samoans begin a lifelong practice of attending to the body, which not only realizes the expectations of meaning which can be nominally attached to any body, but instructs the newly observed body in the precepts of appropriate deployment through which it will enact itself in the world. We saw in Chapter 3.1 that certain basic notions about body substances, and their proper presence in the world, are embodied in the acts of sex, foetal

development, and in the treatment of the newly born infant, as it stumbles and cries under the constant attention of caregivers and onlookers. The developmental nature of the body, as something moving toward restraint and modesty as it achieves its final social form, is encoded in the treatment of the mother during pregnancy, with rules and concerns about protecting her own body in order to protect the final form of the child's body, and in infancy with the tolerance of noise, constant eating, and uncontrollable bowels, which characterize the first months of life.

At stake in these first efforts of attention is the laying of a ground of meanings within which the child can engage the world as a participant rather than a particle. Understanding the nature of body form and function direct the treatment of the child. As the child moves into its own space of awareness and complicity in embodied sociality, it does so with knowledge of the limits and expectations of the world around it, and the people with whom it connects. This 'preobjective' knowledge becomes the ground of engagement from which the child emerges, slowly, as fully human, and fully connected, in the co-operative mosaic of bodies conjoined in mutual construction. The combinations of semen and blood, the forcing of substances into and out of the infant's body, the way the child is held and manipulated in games and in caregiving, and the constant drawing of the child's attention to the enacted world around it, outline the limits of how that world can be known, and gradually direct the infant toward knowing the world, and their meaningful place in it.

THE BODY ENLIGHTENED

In the acts of learning the limits of appropriate space, and the bodies which can be deployed in the different kinds of space in which the Samoan child moves [Chapter 3.2], a different process is slowly enacted. It is one which begins to define the world through the physical act of the child's body moving in it.

Socialization connects lived space with body substances, manners of movement and noise, ways of seeing and being seen, and the dangers and comforts which culture attaches to space. The world in which the child moves becomes a world incorporated, that is, a world that contains his or her understanding and experience of modesty and humility, obligation and responsibility, and good and bad. In the socialization of lived space in Samoa, the basic concept of *lāaga*, socially bad or dangerous, becomes part of the child's very experience of its body as it moves through daily life.

I deliberately chose the word enlightened in beginning this section. In this process of incorporation through which the child becomes a formal and knowledgeable participant in the embodiments of everyday life, Samoans have a deep concern with the space of light, and the space of darkness. Enlightened space is the space of community, visibility, and co-operation, while the space of darkness is the space beyond the illumination of society, where individuals pursue individual desires and concerns. The child learns a fear of the dark in both a physical and metaphorical sense. It is a fear that is enacted by the ways the child comes to deploy its body. Physically, the child learns the dark is the

space of dangers, either from *aitu*, or from paths that become obscured in the darkness. It is the space of monsters, in a very real and physical sense. The child also learns that the dark is a space which puts at risk the very nature of who he or she is as an embodied person in Samoan society. To be out of view and hidden, and especially to purposefully seek invisibility, become laden with fear and concern. The child learns to seek the comfort of the light in the centre of the village. In this sense, the dark space outside of sociality becomes a persistent space of initiation and re-initiation. In its movement back and forth over these boundaries, the child comes to enact the embodied space which makes its body possible.

THE BODY ENRAPTURED

Play and work are two sites at which the full force of the process of embodiment is engaged in the life of any society. In play and work, the body is expressive and exploratory, extending itself wilfully into the world around it. Doing and being in the world are inseparable, connected in a single process of embodiment. Having a meaningful body structures and manipulates the world by incorporating the world into the body itself.

In Samoan play and work [Chapter 4.1], the world becomes a coded place of appropriate connections between pleasure and sociality. It is in work and play, from the complex acts of building a house, to the simplest act of a child playing under a tree during a rain storm, that the body sustains itself as a presence in the world. The village centre becomes the place of intersubjective play and

cooperation, while solitary play is reserved for the a-social periphery.

In work, and in play, and in this we need to include marital sex and sexual play, Samoans learn the need for the darkened periphery. They engage it in their individual pursuits, but they do so with an eye on the light they are leaving behind. The enactment of bodies in work, and in play, enacts the obligations of sociality and individuality in the demarcation of space that bodies doing different things embody in different ways. The child playing alone with his truck on an isolated village road, teenagers courting under bushes in the night, or boys working in solitude to clear away the weeds in the taro patch, are each embodying space with the manner in which they deploy their bodies, both in labour and pleasure. In the same way, brothers and sisters joking or dancing, husbands and wives eating together and discussing the day's events, or children inviting each other to share in their toys or their bags of potato crisps are deploying social space in the manners of their embodiments.

The body in work and play explodes the social field with its variations and simultaneous return to order and stateliness as it moves in and around the boundaries of the world that its actions create. The body of the playing child, the bodies of boys fighting along the darkened roads at night, or the bodies of *matai* deep in conversation over their morning tea, are each engaged in a similar process, however diverse the activities they pursue. They are making spaces within which the various expressions of the good and proper body can be deployed, by deploying their good and proper bodies within them.

THE BODY ENCOMPASSED

Discipline is never isolated from the body in rapturous deployment in the acts of working and playing. Indeed, discipline is always the energizing core of even the most mundane act of pleasure or labour in Samoa [Chapter 4.2]. Whether the inherent embodiment of discipline in the deployment of appropriate space, or the formal discipline of the arrangement of *matai*'s bodies in the fono, discipline and surveillance are fundamental to Samoan sociality. So basic is the pervasiveness of discipline and surveillance, that even in the darkest private spaces, where the necessary pursuits of individual bodies are encouraged, social forces in the form of *aitu* and ancestors, and the bodies deployed there themselves, extend surveillance and social control, so that nothing is ever completely invisible or hidden.

Discipline is about stillness, modesty, and quiet propriety. Acts of discipline, such as the arrangement of ranked bodies in the *fono*, the punishment and violence through which rules are enforced, and the way bodies become silent as they move through the spaces of dignity with which the body maps the world, have the effect of incorporating and reincorporating bodies and acts into the still order of the communal whole. When a child is beaten, or when the paramount *tulafale* calls out the house positions of the *matai* at a *fono*, the bodies engaged are not being marked as special or isolated bodies, but as the necessary bodies of orderly stillness which is the dignified centre of *fa'a Samoa*. The disciplined body in Samoa is not a docile one. It is an instigator which enacts in its

deployments the topography of propriety through which the Samoan body is experienced.

THE BODY ENDANGERED

And then people fall sick. In discussing illness and healing [Chapter 5], my primary concern was with the principles of connection between ill bodies and the world around them, and with the processes of illness which define bodies out of step, and seek to draw them back toward incorporation in the embodied sociality of the community. At stake in illness in Samoa, is the integrity of the enacted body, because illness endangers one of the most important sites of culture. Illness in Samoa also makes the body dangerous, because illness is never self-limiting, but always implicates those around the ill person. It enacts the cooperative core of Samoan sociality, and also engages the body in constant surveillance. Illness endangers propriety and dignity, not only for the body of the ill person, but for the socially meaningful bodies of those around it. Treating a headache becomes an act of restoring or sustaining dignity, as much as the formal speeches and exchanges at funerals or weddings.

Illness also illuminates and reinforces the experience of knowing which Samoans bring to bear on the world they live in. Processes of diagnosis and treatment, in restoring the orderly geography of the organs, the proper flow of substances into and out of the body, and the restraint on presence embodied in posture and motion, restate, in practice, fundamental understandings of the dignified nature of the social world. This enactment of dignity, whether in the

movement of the bowels or the strength of muscles or the proper consistency of semen, renders dignity inseparable from the lived experience of the body.

The ill body is a body engaged by processes of discipline in the same way as the body of the disobedient *matai* trussed like a pig and left on the *malae* to be ridiculed and reviled. Each in their own way endanger the community. Silence and stillness surround healing as the community watches its own slow restoration. So much is at stake in illness, that the world almost stops, held in abeyance until the healthy, reconnected, proper body returns. That Samoan diagnosis and healing is often simple and undramatic should not obscure the fact that, in the watchful eyes of the family and village as the *fofō* negotiates the diagnosis and outlines a cure, the most basic of fears about the dissolution of society are being expressed and monitored. Illness is the discipline of society as a whole, enacted in the body full of fevers or covered in sores or vomiting grey bile and blood.

Taken together, illness, tattooing, socialization, and the formal and informal enactments of proper bodies, express and create the key values of order and restraint, which characterize and energize *fa'a Samoa*. Throughout their lives, Samoans pursue a physical presence which enables them to participate in the world as meaningful, and suitable bodies. Figure 6.3 [next page] illustrates the practices which I have been describing. The body, imagined into social presence through the linked practices I have been calling embodiment, is at one

and the same time, an organic, objective reality, and a transient, culturally and experientially specific effect. When Jerry, a neighbour in Vaimoso, came out of

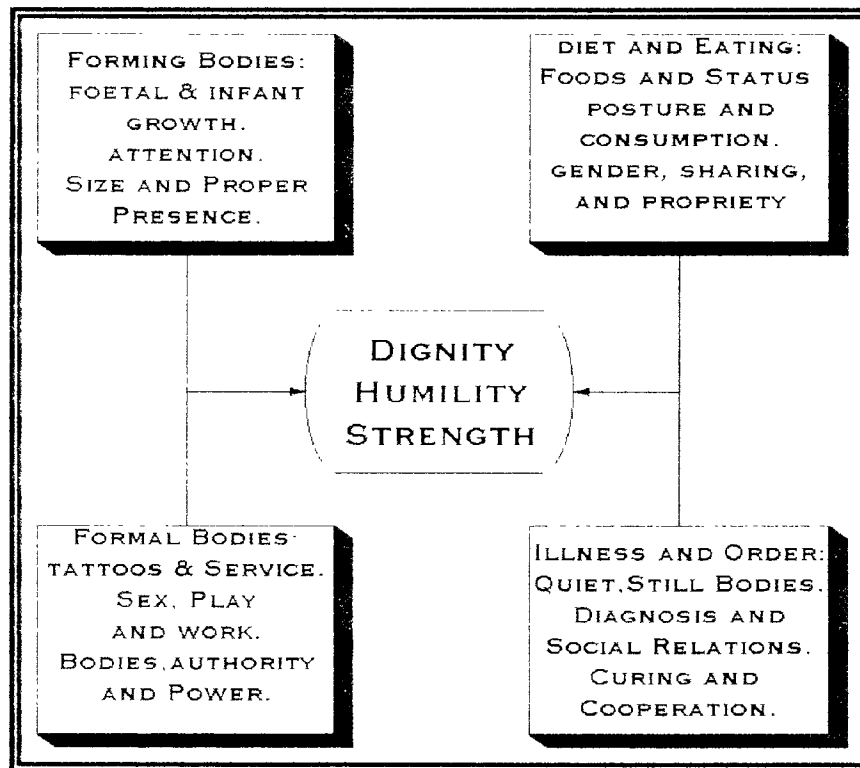


Figure 6.3 Summary of Associations between Cultural Ideals and Embodying Practices in Samoa

his house the morning after Cyclone Val had finally moved away from the islands, and danced quietly in the mud which had trapped the family truck, he was engaging in a dance that connected him to the meanings, restraints, and expectations which centred his body in the world. His dance expressed, in its grace and delicacy, a tentative but expansive joy. It was an act of memory, and projection, in which the experiences of the previous five days were contained and completed, in a poised reassertion of his commanding presence as a body which

enacts the world by being, meaningfully, in it.

THE PATHS THAT BODIES TAKE INTO THE LIGHT

I have argued, throughout this text, for a model of the body which connects each of these complicit, and interpenetrating, practices - learning appropriate space, and the appropriate kinds of bodies that can be present there: practices of discipline, submission, and surveillance, through which bodies are formed and sustained in daily action: the practices through which the healthy and the ill body are understood, recognized, and manipulated, not only in the prevention or treatment of illness, but in the observation of, and enactment, of good and proper bodies. Too often, the various sites of body manipulation have been treated in isolation, as limited practices. What this produces is a fragmented picture of the body as a set of discrete processes, losing sight of the lived quality of making bodies meaningful. What I have been arguing is that a critical model of the body as culture needs to explore the interconnections between these sites, as part of single process of being and doing a body. What I have been suggesting is a shift in the ground of body studies, from the exotic bodies of ritual, to the everyday bodies through which ritual is performed. Instead of a study of how institutions effect bodies, I have been arguing for a study of how bodies make institutions possible.

What I am proposing builds on accomplishments in other areas of body study, both within anthropology, and without. As I discussed in Chapter 1, recent advances in medical anthropology, such as Scheper-Hughes and Lock's [1987]

argument for a more critical approach to the combination of bodily practices within which illness is practised, in the anthropology of the body, such as Csordas's [1994] model of knowledge of body experience as a preobjective field of meaning which determines the possible meanings, and consequences, body experience can have in a particular culture, have opened up new areas of description and analysis in body study. In this thesis I have been exploring some of those areas and issues, in the context of a discussion of linked embodying practices in Samoa. I began my own study of Samoan embodiment, because of a dissatisfaction with the position of the body in anthropology. The body as an ongoing, lived, experience has been under-theorized in Anthropology. This thesis, building on works such as those discussed in Chapter 1, which explore a parallel dissatisfaction with the way the problem of the body has been addressed in anthropology, has suggested one possible direction a renewed interest in the body might take. The body has never been too far from the surface in anthropological studies, but its presence has been too long taken for granted. What this thesis, and the work of others which I have described, argues for, is a critical re-evaluation of the relationship between culture, making sense of the body, and making sensible the world which both the body and culture occupy. That the body is, and should be, a fundamental focus of anthropological study, is not in itself a new idea, as the range of body studies I discussed in Chapter 1 demonstrates. What is new, and I believe implicates a paradigmatic shift in the focus of the anthropological study of the body, is the recognition that in the

intimate, everyday practices of embodiment this thesis has explored, culture is understood, constituted, and expressed. Walking and talking, I am arguing, are no less important to sustaining culture, and creating lived history, than the imposition of orders of slavery or the enactment of ritual secrets. By shifting the focus away from special bodies, toward an approach to the body which centres on the most mundane of quotidian activities, I am arguing for an anthropology of the body which is no longer a special kind of anthropology. I am suggesting that whatever the focus of study anthropologists choose, approaching it through how, and to what effect, the body is implicated, can add insights, and new kinds of knowledge and understanding. To repeat Franks's [1991] comment, which I quoted in Chapter 1, what I am suggesting is an anthropology which approaches culture and society from the body up.

Throughout this text, I have been raising issues of how the body is meaningful in Samoa in order to draw your attention to some of the key components I believe, such a model of embodiment needs to address. I want to list some basic propositions around which I feel future work on embodiment should focus. I advance these propositions as a summary of the issues that the descriptions in previous chapters have raised, and as points of departure for future work in the field of embodiment study. They follow from one basic recognition I have been arguing for in this text: that self, personhood, identity, social structure, culture, and history, are inextricably linked to, and enacted by the body's presence in the world.

These propositions are ranked in the order of priority suggested by my descriptions and analysis of Samoan bodies in this text. However, the study of embodiment remains fragmented and incomplete, and this prioritizing of issues is preliminary and specific to the case I have been discussing here.

1. The body is not a thing, but a series of actions, guided by precepts and anticipations. It comes into meaningful existence through its enactment.

Any approach to embodiment must begin with what is done with the lived body itself rather than with an abstract, a priori, body of organic qualities, since even the organic nature of the body is subsumed by the practice of embodiment rather than the other way around. Embodiment does not respond to organic nature, but creates it. Unravelling the generation of anticipations and understandings of body function and form requires that the most fundamental components of the body, its organs and sensations, not be over-read as prior to experience, but be understood as aspects of experience itself. Body parts, that is, are cultural phenomena, and not simply the accumulated consequences of biology and evolution. As such, expectations about the body are a form of body knowledge inseparable from the experience of the body in specific circumstances and under specific constraints and conditions.

2. The body creates itself in its deployment rather than creating itself in order to be deployed. That is, the body is not simply a learned invented object, but a process of deployment which collapses object and action distinctions.

The body moves in space as a process rather than as a thing, insofar as movement is governed by the culturing action of making the body meaningful and

moveable. In this way, the body is never actually fully present in space because it is always being re-formulated in its deployment depending on the obligations, exigencies, and vagaries of its encounters with other objects. Understanding the body as a path rather than a destination clarifies the complex relationship between being and time, because it allows us to think of the body in terms of emergence rather than objectification. The enacted body is just that, a performance of itself.

3. The deployment of bodies is both determined by the meaning of space, and an act through which space is made meaningful.

A conundrum any theory of embodiment will need to address is the fact that neither the body nor space can be said to be prior to the other. Although it is possible to speak of the constraints space imposes on deployment, and of the meanings deployed bodies enact on space, the direction of causation in this relationship is circular. The body makes space, which makes bodies, which make space, in a constant re-enactment of each other which cannot be accommodated by conventional models of causality or intention.

4. There are no properties of the body which are self-evident and universal in any, but the most mundane sense of being.

The sexing of bodies exemplifies this issue. Bodies appear, universally, to be of two forms, that is, male and female. Other sexed deployments are read as variations on this given attribute. In contrast, I am proposing, along with Butler [1993], that sexing itself be problematized as being a function of enactment rather than organic pre-determination. This does not mean male and female bodies do

not exist, but that their experience as bodies is a function of embodiment rather than biology. Genitals are non-existent until practiced into existence as aspects of a deployed body, and as such, need to be read from their effects, rather than from their form. That is, like bowels or arms or eyes, they are not solely organic structures, but focal points of practices which invent them as body parts. A study of embodiment needs to address how this process is enacted, and what relationships it bears to such issues as ideology, roles, and power.

5. The body is an act of attention, and attention may take different forms, not only between cultures, but within them.

Attention refers not only to what can be seen, but also the manner in which things are seeable. Attention can focus on conformative similarity, digressive multiple meanings of single objects, or on the transgressive qualities of enacting objects in relationship to circumstantial exigencies. The practice of attention is a function of both individual recollections of cultural history, and the lived experiences of each body connected with other bodies in the historical field of a given society. However, defining attention as prior to the person attending to something is problematic, because it suggests an attending gaze beyond the body. This issue of where attention resides in the social action needs to be explored more fully, in order to grasp how rules of seeing effect embodiment, as well as how the practice of embodiment effects the generation of rules of seeing. That is, the issue is not that all societies have rules of meaning. Rather, the issue is how those rules are embodied and transformed.

6. The body is not only an object of discipline. it is an act of disciplining the world in which the experience of the body colludes with expectations of order and propriety to generate a good and proper universe.

I have stressed throughout this text that the bodies deployed in daily life in Samoa are co-participants in the structures of visibility and discipline which establish meanings and limitations on experience. The experience of discipline is not an imposition of docility on a waiting body, but an engagement between the world as thought about. and the world as experienced. This is another tautological relationship which needs to be exploded through more detailed analysis and consideration, because the issue of disciplined bodies penetrates all acts of embodiment, and makes embodied action possible. Excavating the disciplining effects of embodiment, as I have attempted here, is something a model of embodiment needs to pursue.

7. The body is not only thought about. Whatever the degree of rationalized distance with which we engage our body or its aspects, thinking about the body can never be extricated from the experience of our body, through which thinking is made possible.

The vast and complex literature of body image psychology [Fisher 1986] illustrates the complications of psychological approaches to the body, and to body awareness, drawing attention to a singularly difficult issue in embodiment. The act of thinking can never be isolated from the fact the body is a construction, a thing enacted through attention and awareness. Bodies and thinking about bodies are coterminous in the enactment of the embodied world, and must be deciphered in their connections, rather than dis-integrated into singularities. We

do not so much think with the body as we embody the act of thinking.

8. A model of embodiment should have as its initiating impulse a determination to dismantle, or at least destabilize, conventional approaches to society and culture, which have obscured the lived enactments of the body.

Assertions such as 'the body is not an object' or 'the body is not something we do things 'to', or 'the body is what we think it is', may seem to run opposite to what we intuitively know to be true. What I am suggesting here is that intuition is perhaps the compliment we pay to our biases. A model of embodiment needs to decentre intuition if it is going to get beyond the limiting expectations within which our own self evident bodies surrounds us. Earlier I quoted a student who suggested that the best definition of culture is that "culture is the act of creating culture." This is, for me, an insight which we should not lose sight of, in thinking of ways to approach and understand the body. What a model of embodiment needs to accomplish is the deconstruction of the comfort each of us feels in the body we know. A model of embodiment needs to make the bodies we are, that is, the bodies we bring to bear on the study of the body, problems in themselves. By subverting our own bodies, as practical enactments of a too taken for granted common sense, a model of embodiment can use the energy of our discomfiture to begin to unravel the possibilities for understanding the embodying experiences of others.

These are working propositions for a continued exploration of the practices of embodiment as a culturing process. They are suggestive and tentative aspects of embodiment, which I have drawn from the ethnographic account of the

Samoan bodies I have developed in this text. They point to questions which future research on the body as a comprehensive practice, may explore. For example, how do embodying practices change over time? If actual bodies, and ideas about bodies, are mutually determinative, what can produce changes in these practices? Are their modes of embodiment based, for example, on excess and restraint? I noted in Chapter 3.2, that Samoan's do not have a semen conservation complex such as those found in Papua New Guinea. Does this suggest that for at least some peoples in Papua New Guinea, embodiment is governed by a model of the body which is defined in terms of the preservation and control of body substances, and if so, can analyzing these models tell us anything about these societies as a whole?

The link between embodiment and identity, such as the appropriation of tattooing by younger Samoans as an expression of an emerging ethnic identity, suggests other issues which a comprehensive study of embodiment may explore. What, for example, is the relationship between ethnic, racial, or national identity and the experience of good and bad bodies? In what way do ideologies of identity effect how the body is understood and manipulated? As I noted in Chapter 1, this area of body study over the last decade has been both substantial and innovative. It is an area on which the development of a critical model of embodiment can continue to build. For example, can the work of Parker et al [1992], or Mosse [1985], on the link between nationalism, morality, political power, and ideologies of sexual identities, be extended to other areas of

connection between the experience of the body and the practices of personhood? Can Taussig's [1987] analysis of the embodying effects of slavery in South America, or Comaroff's [1985] discussion of the historical links between Christianity, racism, and illness, among the Tshidi of Southern Africa, be developed further, as a way of approaching the question of how personhood, not only in extreme forms, but in all its forms, is deployed by, and through, the experience of the body? Can we take Feldman's [1991] argument that the civil war in Northern Ireland has created special kinds of embodied experiences and understandings which perpetuate that war, because the kinds of bodies the combatants now have demand violence, and apply this insight to other aspects of history and experience in other cultures, and other times?

Another fundamental issue of identity, gender and sexing, is perhaps the key area in the study of the thoughtful body. How bodies are identified and sexed, what criteria are used to determine the sexual status of bodies, and the way in which body parts are defined or ignored in the embodiment of gendered roles, are some of the issues which the study of embodiment needs to explore.

Relationships between sexing and gendering practices, and other aspects of social life, such as the design of living space, the manner and rules governing talk, and the embodiment of ideals of gender form and meaning as expressed in men's and women's work, are some of the issues which a critical model of the body can begin to draw together into a unified field of study.

Finally, though not exhaustively, the question of what is, and is not, a

body needs to be addressed. In this text I have been talking about bodies as I recognize them. That is, tangible and human in form. In the study of embodiment, it will be necessary to define the limits of the field of study and observation, by determining the embodied meaning of non-human bodies such as Samoan *aitu*, ancestors, and gods. When we talk about bodies, are there bodies we need to add to our scrutiny and consideration?

These issues arise from what I see as a new path the study of embodiment can offer to anthropology. Such a study builds on anthropology's accomplishments as a discipline by taking it in new, and I feel, compelling directions.

The title of this chapter is poetic, a recollection of a line from a piece by William Blake. I chose it because, for me, the final aspect of the body which makes its study so challenging is that, not only is embodiment ongoing, it is instantaneous. In the moment we apprehend the presence of another body, we know everything we need to know about that body in order to see it. In an instant, we know its gender, its relative age, whether it is attractive or anomalous or a threat. The body before us is meaningful. In the time it takes light to fall on a body, to become visible, we have constituted it, and made it sensible, through our own embodied understanding of the world, and through the embodying efforts of the body before us, which make it observable, thoughtful, and suggestive.

Our ability to recognize and understand the bodies around us, and to present our own bodies in recognizable and comprehensible ways, are key

moments when embodiment crystallizes our being in the world. In those moments, we engage the accumulated practice of being a body in what I feel is the most fundamental aspect of culture - experiencing, through our bodies, what the world means. I have argued in this text for an anthropology of that moment of recognition and understanding, because grasping how that moment is possible can take us into the core of what culture is, as a collaborative presence in the world.

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