

'O LE TĀTATAU:

AN EXAMINATION OF CERTAIN ASPECTS
OF SAMOAN TATTOOING TO
THE PRESENT

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PREFACE

One hundred and fifty years ago the island cultures of what we call Polynesia were practicing tattooing as a distinct cultural characteristic. The custom was still at that time a popular, meaningful part of the Polynesian way of life. In some cases, it had legendary origins (as among the Maoris and Samoans, for example), in others it appears to have been adopted from neighbors at a later date, and thus has no legendary origins (as among the Niueans, for example).

Between the 1820's and the 1970's, the practice of Polynesian tattooing has disappeared from all of its former island homes save Western Samoa. The discovery of this intriguing fact compelled me to research Samoan tattooing to discover what I could of its origins and traditional practice, to determine to what degree acculturation has affected and is affecting it, and to ascertain why Samoans should have retained it, if possible, prognosticating its future continuance from present trends.

In order to accomplish these goals, it was first necessary to review available literature on the subject, and then to go to Samoa to interview all living practitioners of this ancient, once widespread Polynesian skill, as well as Samoans of various backgrounds--both tattooed and untattooed.

Brief references of varying significance and accuracy regarding the practice appear in many books of Pacific travels, and must be tediously sought after. The most detailed and more readily available accounts, however, may be credited to four people (Marquardt, Kraemer, Willowdean Handy, and Buck) who, writing from an ethnological viewpoint,

provide the best sources of information concerning methods and motifs employed between the late 1800's and the 1930's. Since then nothing significant regarding the subject has appeared in print. Furthermore, these accounts made relatively little effort to explain the purposes--traditional or contemporary--behind being tattooed, and unfortunately nothing was recorded of the number of practitioners then at work, or estimated concerning people living who had undergone the operation. Neither were any reasons given for the continuance of the practice in Samoa.

Interviewing the tattooers, and tattooed and untattooed Samoans in Samoa between June and November of 1972 proved to be a rewarding if time-consuming experience. First they had to be tracked down (which in the case of the tattooers was no easy matter, their being wherever their work was wanted), then their approval sought to my interviewing them, the good offices of an interpreter very often being depended upon to clarify and communicate questions and answers, as well as to take care of whatever ceremonial observances or forms of politeness were at times necessary to the smooth progress of my work.

Certainly it would be remiss of me not to document my deep gratitude to the various individuals whose especial contributions of time, talents, effort, and--in many cases--hospitality made the progress and completion of my work possible in a most delightful way.

Official assistance is to be credited to Tuiletufuga Henry Hunkin, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister of Western Samoa. My interpreter and companion of many trails and trials, Malu La'ulu Tulali, is remembered

for his great assistance and patience (at times).

All the tattooing masters (hereafter referred to as tufuga tatatau, and whose names are recorded elsewhere) are remembered for their fine cooperation and the sharing of their knowledge which has made the following chapters authentic and meaningful.

Many people, tattooed and untattooed, who answered my many questions without ire, thus contributing to the completeness of the record, are recalled for the valuable insights they provided into the state of tattooing in present-day Samoa.

And, most remembered of all because of the life they sustained by their generous hospitality throughout the five months of field research, the following individuals and families:-

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Soloasa & Penina & Family

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I. SAMOAN TATTOOING PRIOR TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Actual Origins

Prior to 1722, there appear to be no documented accounts of Samoan tattooing. Only legends provide an account of the origins of this practice. To date legends is, of course, very difficult without some recognizable point of reference in time. The Samoan legends which refer to tattooing all have one point in common, however: the Fijian origin for tattooing in Samoa.

If legends can be regarded as having some basis in fact--however small--then it can be said that the legends regarding the Fijian origin for Samoan tattooing possibly indicate a time when Fijian influence was of some marked significance in Samoa, perhaps as a result of conquest. Research I have done to date cannot substantiate this possibility more than to say that numerous references to Fiji and Fijians in legends and genealogies hint at a period when Fiji appears to have enjoyed an influence in Samoa somewhat akin to that of Tonga during her 300 years of occupation in Samoa, between about A.D. 950 and 1250. Watson (1918: 21) believes that this period of Fijian influence must have been "...in the dawn of known Samoan history...", or at some time prior to the Tongan period in Samoa when the "...Fijian conquerors are said to have established themselves in Manua'a..." Watson unfortunately does not record the source of his information concerning this Fijian period in Samoa.

Such Fijian influence, of course, need not have been because of Fijian conquest or superiority, but could also have been from close

association as a result of Samoa's ruling Fiji. A legend collected by an L.M.S. missionary the Rev. T. Powell in the mid 1800's and translated by the Rev. John Fraser (1897:69-70) expresses the Tui Manu'a's supremacy over Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji, at which period Fiji was in tribute to the Tui Manu'a.

All that can be said with certainty, however, concerning the actual origins of the practice of tattooing in Samoa is that insufficient data exists for any wholly definitive statement. The legends are unanimously explicit in ascribing a Fijian origin to the practice, but as to the period of this we can only speculate. If the custom were introduced between about A.D. 950 and 1722, a period before which there is scant legendary reference, extant legends make no mention of this. This may indicate an origin for Samoan tattooing prior to about A.D. 950. The cycle of legends in which the tattooing segments appear are in the nature of explanations of the lives of two goddesses and the origins of certain practices associated with them. This argues strongly in favor of tattooing being one of the earliest established traditional practices of the Samoan people, the antiquity of which practice being comparable to that of the epics of the gods.

An idea of how early tattooing may have been started in Samoa can be gained from the estimated date of its origin amongst the Maori of New Zealand--as ascertained from genealogical tables--which was about A.D. 300 (Anon., 1911:167). Since carbon dating has indicated settlement in Samoa by, at the latest, A.D. 9 (Ferdon, as quoted in Peoples and Cultures of the Pacific, 1968:100), this would not make a date for the introduction

of tattooing into Samoa prior to A.D. 950 either impossible or improbable. Indeed, it would make it highly probable that that was the case.

None of the tufuga tatatau interviewed had any idea of how long Samoan tattooing has been practiced. Offering various versions of the legendary origin, they were unable, beyond saying "a very long time ago," to relate it to any event or period in their known history and traditions.

Legendary Origins

For as many people as tell the legends, there are as many interpretations of them, each reflecting most favorably upon the 'aiga ("guild" or "family") of the teller. When, however, the contemporary versions of the legends referring to tattooing are compared with versions recorded last century, a basic pattern emerges, three significant points of which are that:

- (i) two women are the main characters;
- (ii) Fiji is the country whence tattooing was brought to Samoa;
- (iii) men are to be tattooed.

An additional point of significance nearly all of the versions make is that men are tattooed only because the women (often also described as goddesses) got the instructions they received in Fiji garbled on the way back, resulting in men being tattooed, whereas women were supposed to have been.

As has been mentioned, the legends concerned with the origins of Samoan tattooing are in most cases but segments in a cycle of legends concerning the lives of two goddesses and the origins of certain practices associated with them. My concern will be principally with these segments

regarding the origin of Samoan tattooing. Since Manu'a has long been regarded as the spiritual seat of Samoan authority, and is the place where the goddesses are commonly reputed to have been born, the Manu'a version shall be considered first. Also collected by the aforementioned Rev. T. Powell in the mid 1800's, and from the official legend-keeper of Manu'a, Tauanu'u, and his nephew Fofu (Fraser, 1896:170), this version is probably best regarded as the "official version". Following a precis of the Manu'a version, which is based on Fraser's translation (Fraser, 1896: 174-178), variations from other sources will be considered for comparison.

(a) The Manu'a Version

Female Siamese twins were born to Faimalie and Faitama'i at Foga'olo'ula, Ta'u, Manu'a. After certain events, their bodies became separated. As separate individuals, Taema and Tilafaiga, they began to do remarkable exploits, eventually killing some men. Lest this act be repeated upon themselves, they prudently decided to swim off to another place, using some type of floats.

At last they arrived somewhere in Fiji where they met two men with baskets whom they decided to ask for food. In conversation these men said they were named Tufou and Filelei, tattooing being their profession. Unfortunately what they were carrying was not food, but their tattooing implements. Since the girls had nothing better to do, they accompanied the men, who did not object, and who at last fed the girls.

Taema and Tilafaiga stayed in Fiji for a time observing the work of Tufou and Filelei whom they eventually asked to allow them to follow the occupation of tattooing. The men agreed and wished to celebrate their partnership with a feast, but the girls would not wait for that. Hastily

they departed with a basket of tattooing implements, a gift from Tufou and Filelei who had admonished the girls to mention them whenever they were tattooing. (A song does exist which commemorates these two men).

Eventually the girls reached Samoa again, landing at Falealupo, Savai'i, where at the house of a certain Na, they were well treated, (Tilafaiga decided to call herself Nafanua here, commemorating the kindness of Nafanua, or "Na's place.") Because of their hosts' kindness, the girls decided to liberate Na and his people from their oppressors. After some fighting, the girls vanquished Na's foes and from that time Taema and Nafanua were recognized as deities.

Nafanua counselled Taema to return to Tutuila to practice tattooing while she herself further engaged in wars. Nafanua's prayer at their separation requested neutrality for Taema, and war for herself. She then admonished Taema to think of her whenever she was busy tattooing, that thus her tattooing might prosper. Before she left, Taema was instructed to permit no wars to reach Manu'a and their parents.

Taema thus swam to Tutuila where she dwelt at Poloa, tattooing and refraining from war which became her sister's work.

It is often sung that men grow up to be tattooed, and women, to have children.

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Quite different in most details is the following, although, the significant points are still present. It was translated by the Reverend George Pratt, for many years a missionary in Savai'i, and was published by Abercromby (1891:460-463).

(b) A Savai'i Version

Taema and Tilafaiga, two Samoan goddesses who had been born joined together, swam off to "a land called Fiji" where they encountered tattooers. (Perhaps because they wanted to find out about the art of tattooing, all the women of Fiji were rallied against them.) Taema and Tilafaiga fought all the women of Fiji three times, each time repulsing them. The fourth time they fought, they decisively defeated the women, whom they chased into their dwelling cave, there finding a basket of tattooing implements.

The tattooing implements were taken to sea, Taema and Tilafaiga swimming with them to Samoa, singing "The women are marked, the men left." At one point, a clam shell used as a container of some kind fell out of their grasp, so they dived to retrieve it, thus being caused to muddle the song which ended up being, "Tattoo the men, but leave the women."

They finally reached Falealupo where they encountered two boys whom they sent to fetch their parents who informed them of the grievous conquered situation their people were in, whereupon Taema and Tilafaiga saw to it that this situation was reversed--which had been their intention in going to Pulotu (in Fiji) and bringing back the professions of tattooing and war.

Taema and Tilafaiga then went on to Safotu where the chief, Seve, was sleeping, it being night when they arrived. They awoke him to ask whether he wished to learn tattooing. He told them he had dreamt of their visit and then requested that they go with him to his friend, the

chief, Mafua, at Salelavalu. There at Mafua's place, because of Seve's courtesy, the women gave Seve some of the tattooing implements. Mafua was then instructed in tattooing, and told it was his right to drink kava first in any kava circle, but he did not accept this honor, so the women took away his occupation as tattooer.

Off they then swam to Upolu, where they encountered kindness of one fisherman named Pule to whom they taught their skill, enjoining him to partake first of any kava being presented, that his success might be assured.

Going inland along the mountain range, Taema and Tilafaiga, stopped at Olotapu mountain, inland of Safata. There a busy farmer, named Atapu, stopped his work to make the two travellers comfortable and to refresh them. They rewarded his consideration with instruction in tattooing. He proved their most worthy pupil to whom they entrusted their remaining implements.

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Kraemer (1902:120-121) records another version, but unfortunately does not provide any indication as to the part of Samoa he derived it from, although it would seem to be from Savai'i.

(c) The Kraemer Version

Two Fijian women journeyed to Samoa singing, "Tattoo the women and leave the men." Arriving near to Falealupo, one of them looked down and noticed a Tridacna mussel which they both dived down for, bringing it back into their boat.

After a moment one of the women asked the other what their song was supposed to be, to which the reply was, "Tattoo the men and leave the women." Thus reversed, that information was taken to Safotu.

At Safotu, a certain chief, Lavea, was sleeping when they called out to him that they had brought tattooing to his place, so they went on to Salelavalu, to a certain chief, Mafua. He also did not deserve the women's skill, so they went on to the house of the chief, Su'a at Safata. He received them kindly, made presentations to them, they, in turn, honoring him with the presentation of their tattooing implements and instructions concerning their use, and informing him he was to receive kava first in any kava circle.

The Fijian Proof

Acquaintance with the legend in its various versions all purporting a Fijian origin for Samoan tattooing, makes one immediately suspicious of the veracity of any part of the legend--especially that part--because the Fijians are commonly darker-skinned than the Samoans, a physical characteristic which definitely makes tattooing less likely to be part of Fijian custom. Indeed, Berthold Seeman, on a fact-finding mission to Fiji for the British government during 1860 and 1861, felt it was strange for Samoans and Tongans (who possessed more sophisticated forms of tattooing) to ascribe to Fijian tattooing an origin older than their own (1862:115).

As it happens, no one has hitherto made a scholarly exploration of the possibility that the Fijian origin claim just might have some basis in fact, thereby providing some proof to substantiate it. Thus it was with great delight that, after a brief search, I discovered several such "proofs."

The earliest reference to tattooing in Fiji is Thomas Williams' (1860,1:159). "Genuine tattooing," he says, "is only found on the women" (my underlining). It was all but obscured, however, by the liku (short, stranded fibre skirt) worn by them. He states that Ndengei, the principal Fijian deity, ordered that women be tattooed on pain of punishment after death if they neglected to do so. Called gia by the Fijians, and confined to women, the practice--employed by old women--involved " . . . an instrument called a 'tooth', consisting of four or five fine bone teeth fixed to a light handle six inches long . . . " After the pattern had been carefully delineated, the teeth of this

implement were dipped in the charcoal and candlenut oil pigment which was beaten into the skin with a rod. Months could be occupied with this very painful process inspired by "pride and fear", as he says, feasts being held to mark it. Barbed lines were also tattooed on the hands, and spots at the corners of the mouth, but these were optional. Williams' observations were made between 1840 and 1853.

Basil, Thomson, who was in Fiji between 1894 and 1904, and A.B. Brewster, who was there between 1870 and 1910 (both as colonial officials in various capacities), corroborate Williams' observations and add a few further points of interest. Thomson felt that there was little that was aesthetic about the patterns, the object being mainly to cover large areas of skin with pigment (1908:217-218). Brewster's two informants mentioned shaddock thorns, mounted on a reed handle, being used as the "teeth" to introduce the pigment (1922:185,186,187). That there was some sexual purpose behind the tattooing is expressed by both. One chief expressed to Thomson the great disgust he felt at the idea of marrying an untattooed woman. Physically, to him, a tattoo made a woman a desirable mate (219, my underlining). Barbed lines and some dots were also observed on fingers (218). Brewster's two informants concur in suggesting the sexual significance of Fijian tattooing when one says that it increased the husband's desire upon sight (186), and the other says it was necessary to have it done before marriage (187).

Roth (1933:162-163) makes the most recent reference to Fijian tattooing, which he said was "...still practised more or less surreptitiously in certain parts of the provinces of Ra and Mathuata" at

that time (the early thirties). The area covered was around the female genitalia and "adjacent areas which are covered by the short fringe skirt (liku).\" The tattoo was done front and back, and could also continue onto the calves of the legs. With this area of the body covered most of the time, evidence of the job having been done would be tattooing all around the mouth, only "extremities of the lips" being done if the tattoo did not include the thighs. Apparently such tattooing was at that time being performed about the time of a girl's first menstruation. Medical officers informed Roth that the designs employed were similar to those made on barkcloth, or carved on clubs (Plate I). The mode of operation he records is similar to the former observations. An interesting point he makes is that a ranking girl must not be tattooed alone, but must be accompanied by a commoner.

Despite such antithetical facts as the Fijian practice not being done by men (although the legend of Taema and Tilafaiga says it was from men that the girls gained their knowledge of tattooing), the lack of any guild organization in Fiji to which the practitioners belonged (such guilds existing in Samoa), and the differences in mode of operation and tools, other striking similarities emerge. The most prominent similarity is in the designs described, which bear no such similarity to the tattooing designs done on Samoan women (to be discussed later). Fijian tattooing designs are characterized by Thomson as " . . . a mere interlacing of parallel lines and lozenges . . . the apparent object being to cover every portion of the skin with pigment" (1908:217-218, my underlining). Samoan female tattooing designs are, on the contrary, characterized by

Willowdean Handy (1924:24) . . . as scant and dainty . . . with delicate marks which give the impression of polka dots, or cutwork embroidery . . . "--not at all reminiscent of the extant descriptions of Fijian tattooing.

The Samoan male tattoo and the Fijian female tattoo do, however, show a strong similarity of preference for parallel bands, and solid blocks of pigmented surface, a similarity which adds credence to the legend as much as does the fact of Fiji's actually having had tattooing in the past. In addition, the sexual significance of the Samoan male tattoo somewhat resembles that of the Fijian female tattoo, both being necessary before marriage, both making their wearers more physically desirable. The practice of not tattooing ranking individuals alone is definitely a very interesting parallel between the Samoan and Fijian customs.

The Guild of Tattooers

Tattooers, like fishermen, housebuilders and followers of other ancient professions, were traditionally associated within an 'aiga, or "guild." Of these guilds, Su'apa'ia (1962:74) says their operation was similar to:

...the system of the present labor unions in other countries. The guilds, however, are known to have been operated in Samoa for very many generations in the past and are still operating under their original set system and codes. Practically all guilds are composed of members of a certain line of chiefs. Like all other authorities and privileges in Samoa, the rights are traced back to the claimant's ancestors. If a person's forefathers were known to have been members of a certain guild, then he is permitted by heredity to enjoy the same privileges...It is worthy of mention that the Tattoo Operators' Guild operates independently. The kings do not lay any claim to it, (sic.) as they do to the House Builders' Guild and the Fishermen's Guild. There are only two recognized original branches of the Tattoo Operators' Guild. They are:

Sa Su'a (Different from the author's line)
Sa Tolu'ena.

Pratt's translation of some Samoan stories makes the earliest reference I can find to the guild and its origins (Abercromby, 1891:463-467). In essence, it is recorded that there were two branches of "the family of tattooers." One--"a very large family"--was known as Sa-Tulauena (sic.), Seve being its leader, and Pe-o-Sa-sua (sic.), the leader of which is Atapu. Seve was thus honored because he had welcomed Taema and Tilafaiga to his place with suitable marks of respect, and Atapu was thus honored for his kindness to them. The one great branch, Sa-Tulauena, was

apparently second in precedence to Pe-o-Sa-sua because the story mentions that Taema and Tilafaiga designated Pe-o-Sa-sua to preside over Sa-Tulauena, the work of the latter being described as "incomplete" (467). Pule, the kind fisherman whom they also taught tattooing, is not recorded as being especially distinguished as were Seve and Atapu. This may possibly be because part of the story is missing, for it seems that Pule--like Seve and Atapu--would have trained others to follow in his stead.

Kraemer (1902:121) makes mention of the "faletolu" (three houses) in reference to the tattooing profession, but further explains from his informants that "Two branches of the family tattooed first, while the third is the tattooer of the Tui A'ana." The initial two, he notes, were Su'a (sic.) and Tulau'ega (sic.), and the third Pauli. It appears, from what he could discover, that Su'a originally operated from the malae* known as Fa'amafi in Safata, Upolu, while Tu-lau'ega operated from two malae: Lalotali in Satupa'itea, Savai'i, and Fagalele in Falealupo, Savai'i. Kraemer's Pauli and the aforementioned Pule may be the same individual, neither of these names having a special malae mentioned for them. These malae were important because people desiring tattoos had to go there to be tattooed (Fitisemanu, pers. comm.).

Modern informants, tufuga tatatau themselves, when interviewed offered various conflicting versions of how the guild came about and which branch had precedence. Some of these variations are considerable

*Literally the village green or plaza, the center of village activities. Here the reference is to the centers of the tufuga tātataus' activities.

when compared with the preceding. Fao Isaia says that Tulou'ena (sic.) was the son of Su'a, who first tattooed. Fa'alavelave Petelo also says Su'a was the original line. In clarification, it might be said that, while the oldest extant recorded reference to these matters I have been able to locate (Abercromby, 1891:463-467) does say that the Tulau'ena preceded Su'a in practicing the art, it also records Su'a having later been given a presiding precedence over Tulau'ena. They are together referred to as "two great branches of the family" (467).

Sadly there is presently no unified tradition of the guild, any efforts one makes to ascertain how things may have been as little as a hundred years ago revealing great confusion. It does appear, however, that the activities of Sa Tulou'ena were confined to Savai'i, while those of the Sa Su'a were exercised over Upolu, Tutuila, and Manu'a (Numia, pers. comm.; Petelo, pers. comm.).

Traditionally the importance of the guild^{branches} was great both because they were of chiefly connection, and because they provided for the maintenance of the profession as well as its standards. When tufuga tatatau addressed each other, or other people addressed them, it was necessary to acknowledge the branch of the guild involved. (Su'apa'ia, 1962:74). Not only was this courteous, but also respectful of the mana, or especial prestige, possessed by the tufuga tatatau. This mana, a privilege of their inheritance, could be passed on by the skilled masters to those whom they taught. Formerly their apprentices would most likely have been related to them in some way, although this was not a necessary qualification (Brown, 1910:305) and thus rightful inheritors of the

profession (Petelo, pers. comm.). Two forms of respectful address were told to me as follows:

1. Su'a ma le falelua o le 'aiga Sa Su'a "Su'a and the two houses (branches) of the Sa Su'a." (Used for tufuga tātatau of the Sa Su'a (Petelo, pers. comm.).)
2. Lau fetalaiga Li'aifaiva ma le tou 'aiga Sa Tulou'ena (Ioane, pers. comm.) "Honorable orator Li'aifaiva and all the Sa Tulou'ena." (Used for all practitioners in the Sa Tulou'ena (Maletino, pers. comm.).)

Sometimes a travelling tufuga tātatau might visit another tufuga tātatau at work. Following the appropriate formal addresses, the visiting tufuga tātatau might proffer his assistance. To do so was to compliment one's colleague who could respond by allowing the visitor to practice with his own implements upon the patient(s) then being worked upon. To signify their appreciation of this honor, the family of the patient(s) would prepare a sumptuous feast for the visiting tufuga tātatau, possibly also presenting him with a fine mat. A youth thus honored could boast of his having the work of two masters upon him.

In the process, the goodwill between members of the Guild of Tattooers, and separate branches of that Guild, was fostered--even improvement of methods and aesthetics being a possible result (Su'apa'ia 1962:73-74).

Historic Accounts of Samoan Tattooing

Samoan tattooing did not come to the attention of the Western world until Roggeveen, the Dutch navigator, discovered part of the Samoan islands in 1722. The narrative of this voyage contains some observations concerning the Samoans, although the Dutch did not go ashore for closer observation because they were not certain they could trust the indigenes. One remark that was made expressed the first European view--albeit imperfect--of Samoan tattooing. "They were cloathed from the waist downward with fringes, and with a kind of stuff of silk curiously woven" (Dalrymple, 1770:106). The "fringes" were evidently the original ti leaf skirts, while the artificially wrought silken stuff was the tatau.

It was not until May of 1768 that a further observation was made during the French expedition of Bougainville (1772:281). "These islanders..." he says, "...paint their breast and their thighs down to the knee, of a dark blue..." Like the Dutch, the French did not make close or detailed observations. A slightly clearer description comes again from the French in December of 1787, during the la Pérouse expedition. La Pérouse (1807:103) says, "The men's bodies are painted or tattooed, so that you would think them dressed, though they are almost naked." Some uncertainty still exists at this point as to whether the Samoans are painted or tattooed, an uncertainty resulting from a lack of close, detailed observation. Unfortunately no graphic representations of these early observations exist today, if such were ever made.

John Williams might be expected to have made some record of Samoan tattooing, but all he allows himself to say in his Missionary Enterprises

in the South Sea Islands (1838:421 & 461) is that it existed, his main concern being, of course, the salvation of "his" islands. Strangely, considering his conscientious aversion to tattooing, he permits a favorable appraisal of the tattooing of Makea, the king of Raratonga, whom he describes in the same book (86) as "most beautifully tattooed," providing even a colored illustration as if for proof.

Fortunately Horatio Hale, the philologist of the United States exploring expedition of 1838--1842, proved also to be an interested observer of customs. Concerning Samoan tattooing, he says (1846:39) it extends:

. . . from near the waist behind, down to the knees. In front, however, the abdomen is free from it, except only a small patch over the navel . . . The general effect, at a little distance, is to give the person the appearance of being dressed in short, dark-blue drawers.

Wilkes himself (1849:142) says that males were tattooed "from the loins to the thighs," adding that women had "only a few lines on their hands and bodies," which is the first historical mention of female tattooing in Samoa. He also records something of the mode of operation and other significant details (141-142) which he observed in 1839 and 1841, and which may be listed thus:

1. It was done by professionals.
2. The tattooing age was between fourteen and eighteen.
3. It was usually considered initiation into manhood.
4. The pigment was obtained from the kernel of the candle-nut.
5. Tattooing was called ta-tatau.
6. It was tastefully drawn.

7. It was popular.
8. It was expensive, costing fine mats, siapo, and other property agreed upon before the operation.
9. The tool used was made of bone, sharpened comblike.
10. The pigment was introduced into the skin with a slight blow.

The Reverend John Stair (1897:157-164) gives a most detailed description of the custom as he observed it between 1838 and 1845. The main points he makes are that:

1. Tattooers formed an important, influential "fraternity."
2. Two female deities, Taema and Tilafaiga, presided over tattooing.
3. All males, twelve to fifteen and up were tattooed.
4. It was their initiation into manhood.
5. Women scorned men who would not get tattooed.
6. A young chief would be tattooed with the sons of talking chiefs (tulafale) in his district--at the high chief's expense--to share the suffering (tale-i-lona-tiga).
7. Each tulafale's son received a fine mat at the end of the operation.
8. The tattooing of tulafale's sons was less esteemed (less attractive) and known as 'o le ta tulafale.
9. A tattooing was the cause of a great district gathering, hospitality being widely extended by the chief's 'aiga.
10. Before the commencement of work, the tattooers assembled their families and assistants, the chief tattooers bearing their

container of tools.

11. The tool container was called a tunuma.
12. The tools were fine comblike pieces of human or animal bone mounted adze-like on reed handles, ten or twelve forming a set highly prized by the owners.
13. A small rod was used for striking the "combs" with pigment into the flesh.
14. The pigment was "burnt candlenut powder."
15. A fighting display and presentation of some seven or eight fine mats and about twenty pieces of siapo preceded the commencement of the work.
16. The young chief would be started on, the small of his back being the beginning area.
17. A selected instrument was dipped in pigment which was then struck into the skin by the small rod.
18. The punctures were closely and swiftly made.
19. A dark, well covered appearance was appreciated.
20. Some assistants wiped away blood with tapa cloth; others stretched the skin as necessary.
21. The operation continued as long as it could be borne, and as long as inflammation did not cause a halt.
22. The hips and thighs were tattooed with skillful work, looking like long underclothes.
23. A month to six weeks would be required to get the job done, during which games and dances continued each evening, obscenity

being a feature.

24. As many as a thousand fine mats, and large quantities of siapo would be presented upon completion of the task.
25. The following day payment and property was distributed to the accompanying youths, chiefly relatives, and any who had provided food for the guests.
26. The "sprinkling of the tattooed" ceremony happened that night, the chief feature of which was the finding of the stopper of a waterbottle broken before the young chief, the loss of it meaning death for one of the tattooed.
27. The next day all the tattooed were sprinkled with coconut water as a symbolic lifting of the tapu attaching to them, this being the end of the whole procedure.

Erskine (1853:36), commanding a British cruise of the Western Pacific, notes that Samoan men he observed a Faleasau, Ta'u in the Manu'a Group, in 1849 were "none of them...tattooed about the face, but...on the belly, hips, and thighs, giving them the appearance of being clad in tight knee-breeches." He did not observe the operation.

Writing in 1861 from experience in Samoa between 1842 and 1861, the Reverend George Turner of the London Missionary Society, devotes several pages (181-184) to tattooing. He makes the following points:

1. It was done by professionals.
2. A young man was in his minority until tattooed.
3. The tattooing age was about sixteen.
4. It was a necessary prelude to marriage.

5. Lower ranking youths got tattooed when a young chief was being done, six to twelve being thus done together by four or five tattooers.
6. The tool was made from a comblike piece of human bone mounted adzelike on a cane handle.
7. The pigment was candlenut ashes mixed with water.
8. It was introduced into the skin by tapping the comb-adze with a small mallet.
9. The job took two to three months.
10. It was well paid with fine mats, siapo, and food.
11. The tattooing covered the body from waist to knee, relieved at intervals with strips of untattooed skin giving a "black silk knee-breeches" effect.
12. It was still popular.

Turner also mentions the tradition of the legendary origin traced to Taema and Tilafaiga (182).

In 1862, another Britisher, Hood (1863:44 & 49), made observations of men in Tutuila "... tattooed from the waist to the knees in a most artistic manner." Half a dozen male dancers he also observed were all tattooed like this.

Serving as British Consul for Samoa between 1848 and 1857, George Pritchard (1866:143-146) recorded his observations on tattooing which may be summarized as listed below:

1. It was the Samoans' initiation into manhood.
2. A young chief was tattooed at eighteen.

3. Youths from the age of fourteen to eighteen from the chief's 'aiga shared the operation with him.
4. It was a "regular and honorable profession," the tattooer being a matai.
5. A presentation of fine mats accompanied an "application" for a tattoo; acceptance sealed the contract.
6. A special house was reserved for the operation.
7. Work started on the chief and moved to the others according to rank, a little being done on each at a time.
8. A further presentation of fine mats and possibly a canoe preceded the beginning of the work.
9. Food was daily supplied to the operators by the youths' friends.
10. The tattooer was assisted by five or six wipers who used tapa cloth.
11. The youth being tattooed rested his head on the lap of a young woman (generally a relative) while three or four others held his legs and sang songs to comfort him.
12. To show the pain by groaning was unmanly, although a certain amount of writhing was permissible.
13. A "stripe on the back" above navel level began the tattoo.
14. The navel mark finished the tattoo.
15. Flies were kept off with white tapa switches.
16. Half way through the operation, a further presentation of fine mats was made.
17. The major and finest presentation was made just prior to the navel being tattooed; if unsatisfied the tattooer would not

continue.

18. The navel mark finished, a final presentation was made.
19. The cost was regarded as expensive in Samoan terms, requiring fine mats, siapo, canoes as well as food consumed over the three to four months of work.
20. Following feasting, a great dance and celebration was held at which time the tattooed youths were to display their tattoos--especially for female admiration.
21. Five tools were used, looking like fine combs affixed to reed handles in the manner of adzes, the combs being made of human bone.
22. A small mallet held under the thumb and over the forefinger was used to drive the pigment-dipped "combs" into the flesh.
23. Speed characterized the tattooer's work.
24. The pigment was made from candlenut or coconut ashes and water.
25. The basic pattern was the same throughout Samoa, though motifs varied.
26. An unfinished tattoo was a shame.
27. The custom was slowly declining (mid to late 1850's).
28. Chiefs over forty years of age would sometimes be re-done, for added youth and virility.

In 1865, Brenchley (1873:40) observed men in Pago Pago, Tutuila, many of whom were "...tattooed from their middle down to their legs," the designs being "...so full and well executed as to give the impression of their wearing pantaloons."

Cooper (1880:14) mentioned that the Samoans differed from the Fijians

in that they tattooed only the men "...not on their faces, as is the case with the Maories (sic.) of New Zealand, but on their bodies from the waist to the knee..." His observation noted large "black" areas for the most part, but relieved here and there by some "...gracefully executed stripes and patterns." The Samoans of that time were very proud of their tattoos which, he observed, looked "at a little distance" like "black knee breeches."

William Churchward (1887:392-393) another British Consul (between 1881 and 1885), made the following points:

1. A youth was not respected unless tattooed.
2. A youth could not get a girl to marry him untattooed.
3. Tattooing was a "very lucrative" profession.
4. It was generally an hereditary profession.
5. The tools were of various sizes to accommodate various patterns and lines, and made of human bone.
6. The operation took from two to three months.
7. It was done in groups.
8. It was done at some secluded bush place.
9. The tattooer must be kept satisfied with gifts of mats, money, and food brought by relations lest he strike work.
10. An unfinished tattoo brought great shame.
11. The tattooing stretched blue and breeches-like from hips to knees.
12. It was still popular despite missionary opposition.

While cruising "In Savage Isles and Settled Lands " (book title)

between 1888 and 1891, Baden-Powell (1892:348) also observed the "thin knee breeches" effect of Samoan tattooing with which Samoans "made themselves nearly black from the waist to the knees."

A Methodist, the Reverend Samuel Ella, writing in 1897 (153), as well as remarking on the legend describes the tatau as "...artistic figures from the waist to the knees," and done when the young man was fit to marry or go to war.

Augustin Kraemer, (1903,1:120-121 & 2:13-87), a German scholar and anthropological observer who was in Samoa just prior to the end of the 1800's gives a concluding view of nineteenth century tattooing practices the main points of which are:

1. Tattooing was done to youths and girls.
2. It was done by matais who were accompanied by as many as six assistants.
3. Tattooers were highly esteemed.
4. Youths were tattooed for decency and modesty, tattooing being a necessary prelude to marriage.
5. Girls were tattooed, if ranking, and also for modesty.
6. Boys were scorned by girls if they were not tattooed.
7. Tattooers were wealthy, gaining as many as a 1000 fine mats from an especially good job.
8. The tools were made adze-like of small bone combs, attached to tortoise shell bases lashed to bamboo or light wood handles with fine sennit fibres, these combs--dipped in pigment--being beaten into the flesh with a mallet made from a coconut leaf stalk.

9. The pigment was made from the soot of lama, or candlenuts, mixed with water.
10. The operation could take between two and three months.
11. The operation should be done between the ages of 14 and 18 for youths, and 18 and 25 for girls.
12. The tattooers were organized into three guilds; or professional groups.
13. The area of the body covered was from the hips to the knees (for the men), and on hands, knees, thighs, and lower abdomen (for the women).
14. There was a highly finished appearance to the men's tatau, suggesting the finest brocaded trousers, while the women's malu was free, airy, giving a mottled effect.
15. At certain stages in the operation renewed gifts of fine mats would be made.
16. Talking chief's sons would be tattooed with a high chief's son.
17. 'O le ta o le tulafale, "Talking Chief's tattooing" was a term of scorn indicating that the work done on talking chiefs' sons was inferior to that on high chiefs' sons.
18. Samoan tattooing was most beautiful especially in view of the prescriptions of arrangement and symmetry which might be expected to limit the tattooer's artistic abilities.
19. Much ceremonial accompanied the whole process.
20. Untattooed girls were apparently forbidden to show their knees.
21. There did not appear to be any religious or mystic associations

with getting tattooed.

22. Two Fijian women brought tattooing to Samoa (Kraemer was aware of the existence of other versions of this legend).
23. Five or six girls would sit around the chief's son while he was being tattooed to comfort him by holding his head, kneading his body, and otherwise trying to keep him relaxed.
24. An old tattooing song was customarily sung (among other songs) during tattooings.
25. The navel mark was the last mark made--the signature mark.
26. Old barkcloth was used to wipe away the blood.
27. Club fights and games attended the tattooing period at night.
28. A huge feast and final gifts to the tattooer(s) were offered once the job was done.
29. The boys were sprinkled in a special ceremony ('O le lulu'uga o le tatau, "the sprinkling of the tattooed") in order to lift the tapu that was upon them by reason of their blood being shed.

The Social Significance & Relevance
of Tattooing to the Fa'a-Samoa

London Missionary Society denunciations of traditional Samoan tattooing apparently took no account of the pervading and abiding influence of the fa'a-Samoa, the Samoan customs and way of life, amongst their following. Tattooing, though pronounced abolished--at least in L.M.S. congregations--would not die, but sprang up in their midst as it was being practiced all around them.

Traditional Samoan tattooing may have had something to do with decency as Hale (1846:39) and Pritchard (1866:146) express it, but there were far more significant considerations related to it.

First of all it was a custom not restricted only to chiefs, but shared with them (Turner 1861:181).^① It signified the male youth's passage from childhood to manhood (Wilkes, 1849:141),^② an advancement in social status which was the occasion of games and feasting (Stair: 1897:136 & 159). Once tattooed, a youth had the right to marry and to be a warrior (Turner:1861:181 & Churchward, 1887:392), a right to the approbation of society (Turner, 1861:181). Tattooing was the principal adornment of the Samoans (Turner 1861:207) who took pride in displaying it at their feasts and entertainments--indeed were taught to do so (Samoan Culture and Customs Committee, 1962:55). In some cases, it may have indicated one's rank by special motifs (Handy, 1927:21).

Of greatest social significance was its role in old fa'a-Samoa ceremonial. Brother Herman (1924:11) gives the following description of the correct traditional appearance and qualifications of a cupbearer

for chiefly 'ava ceremonies:

The young man who performs the office of cup-bearer must be the son of a chief or an orator. He should be handsome and fit for this office. He must not be sickly or suffering from skin disease, and he should be tattooed. (My underlining) His body must be bare of all clothing except the loincloth. Neither necklace nor any other adornment is permissible.

Indeed, it was not permissible to serve chiefs in their houses or in their places of assembly if one was not tattooed (Fitisemanu & Maura II, pers. comm.). Untattooed men could climb for coconuts, get the cooking fires ready and do other menial tasks, but only tattooed men could handle the food, apportion it, and serve it to the chiefs (Fitisemanu, pers. comm.). Literally, therefore, those who wished to serve the "inner circle," the people of consequence who transacted their business inside buildings, had to be tattooed, otherwise they worked outside. Only tattooed men and sometimes the taupou* could make taufolo, the chiefly food made of pounded cooked breadfruit and coconut milk which had to be rolled into balls with the hands (Fruean & Tinilau, pers. comm.). Untattooed men were unfit for this task, possibly being regarded as unclean. It was also believed that tattooed men were better able to handle sharks and other big sea game, as well as being more avi, or "sexually desirable" (Fitisemanu, pers. comm.).

The difference between tattooed and untattooed men was thus considerable. Even special terms segregated them. The tattooed man was a soga'imiti, one to be respected, admired, one who was somebody as opposed to the pula'u, the "untattooed" man, or literally "bad taro" (Milner 1966:191, 294) one

*The elect village virgin with ceremonial responsibilities.

who was not worthy, not highly esteemed. Occasions for not being tattooed would appear to have been the poverty of low birth (Turner, 1861:181), and just plain cowardice which was much scorned (Pritchard, 1866:145).

It can be seen from the above that the practice of traditional tattooing in old Samoa provided males a means of transition from childhood to adulthood at about the time of puberty. ⁽¹⁾ A tattoo was the mark of their manhood, the symbol of their qualification for honor, the token of their bravery--be it during the pain of the operation or in combat for which they thus qualified. From this it can further be seen that a leader had to be a tattooed man, and no 'aiga felt secure without a full complement of tattooed men who, in effect, symbolized their strength, dignity, and bravery. The more tattooed men an 'aiga could muster, the more secure the people felt (Fitisemanu, pers. comm.). In effect, it can be said that the tatau was a stabilizer of the old fa'a-Samoa society, for, without it, advancement in status and rank were impossible, as were marriage and warfare. With it, the continuation of that society through procreation and warfare were possible, as were public approbation and admiration--not to mention a general sense of confident security. In sum, the tatau symbolized the male Samoan's pride (Pritchard, 1866:146), and the Samoan society's stability.

One final aspect of relevance to the old fa'a-Samoa requires mention, namely the religious significance which may anciently have attached to the practice of tattooing. Informants and early sources all seem silent upon this matter, but there is evidence that at least some tattooing in Tonga was done with an object associated with the traditional religion. Collocott (1921:161) records one case in Tonga where it was recalled that the priest

connected with the worship of one of the old gods whose sacred creature was the kalae (a rail), had a representation of this bird tattooed on his throat. Unfortunately when Collocott recorded this, the old customs had been discontinued for over a hundred years, and nothing further could be ascertained with regard to Tongan tattooing purposes.

With regard to Samoa, an extensive detailed survey of the traditional religious practices has never been made. Turner (1884:16-77) summarizes the main beliefs, listing numerous deities, and it emerges that each deity had some animal representative which was a totem for an 'aiga, or extended family group. Some deities were recognized throughout Samoa, their animal representatives being universally recognized. (Incidentally a similar religious system existed in Fiji (Capell & Lester, 1941:59-67) and Tonga (Collocott, 1921:161). It is possible that Samoan tattooing motifs once represented the totems of some of these deities in an attempt to clothe the person tattooed with the mana accruing to those deities. This would seem highly probable since a number of the motifs are animal-representative. The remainder refer in the main to plants, while several refer to inanimate objects. The plant motifs could also be related to deities. Sacred plants as well as creatures were known to be related to the Fijian deities (Capell & Lester, 1941:63), so this would not be unusual in Samoa.

An examination of what is known about the Samoan deities of old makes the following parallels between them and certain tattooing motifs possible:

(Each relevant motif is mentioned with an explanation of possible totemic references.)

1. Vaetuli The term tuli is applied to several species of birds in Samoa, but the tuli o Tagaloa. (Charadrius fulvus) was venerated according to Stair (1896:35). (Turner (1886:53) says Tagaloalagi was incarnate in the tuli, and was associated with observances restricted to men.
2. Fa'avaetuli
3. Fa'avaevaetuli
(A common motif with variations which is used freely.)
4. Atualoa
(A common motif used freely.) The term atualoa refers to the centipede, but means literally "long god". Turner (1886:69) records the centipede recognized as a god, Leatualoa. He also says the centipede was known in some places as Lesa, a household god, and also under the same name as a war god, and then in the form of a lizard (47-48).
5. Pe'a
(A common term for tattooing.) The term pe'a refers to the bat or flying fox. Turner (1866) records two gods using the bat as a representative: Sepo Malosi, a war god of Savai'i (51); Taisumalie, a female war god represented by the bat (56-57).
6. Fa'apepe
(A "butterfly-like" area on the inside of the legs above the knee (Paulo, pers. comm.) The term pepe refers to butterflies, whom Turner (1866:76) records as representatives of a family god Taumanupepe.

Thus, originally, it may have been of social significance to have certain totemic patterns in one's tattoo to identify one's 'aiga, and to increase one's mana by finding favor with the deities whose signs one wore. Then to one's strength, dignity, and bravery could have been added the protection of the gods recognized by old fa'a-Samoa society--a symbolic expression of what West (1961:131) has called "the supernatural sanctions

by which the old order was sustained." It should be noted that Kraemer (1903:67) felt there was no association between tattooing and traditional religious beliefs. In his opinion, the tattoo was properly for ornamentation, an adjunct to propriety, a mark of distinction.

II. SAMOAN TATTOOING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Traditional Samoan tattooing, despite efforts for over a half century to abolish it, endured into the twentieth century. It was still a common enough practice in 1916 for Neffgen (ms.), former government interpreter for the German government of Western Samoa, to remark:

The best way in dealing with Samoans is: make them look ridiculous, laugh at them, tell them they behave like schoolboys or boys not yet tattooed*--and you will gain your object more likely than by cursing and swearing.

A handbook put out by the New Zealand government subsequent to its taking over the task of governing Western Samoa, makes the following observations (1925:52): "The art of tattooing is...in vigorous survival. The men are tattooed from hip to knee...Women are also marked, but in a much less degree." And the practice survives yet. The twentieth century, although it produces basically the same appearance first noted by Roggeveen in the eighteenth, has, however, brought about a few differences in practice and purpose which need to be considered.

Like living languages, living cultures change, the changes in practice and purpose of a facet of Samoan culture--traditional tattooing--being significant indications of the vitality of the custom as it adapts to new situations, and as strong outside influences affect it.

*My underlining.

Non-Traditional Influences

Non-traditional influences upon Samoan tattooing can be generally related to the presence in Samoa of outsiders whose "missionary work" (whether it is sectarian or secular) has continually preached--often unintentionally--new ways for old. In neither Western Samoa nor Eastern Samoa were there large numbers of outsiders, but the influence of the missionaries (whose efforts and attitudes are considered below) and other foreign residents has largely been negative by reason of the London Missionary Society's disapproval of tattooing and the foreign residents' provision of new ways to do old tasks.

The missionary influence was definitely the prime cause for demise of the practice in American Samoa. West (1961:131-132) best provides the background to understand this.

The sheer physical smallness of the Eastern Samoan islands meant that trade and commerce were severely limited, and that the major influence upon Samoan life there was missionary. The villages each had their church and their native pastor whom they were called upon to support. Obviously the wholesale conversion to Christianity, which happened relatively rapidly, struck at the divine basis of high chiefly authority and the supernatural sanctions by which the old order was sustained...There was in Samoa no powerful priesthood nor institutionalized religion which, when it crumbled, carried society with it. The Samoan chiefs tended to take over a new set of beliefs... The matai, who had been the mediator with the old gods now became the deacons of the church...the passing of the old tabu (sic.) loosened some of the bonds of the old society, while at the time creating new ones.

The London Missionary Society was, because of the small area involved, able to dominate life to a much larger degree in Eastern Samoa than in

Western Samoa. The American administration until very recently allowed the status quo to be maintained. The result is that, despite a lingering desire amongst some few individuals, tattooing after the traditional manner is today a thing of the past in American Samoa. The last tufuga tatatau to practice there, Ega Samatua of Asili, Tutuila, died in 1963. He had gone in his youth to Western Samoa where he spent about ten years during which time he learned tattooing, returning to American Samoa in 1928 to practice. He was the only tufuga tatatau living there in his lifetime. Since his death there has been no other. None of his five sons either followed his father's footsteps, or was tattooed, and this was because of religious scruples--they are Congregational Christian Church members (as, incidentally, was their father) (Samatua, pers. comm.).

The continued existence in Western Samoa of traditional tattooing owes much to the significant influence of the Wesleyan and Catholic congregations which were not opposed to it. (This is discussed in further detail later.) They provided a counterfoil to London Missionary Society efforts in Western Samoa which was absent in Eastern Samoa until too late to be of any significant influence. However, since the practice does continue in Western Samoa, influences other than missionary might be considered, and evidence of these sought in changes which may have taken place in the tattoos themselves and the methods employed to obtain them, as well as in the purposes for which they are done. These evidences of change I shall term acculturation. The influential agents of change I shall term commerce and education.

The Relevance of Traditional Tattooing to the Contemporary Samoan Way of Life

It is difficult at first to recognize any relevance in traditional tattooing to the contemporary Samoan way of life. The following remarks, however, based on the preceding research and observations in the field, discern a very real one.

The "revelling and immorality" Turner (1861:183) expresses as two of the principal reasons for the London Missionary Society's discountenancing Samoan tattooing no longer obtain. However, two reasons he gives for the continued existence of the custom some thirty years after the Society began its work in Samoa still obtain today--namely: youthful opinion and parental pride (183). These feelings have endured over one hundred and ten years, when most of the other reasons traditionally associated with the existence of the practice have ceased to be important. Beyond these feelings, which are rather strong at present, on the surface there would appear to be no special relevance in traditional Samoan tattooing to the contemporary Samoan way of life.

In explanation, it can be pointed out that war, which was traditionally associated with tattooing (the tatau being the proper garb of the toa or warrior), no longer exists in Samoa. Neither is a tatau regarded as necessary before marriage can be contemplated. (Many girls say they do not like boys to have them.) As an indication of rank, the tatau is no longer the determiner. It serves no totemic purpose. It does not indicate maturity, for I have come across eleven and twelve year old boys who have been tattooed. Yet the custom continues. Why?

Contemporary Samoan life, it is true, differs a great deal from that of as little as a hundred and fifty years ago--outwardly, that is. Today everyone is nominally Christian, covers the body more than was ever the case before, does not engage in open warfare, uses money to buy imported manufactured goods, and goes to school to get a basically Western education. However, these differences are only external. The fa'a-Samoa still exists in the minds of most Samoans, and is still a vital force outside of Apia, a force which maintains a traditional way of thinking which is reflected in other actions than those borrowed ones mentioned above. This fa'a-Samoa is everything that the Samoans have retained of their identity as Samoans. Thus, while traditional tattooing may have no apparent relevance to contemporary Samoan life as it appears in its Christianized condition, it still retains relevancy within the fa'a-Samoa.

The fa'a-Samoa, as it exists today, has a largely ceremonial function. While chiefs in the London Missionary Society received status within that church in exchange for abandoning "heathen customs" such as tattooing (which had formerly conferred status), amongst Catholics and Methodists, chiefs could function within the fa'a-Samoa and within the Church almost without change. The London Missionary Society can thus be seen to have attempted to recast the fa'a-Samoa after its own fashion, only to have it continue in the minds of its members, as well as in the practice of the members of the other sects. Evidence of this is found in the widespread employment, even in American Samoa, of tattooed men when important modern ceremonial functions (such as dedications and national

anniversary celebrations) and traditional ceremonial functions (the chiefly 'ava ceremony and welcomes for distinguished individuals) take place. The ceremonial functions of the fa'a-Samoa are still best served by men with the tatau.

It is this great vitality of the fa'a-Samoa which, from early in the period of European contact, struggled against a dominant influence from foreigners, attempting to set up a king in order to maintain their autonomy (Grattan, 1963:461). Later as the Mau, or "rebellion" movement, it asserted itself for independence against New Zealand from the late twenties through the thirties. Tattooing has been an accompaniment to such expressions of the fa'a-Samoa, an unmistakable symbol expressive of its vitality. Thus it continues today, notwithstanding religious proscription and apparent official indifference.

There is a growing realization that Samoan identity and the tatau are definitely linked. Many who now get tattooed are proud to do it for what it represents in terms of the fa'a-Samoa. Some parents who are members of the London Missionary Society will compromise their membership in order to get their children tattooed for which they will be temporarily disfellowshipped (Tofaeono, pers. comm.), but their love for their children makes this sacrifice worthwhile to them (Maua II, pers. comm.).

Those young men who get tattooed because they want to, give as reasons that it looks good, will enhance their chances of gaining a title, and makes them feel self-confident. All of these reasons can be related to the fa'a-Samoa in which the decorative, qualifying, and psychologically strengthening aspects of tattooing reflect traditional Samoan ideas concerning the decoration, qualification, and bravery of the warrior, the

true man, whose tattooing is the appropriate dress and decoration, which qualifies him as a man worthy of bearing a title, and signifies his bravery which formerly would be called upon in time of war. Even if they do not desire a title, young men still feel manly and confident with a tatau.

After 142 years of London Missionary Society opposition, the general effects of foreign contact, and advances in education, traditional Samoan tattooing survives and is still relevant to contemporary Samoan life because the fa'a-Samoa of which it is a vital part still survives, asserting Samoan identity (of which traditional tattooing is the signifying mark).

A Medical Viewpoint

Describing Samoan tattooing as being practiced in the 1920's, two United States Naval medical officers, Lieutenant Commander Hunt and Lieutenant Humphreys (1923:342-348), noted that, as a result of the tattooing operation, "...inflammation usually sets in with fever and the patient is more or less prostrated." Other complications they noted were "unsightly scars, sloughing of the skin" (resulting from infection), and "permanent crippling through contractures of scar tissue." I was unable to find any evidences of these latter two complications, although inflammation of the type referred to above is still known.

As has been mentioned, the tattooing operation as it is being done today makes little attempt to concede to modern antiseptic procedures. Apart from the rare occasions when the implements and patient are washed with some antiseptic solution, nothing else of this nature is done. The tufuga tatatau themselves do not prescribe certain medical measures which are resorted to by some of their patients. They simply do their job--tattoo. A twentieth century observer naturally suspects that the infection and death rate from traditional Samoan tattooing methods must be very high. Surprisingly the facts indicate the contrary.

After 29 years of practice around Samoa, Dr. I. Esera Iakopo, Medical Superintendent of Motuotua Hospital, Apia, Western Samoa, remarked that he has been impressed with the relative absence of serious conditions resulting from traditional tattooing methods. He estimated that fewer than one percent of all those tattooed by traditional methods have complications which end in death, although a slightly higher percentage

experience septicemia, or other septic conditions requiring rest in bed, but these are seldom reported or brought in for hospitalization (pers. comm.).

Dr. Te'o U. Toelupe, presently serving as the Immigration Medical Officer for Western Samoa, concurs with Dr. Iakopo's observation concerning the low incidence of death from traditional tattooing methods. He further estimates that as few as one in a thousand die from these. In his 30 years of practice, only one young man came to his attention who died from the traditional methods (pers. comm.).

One addition to the traditional methods, which has been mentioned above, is the use of various injections to kill the pain of the operation. This was cited by Dr. Iakopo (pers. comm.) as the major cause of deaths said to result from tattooing. Improper use of the anaesthetics employed would appear to be the reason. One case of a death of this type he recalls, for example, involved a young man who had been injected with Xylocaine, an anaesthetic which can become a poison if introduced into blood vessels.

I must at this point emphasize the distinction which should be made between deaths occurring as a result of traditional methods, and those resulting from the improper use of anaesthetics. The former death rate is almost negligible and hardly heard of, whereas the latter is quite well acknowledged. Superintendent Young (pers. comm.) recalls a death in 1960 resulting from morphine injections, the victim having had twenty-four in one leg. It appears cardiac arrest was the result of this massive dosage. Reports of this type accounted for five of the six deaths I heard of

It should be pointed out that the use of the above-mentioned anaesthetics and novocain (Fitisemanu, pers. comm.) is medically sound to relieve tattooing pain, even if traditionally meaningless. Xylocaine, or lidocaine hydrochloride, "...apparently blocks transmission of nerve impulses by stabilizing the potential of nerve membrane..." (Lewis, 1970: 409). Adverse reactions, such as unpredictable toxic conditions, may, however, occur as a result of "inadvertent intravascular injection" (410). Morphine, a natural alkaloid in opium and possessing analgesic properties, "...psychologically raises the perceived threshold of pain (especially if given preoperatively)..." (Lingeman, 1969:174). However, dosage over 30 milligrams would probably prove fatal (175). Novocain, or procaine hydrochloride, is also a nerve block and is indicated for infiltration (Lewis, 1970:603). All of these prove effective, via subcutaneous injection, in rendering painless areas of the body being tattooed, but they also require expert administration for complete safety. That such expert administration of these drugs appears to have been lacking, could be an indication that expert individuals did not administer the injections--hence the deaths.

Naturally, the Medical Department encourages the use of antiseptics and antiseptic methods, but the actual incorporation of these into practice is left up to the tufuga tatatau, and his patients (Iakopo, pers. comm.). Oral painkillers (such as aspirin and codeine), and antibiotics (mainly penicillin) are supplied if needed. These are seldom resorted to, however. Thus, largely disregarding modern ideas concerning the prevention of serious infection, Samoan tattooing continues to be done, with very seldom less

than one hundred percent recovery from the operation. Perhaps, because of centuries of preparation, the Samoans have developed a natural inherited immunity to infections related to tattooing. To establish the truth of this would, in itself, require an exhaustive study.

It is possible, of course, that tattooing, despite general beliefs to the contrary, just is not as conducive to infection as it would seem to be. In a rather exhaustive study of tattooing in Sweden and its association with skin and rheumatic diseases, Hellgren (1967:62) was able to conclude that "...for most diseases surveyed there is no (sic.) definite mathematical correlation between the frequency of tattooing and the occurrence of a specific disease."

As well as various of those tattooed, some tattooers themselves appear to have faced occasional problems resulting from their profession. Hunt and Humphreys (1923:347) mention a young tufuga tatatau who became blind as a result of a "chronic keratitis" which developed from lama frequently getting into his eyes. I did not become aware of this as a present problem.

Evidences of Acculturation

As a result of non-traditional influences, traditional Samoan tattooing has experienced certain changes which are in the nature of adaptations to these strong and pervasive influences. This process of adaptation we can term acculturation. The powers which have been behind the influences have been and are largely commercial and religious. What has thus far happened to traditional Samoan tattooing may be best seen by briefly examining: 1. The Process, 2. The Design, and 3. The Legend. Kraemer's (1903:63-87) account of traditional practices will be used as a basis for comparison.

(a) The Process

In comparison with traditional practices, Samoan tattooing today is a much simpler matter, very few of the ceremonial observances which are mentioned in the historical accounts being in evidence today. Although the missions did not succeed in displacing the practice of tattooing itself, they did succeed in causing the accompanying games, feasting, and ceremonial to be discontinued (Kraemer, 1903:69), so that what we see today is the tattooing divested of many of its accompanying penumbra. The development of a semi-commercial economy has also had its effects upon the material aspects of tattooing, the equipment used having been noticeably affected. Plastic bowls for rinsing the tattooing implements, corned beef cans for palette bases, nylon fishing line to lash the combs to the handle, plastic bags to stretch over the palette base, and kerosene soot for pigment have replaced wooden bowls, coconut shells, fine sennit

fibres, taro leaves, and candlenut kernel soot respectively. Where once the blood was wiped away with old, soft pieces of siapo, today any old towel or other rag will do. Commercial development has made these non-traditional items available, and their availability has made it unnecessary, in most cases, to prepare the traditional counterparts. It is more convenient to adopt something that saves effort and is readily available. Already one young tufuga tatatau is contemplating adopting a modern means of tattooing that will be more convenient though not readily available--electric tattooing equipment from New Zealand! The use of disinfectants, antibiotics, aspirins, and injected painkilling drugs is also being resorted to in some cases, demonstrating in these instances a change in emphasis from initiation into manhood with its requisite trials of endurance, to mere ornamentation.

(b) The Design

The few extant, or available, pictures of tattooing done last century appear to indicate a style which had more dark areas and less fine decorations than is common today (see Plates I-III). The basic areas of the body covered are the same, but the way in which these areas have been filled in is different. Much fine and elaborate work is now being done, this style apparently having commenced over forty years ago (Buck 1930:644). Once only the high ranking could afford the finest work, but increasingly, since the turn of the century, commercial development has made money more readily available with the result that many more men can afford today what traditionally only their superiors would have gained.

Despite the continued existence of titled ranking people, money now enables its untitled possessor to purchase what once only they could afford. Occasionally, foreign motifs will be seen combined with traditional motifs. In addition, isolated examples of foreign inspiration on the pectoral area, upper arm, and lower abdomen are affected by the youth. This is dealt with below in greater detail (Some Other Forms of Samoan Tattooing, (iii) Miscellaneous). Their origin is apparently traceable to the period of American troop occupation during World War II (Groves, ms.).

(c) The Legend

The legend of the origins of traditional Samoan tattooing is still remembered and appears in many variations, all, however being much simpler than the earlier versions quoted. The following version told to me by Paulo Sulu'ape, a 21 year old tufuga tatatau, who received this version from his father (who also instructed him in the art of tattooing), is fairly representative of what is recalled today of the legendary origins of this practice. Lack of importance with regard to non-Christian references is probably responsible for the present simplifications of the legend.

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It is said that two ladies swam all the way from Fiji to Samoa singing a song that stated women were to be tattooed, but not men. As they approached the point at Falealupo they noticed on the sea floor a pearl shell for which they dived. In the sudden confusion which took place they got their song mixed up. Instead of saying that women should be tattooed and not men, they said that men should be tattooed and not

women. Thus, they went ashore and taught men to be tattooed.

It was not the chiefs at Falealupo, Savai'i, however, that were instructed, for their reception was not apparently suitable. Thus, the two ladies travelled on to Safata, Upolu, where a chief Su'a gave them a fine reception, in recognition of which they gave him instruction in the art of tattooing.

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What appears to have been taking place since the turn of the century is a gradual acculturation of traditional Samoan tattooing. Although in appearance, it is basically the same in conception--save for greater elaboration--the process by which it is done has undergone much modification. A certain democratization of the practice has now made it possible for any young man--or old, for that matter--to be elaborately tattooed whether he has a title or not. That possibility has been ensured by the steady development of a cash economy in which, one way or another, everyone in Samoa now participates. Some Samoans feel that there is an unfortunate aspect of this in that, whereas once a soga'imiti would have been a polished and accomplished individual in Samoan terms, today he need not be (Atoa, pers. comm.). In former times, the tattooed young men were the bulwark of the 'aiga. Today, this is not necessarily so.

Thus, traditional tattooing continues vigorously in Samoa to the present, not to mention numerous other attempts at this form of bodily decoration. That the traditional form has been able to survive, owes much to the Samoan social climate which still allows it to be relevant, although in different ways.

III. SAMOAN TATTOOING: OTHER FORMS, LANGUAGE ASSOCIATIONS, AESTHETICS

Some Other Forms of Samoan Tattooing

Although I have considered the tatau of the men (Plate V) the typical form of Samoan tattooing, some attention should also be devoted to a consideration of the several other forms, both traditional and contemporary, if for no other reason than to demonstrate the great attraction tattooing has for Samoans. Largely, in these other forms --the malu, the malu nunu, and what I shall call "miscellaneous"--this attraction is for ornamentation, but there are also protective uses for tattoos. The major difference between these types of tattoos and the male tatau is that they lack a well-defined, historical or legendary origin--at least that I have been able to ascertain after exhaustive research and interviewing. They have apparently come into existence in Samoa as either the result of outside influence (probably from Fiji), or in answer to specific needs, or both.

A. Traditional*

Two forms of tattooing other than the tatau of the men appear to have existed in the Samoan past: the malu (some informants use the term pe'a malu) and the malu nunu. Both are done by the tufuga tatatau, but neither has the prestige or the significance of the traditional male tatau. Evidence of this is in Buck's observation respecting the malu

*In this context, I use "traditional" to mean "of apparently long standing although unmentioned in recorded oral traditions."

that "...the tattooing of a girl is often used as an opportunity for a student to try his prentice hand..." (1930:656), a remark which was corroborated by several informants (Sefo, Petelo, Ioane, pers. comm.). Neither have there been ceremonial observances such as accompanied the men's tattooing (Turner, 1884:91). The malu nunu would appear to be of long standing, old people being very certain of its therapeutic value.

(i) The Malu

Restricted to women, this form of tattoo was apparently never common. John Williams, pioneer London Missionary Society missionary and one of the earliest observers, notes that "...few of the women were tattooed" (1838:461). According to Su'apa'ia (1962:77), only ranking women were tattooed. A 73 year old informant stated that the malu was just intended to be decoration for taupous (Auva'a, pers. comm.).

Taking its name from the most singular of its motifs, a lozenge-shaped design which is not featured in male tattoos, the malu is far less intricate and extensive than the male tatau. Extending over the thighs and down to the knees was a series of dots (togitogi) grouped in diamonds, as well as anufe, atualoa, gogo, and aso fa'atala motifs. Some patterns, termed punialo also appeared above the pubis. An effect of delicacy was obtained by the widely spaced disposition of the motifs, and the absence of any of the solid tapulu areas which characterize the male tatau (Plate VI).

Since tattooing women was the practice in Fiji, it is possible that the Samoan practice of tattooing women was introduced from Fiji--despite the legends' speaking in reference to the Fijian origin of only male

tattooing if it were not learned during periods of Fijian and Tongan influence in Samoa.

Ranking Fijian women married to Samoan chiefs may possibly have introduced the practice. The Samoan and Fijian female forms of tattoo are very dissimilar, however, except in one respect: the treatment of the hands. The main difference between the Samoan and Fijian tattooing of women was that, while the Samoan tufuga tatatau was always a man, his Fijian counterpart, the lewandaumbati, was always a woman (Thomas Williams, 1860, 1:159). The area covered was different, the Fijians patterning the buttocks and extending about an inch down the thighs, as well as over the mons veneris and up to the vulva (Thomson, 1908:217), basically using the heavy tapulu treatment.

It is possible that, as the differences may indicate, the Samoans developed the malu for women in response to a local demand for distinction on the part of ranking women, for, whereas the Fijian woman's tattoo was scarcely seen by any save her bathing companions and husband, the malu was visible on the knees and a little higher on the thighs, whenever a taupou danced or sat cross-legged to make 'ava.

Kraemer (1903:66) regards the malu as a sign of modesty and supports this by interpreting the term malu as referring to "protection" or "cover" provided for the otherwise naked knees and thighs which were formerly not supposed to be seen if untattooed.

A common accompaniment to the malu was tattooing on the hands. This, however, was not restricted to the women, but was sufficiently often done with the malu to be regarded as a natural accompaniment. Interestingly enough, the barbed lines tattooed on the hands (Williams, 1860, 1:159),

and the barbed lines and dots tattooed on the fingers (Thomson, 1908:218) of young Fijian girls to make their hands look attractive when handing the chiefs food, sound suspiciously like the delicate patterns tattooed on Samoan taupous' hands to the delight of chiefly observers who admired the tattooed hands as the taupous danced or made 'ava (Fitisemanu, pers. comm.). Apparently boys of chiefly families formerly also had their right hands tattooed if they served 'ava (Groves, ms.). The motifs employed for hand tattoos were those of the malu. A distinctive feature was the tapulima, or wrist band (Kraemer, 1903:84; Groves, ms.).

(ii) The Malu Nunu

In this term, nunu (also gugu) refers to rheumatism, arthritis, and other types of pains in joints and limbs (Milner, 1966:70; Ioane, pers. comm.). As applied to tattooing it appears to describe tattooing done on the hands and wrists of men for therapeutic purposes. Although no details can be furnished from the recorded past, the existence of this type of tattoo could be derived from Fiji where it has long been an established practice to tattoo over broken bones and sore joints. In Samoa, the practice appears to be to confine such tattooing to the hands and arms (Plate VII).

(iii) Miscellaneous

Other than Bougainville's (1772:281), references to other decorative forms than those above appear to be absent. His reference makes clear that certain forms of tattoo appeared on the chest but it does not specify

beyond mentioning them. Stair (1897:101) mentions the tattooing of the nose, ('o le ta o le isu) which was, however, a "mark of degradation" for certain offences.

B. Contemporary

As well as the malu and the malu nunu, there presently exist miscellaneous basically decorative attempts at tattooing done by amateurs, usually using several sewing needles bound together. I shall consider them also since they further represent the strong predilection of Samoans towards tattooing, their existence being part of the reality of tattooing in contemporary Samoa.

(i) The Malu

Not a common form of tattoo in the past, the malu in contemporary Samoa is still uncommon. Probably only between one to two thousand Samoan women possess this distinction, well over half of these women being over forty. It is not in demand as is the tatau. An evidence of its lack of currency was in the absence of such tattooing upon candidates for the Tausala Competition to choose the most attractive and proficient (in Samoan cultural terms) young lady as part of the 1972 Agricultural Show in Western Samoa. Their male counterparts in the Manaia competition, on the other hand, all had the traditional male tatau. Evidently, while the traditional male tatau is still regarded as an adjunct to male beauty, the malu is not to female beauty.

One young lady in her twenties informed me that the only reason she had had it done was that her family wished her to be tattooed like

them and thus prevailed upon her to submit to it. The operation took only about five hours spread over two days, her hands not being done. She regrets having it to some degree, for she did not choose to have it done (Viliamu, pers. comm.). Her attitude to the malu appears to be fairly representative of how young Samoan women regard it.

In some cases, a girl who dances well and conducts herself discreetly may be chosen to be the taupou, or elect village virgin, by the village women who will afford her the distinguishing marks of the malu (Fruean, pers. comm.). The general feeling of young Samoan women, however, may be gauged from their lack of patronage. As with the tatau, ordinary people may do what was once reserved to the high born, but neither group shows a great desire to have a malu. This is apparently largely because of education (Palepoi, pers. comm.), but even more so because overseas styles of dress-especially American-are eagerly adopted by Samoan youth. The malu and most American styles for women do not look well together (Viliamu, pers. comm.).

(ii) The Malu Nunu

At present in Samoa this type of tattooing is resorted to to remove aches and pains. Tufuga Ioane, a 67 year old tufuga tatatau, had his right hand and wrist so tattooed years ago when, in his youth, his hand would hurt whenever the weather was cold. His father tattooed the offending hand which has not troubled him since. The motifs employed were the same as for female hand tattoos.

In discussion with Tuiletufuga Henry Hunkin, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister of Western Samoa, the possibility of the therapeutic

effect of tattooing in the light of the present understanding of the value of acupuncture was considered--especially with the malu nunu in mind. Obviously a separate detailed study would be necessary to determine whether tattooing could have any of the effects of acupuncture. Nevertheless, it is interesting to discover that there are acupuncture points on the hand and wrist which reputedly are associated with removing swollen joints, aching joints, and aching fingers (Wallnöfer & van Rottauscher 1972, 130 & 131).

Incidentally, it is the tapulima, or wrist-band part of this tattoo which proves quite popular as a "souvenir" for Peace Corps volunteers who desire an example of Samoan tattooing, but not so fervently as to admit of their enduring the full tatau or malu, which might also prove embarrassing back home. The tapulima can, of course, be quite easily covered by wearing a watch if one does not desire it to be seen.

(iii) Miscellaneous

Although no scholarly treatment of the subject could be found, there are numerous other examples of tattooing somewhat popular among the male youth of contemporary Samoa. These range from the very amateur elementary schoolboy attempts to tattoo names, initials, stars, dots, swastikas, crosses, and other simple motifs upon hands, forearms, and faces (usually restricted to single dots, one on the chin, one on each cheek, or as fancy may dictate), to the more sophisticated execution of eagles, flags, flowers, swords, and other more complicated devices attempted in the main by adolescents and post adolescents upon the chest,

or around and below the navel. The technique involves the use of sewing needles and soot from kerosene. Designs are usually traced on beforehand with pen or pencil, and driven in with the pigment via the needles which are in some cases mounted on a handle, giving an appearance of the traditional 'au, or tattooing implement. Such tattooing is a pastime much resorted to by prisoners, who, in their spare time, work on one another.* Otherwise, one's friends, cousins, or brothers do the job. Not uncommonly, the results are such that one would not wish them to be perpetuated so indelibly; however, a number do show some artistic sense and are not altogether unattractive. One can, of course, also work upon oneself.

Apart from Bougainville's already quoted observation of pectoral tattoos, there appears to be no historical precedent at all for these other random tattoos whose technique is not the result of a careful apprenticeship, but rather the amateur's invention hastily mothered by the apparent whimsical necessity of many Samoans to be so marked. The existence of these miscellaneous forms of tattooing in Samoa further demonstrates the great popularity of tattooing amongst the Samoans notwithstanding the many and powerful missionary denunciations of the traditional practice. These miscellaneous forms may even gain some of their popularity from their not falling strictly within attempted prohibitions of the traditional practice.

*Ironically, in the past (as has been mentioned) for certain law-breakers, tattooing (on the nose) was a punishment.

Certainly Groves' (ms.) comment in the early 1950's that the wartime influx of troops had encouraged the use of the American eagle motif-- even in combination with the traditional tatau--is evidence of the strong acculturative impact of the sojourn of American troops in Samoa some few years before his arrival. This impact probably can be held responsible for the frequency with which one encounters eagle-type motifs as well as other non traditional motifs already mentioned on pectoral and abdominal areas, not to mention arms. These have all become part of the popular tattooing practice in contemporary Samoa.

Proverbial and Other Language Associations with Tattooing

When cultural characteristics are sufficiently significant to a people, it is reasonable to expect that these characteristics might be referred to in their figurative expressions. Proverbs of all countries will, upon observation, be seen to be largely related to important tasks of the people of those countries. Samoan proverbs are no exception. Thus, it is that some Samoan proverbs refer to tattooing which was formerly an honored profession. The following examples have legendary, technical, and traditional associations with tattooing.

Brown (1913:406 & 417) gives us the two which follow:

"O LE SALAMO VALE A MAFUA"--The useless repentance of Mafua." (sic.)

Mafua was a chief of Salelavalu to whom the ladies Taema and Tilafaiga gave the art of tattooing. One condition was that when drinking ava, the first cup should be given to him and that he was never to refuse it out of deference for any other person. Mafua, however, from excessive politeness, declined the cup on the first two occasions on which he practiced his art. The consequence was that the ladies took the art away from him, and though he repented of his folly, he was never again allowed to practice it. ("It's no use crying over spilt milk."-N.L. McG.)

"E LE SE TUNUMA MA MOE FAATASI"--"It is not a tunuma in which all sleep together."

The tunuma is the case in which all the instruments of the tattooer are kept; they all sleep together. We are not all of one opinion or one way of thinking. "Many men, many minds."

Schultz (1953:37) also recorded the last proverb explaining that:

A tattooer who has a job to do will, on the previous evening, put all his instruments into a container (tunuma). There the instruments remain together, one knowing the other. With people it is different. Each one has a mind of his own and does not know the thoughts and designs of his neighbor.

He explains that this is a saying of denial in the sense of one not knowing the views of another person. He also gives us three more (37,

119 & 511):

E LAFI A TAGA USI. Hidden like a tattoo design.
The lavalava covers the design. When the lavalava
is moved aside by the wind or by the man stepping
out, the tattoo becomes visible.
Used of secrets that have been divulged.

O LE AGO E TAFIA. The obliterated tattooing design.
The tattooer draws first the design on the skin with
a piece of charcoal. If he does not like it, he wipes
it off again. (Apparently a reference to something no
longer useful.-N.L. McG.)

TUI'ITU'I MALOFIE. The tapping at the club match.
At a club match the opponents form lines opposite
each other. To challenge his opponent, a fighter will
tap the ground in front of him with his club. The challenge
will be either accepted or refused--The opposing lines are
called fa'amalofie, because youths about to be tattooed
(malofie) are also arranged in lines.

As well as proverbs, there are other expressions in Samoan which
are directly related to or associated with tattooing. Certain words are
specifically used when reference to tattooing is being made, or tattooed
people are referred to. Concerning the term malofie used in the last
proverb above, Milner (1966:125) indicates that it is a polite, or
respectful way of referring to tattooing. He further explains (179) that
the polite way of referring to "putting on a tattoo" is pa'u le malofie,
instead of the common ta le tatau. Kraemer (1903:71) notes that malofie
is probably derived from malo, "victory", and fie (from faigofie), "easy",
being applied as a term for tattooing because traditionally the festivities
associated with tattooing began with club matches, the name for these being
applied to the event they were only part of. Pratt's dictionary, fourth
edition, published in 1911, refers to malofie as "the tattooing of a chief,"
also making reference to the "club match" meaning (201).

Tattooed men are referred to as soga'imiti. (Milner 1966:212,

further specifies the term as relating to a "young man...recently tattooed."), as distinct from those who are pula'u, or untattooed--literally "bad taro", the idea being that untattooed men are not complete, not totally acceptable. This linguistic distinction expresses the social distinction that pertained between tattooed and untattooed males. Although this distinction is no longer societally supported, it is still understood, those tattooed being aware they are thus soga'imiti. Kraemer (1903:64) records a further distinction between tattooed and untattooed youths, the former being referred to as "taiti," the latter as "tamaleta". Pratt (1911:293 & 319) has the entries taiti--"a person tattooed young, a youth" and "tamaleta"--"a youth not tattooed, a youth." Neither of these terms is listed in Milner's 1966 dictionary, nor are the terms familiar to the generation under forty.

There is also a large body of expressions which have been traditionally employed during the tattooing process. When the work commenced, the term lagi malofie, which in highly respectful terms invokes blessings upon the tattooing, was said by those observing ("blest be the tattooing"). At the conclusion of the operation, the term lagi soifua, "blest (be your) life," could be used. During the operation, the terms lagi fa'apau, "blest (be the) pause (in the work)", lagi tatau, "blest (be the) beating (of the mallet)" were also used by observers, or those not actually engaged in the process. (Maletino, pers. comm.). The person being tattooed, and those observing could say, "Tu'utu'u malū mai le sausau pei 'o le faiva o malofie," "Be relaxed with the mallet and the task of tattooing" (Paulo, pers. comm.). Observers could also say, "Malo le sausau," "Admirable (is) the (way you are) beating" (to which the

tufuga could respond, Malo le tali au, "Admirable is your encouragement"), and Malo le 'a'ao solo, "Admirable (are your skillful hands," which complimented the tattooer's work (Falenito, pers. comm.). Milner (1966: 125 records "Malo le 'a'ao se'e, malo le 'a'ao solo" "Admirable (are your) skillful hands, admirable their swiftness," the last part of which compares with the last of the above-mentioned examples, and is used today for generally complimenting a skilled craftsman or craftswoman.

In addition, observers could say, "Malo le silasila," "Admirable (is) the appearance (of the tattoo)," "Malo le ta'oto," "Admirable (is) the lying down" (referring to the brave manner the patient is enduring the operation), and "Malo le seuseu," "Admirable (is the) tapping," (referring to the repeated swift movements of the mallet) (Sefo, pers. comm.). The tufuga tatatau might acknowledge the support of those observing and those who donated food and other things by saying, "Malo le tapua'i," "Admirable (is your) encouraging support." He might also say "malo le taulagi," "Admirable (is the) singing," to acknowledge his appreciation of the music and singing rendered by those attempting to alleviate the patient's suffering (Falenito, pers. comm.). Falenito also mentioned that the family of the patient, sitting opposite the tufuga tatatau, can say "Osina 'o le lagi malofie," "Our presence (is) for the blessing of the tattooing", to which the tufuga tatatau could reply, "Afio ma alala tapua'i ali'i osi lagi", "Remain and lend your prayerful support at this time."

These few examples serve well to indicate the former significance of the practice of tattooing in Samoan culture where it provided a

societal reference as well as possessing its own professional terminology.

An Aesthetic Appraisal and Consideration of Divisions and Motifs of Traditional Tattooing

A probable reason for the popularity of the tattooing custom amongst Samoans is the possession--on the part of most Samoans--of a light golden-brown skin tone which is ideally suited to providing a contrast for the indigo tracteries and areas of the tatau which would have little significance upon dark skin tones. The effect of the contrast between light golden-brown Samoan skin tone and the blue-black hue of the soot pigment used is definitely pleasing to the eye. Even more vivid and pleasing to observe is Samoan tattooing when the body has been oiled. Then it appears to be freshly painted as if by some consummate draughtsman--painter.

After the attractive color contrast has been perceived, the amazing draughtsmanship of the tattoo captures one's attention. Fine lines, wider bands, zigzag lines, and wavy lines vie with dots, stars of various kinds, crosses, squares, rectangles, and diamonds for praise as far as accuracy of delineation and tasteful disposition are concerned. All the more amazing are this delicacy and accuracy when it is realized that the patterns are not merely drawn or painted onto the skin, but literally beaten into it by means of a rod which is hit against an adze-like implement whose tiny, bone, pigment-dipped teeth are guided by the tufuga tatatau's steady hand into the various intricacies of the tatau or malu. Mistakes cannot be erased, so the tufuga tatatau gains or loses reputation with each tattoo he does.

The total effect of the traditional male Samoan tattoo is, as early observers noted, much like fine silk brocade knee breeches with patterns

of indigo over a light golden brown. All the elements of the whole express an artistic unity which probably took a long period to develop. In the opinion of Hambly (1925:264), Samoan tattooing "...is to be considered hardly inferior to that of New Zealand...", Samoan and Maori tattooing being possibly "...final units of an ascending evolutionary series of geometrical patterns." He further comments on the "symmetrical arrangement" of the motifs. If there is a difference between the appearance of tattooing being done today and that of the last century, it would be in the amount of elaboration permitted. Ioane (pers. comm.) indicates that formerly the tapulu, or large dark, filled-in patches, were admired and constituted^a a larger part of the whole than is customary today. The reason for this preference he gives as the greater courage required to endure the more extensive and painful penetration of the tattooing combs. Comparisons of examples of last century's work and that of this century would bear out the idea of less elaborate work having been done. It is, nonetheless, still an example of artistic creativity in the manner in which the basic divisions are filled in.

The creativity of the artist can be well appreciated when it is considered that he is traditionally limited to filling in certain prescribed areas (Plates II & III). How he does this, is left up to him; however, he is again limited to the use of a specific number of motifs.

The Divisions of the Tattoo

Groves (ms.) makes two primary divisions: the pe'a, "or flying fox with wings outspread round the lower half of the trunk," and the tatau "or leg design." I was unable to corroborate this division, but it is a useful way of describing the whole thing. (See Plates II & III in conjunction with this discussion).

The pe'a area may be divided into five divisions commonly agreed upon by contemporary tufuga tatatau. These are the:

1. tua, literally "back", a canoe--shaped band in the small of the back (recorded by Handy (1924:26) and Buck (1930:644) as va'a, or "canoe"), the points of which continue around to the front of the body, each terminating beneath the pectorals in a pair of diverging fine lines known as fa'aulutao, "like fishing spears;"

2. pula, or "bright (area)", a semi-circular or triangular area below the tua and including the pulatama, or "little bright (area);"

3. tafani, or "(area) divided off" which is a series of tapulu, or black bands whose solid color is occasionally relieved by window-like open panels known as fa'aila, or "patches", and 'aso laititi, or "fine lines" which are arranged alternately with the tapulu;

4. saemutu (saimutu), or "(area) cut short," which is of similar treatment to the tafani, but much more elaborate;

5. and 'aso talitu, or "nearly upright lines," (meaning obscure) a final series or ornamented bands from which often hang square or rectangular panels of decoration.

The tafani, saemutu, and 'aso talitu do not continue right around

the body but are bounded on the front with the downward-curving 'aso fa'aifo, or "lines going down" which join the horizontal punialo, or "enclosed (area) under the belly," below which again the fa'aupega, or "netlike" motif is often employed adjoining the pubis. Between the buttocks, below the tafani, there is also a pigmented panel known as the 'ivimutu tapulu, or "blackened-in incomplete bone," a reference no doubt to the spine ('ivitu) only part of which this covers. The tatau may be divided into six main areas. They are the

1. atigivae, or literally "toenails," (though no one seemed to know why; Kraemer (1903:82) however gleaned that this area properly has five lines which could be considered to continue down the legs and finally connect with the toes). These are two often very decorative panels each below a buttock and continuing down the inner half of the leg to the back of the knee;

2. fa'amuli'ali'ao, or "like ends of mollusc shells," a series of sharp spike-like projections from the outer side of the atigivae and across the back of the thigh;

3. fusi, or "belt", two long bands of decorative work stretching from the inner front of the thigh diagonally across each leg to the knees and thence horizontally around to the back;

4. fa'avala, or "separated (areas)", a series of narrow panels radiating fanlike from below the genitals to a point half-way across the thigh, and above the fusi;

5. tapulu, or "filled in (area)", also known as tapulu tele, "large filled in (area)" (Sulu'ape, pers. comm.), and noted by Groves (ms.) as

also being called lausae tapulu--of uncertain translation--which provides a background, if you will, to emphasize the fine line work done around and projecting into this area;

6. and ulumanu, or "bird's head", a somewhat triangular space on the inner sides of the thighs, bounded by the fusi and atigivae, and most often finely ornamented.

Several smaller features appear in the tatau division--usually some fa'aila on the outer side of the thighs, and, above the fa'avalala, each side of the genitals, two selu, or "comb-like designs" often occur. Between the base of the cleft of the buttocks and the top of the atigivae is a small area Groves (ms.) noted as being called tasele tapulu "(area) filled in (with) rapid strokes," which is very sensitive and is thus often hurried over.

Except where noted, the tufuga tatatau agreed concerning the terminology used, differences mainly appearing in descriptions employed by young or apprenticed tattooers.

The Motifs

These motifs are explained in Plate IV, alternative versions being indicated. Again, variations amongst tufuga tatatau were few concerning the terminology, and are indicated in parentheses.

The evidence indicates that gradually the younger tufuga tatatau are introducing changes into the terminology. This process has probably been going on for as long as the custom, terminological variations existing in most accounts of it.

IV. SECTARIAN, GOVERNMENTAL, AND ORDINARY ATTITUDES TO TRADITIONAL SAMOAN TATTOOING

Significant Sectarian Attitudes to Traditional Samoan Tattooing

The arrival of earnest Protestant and Catholic missionaries can be expected to have had some marked effects upon the Samoan way of life. Certainly the three most prominent Christian sects at work in Samoa since the last century,--the London Missionary Society (now Congregational Christian Church of Samoa), the Wesleyans (now Methodists) and the Roman Catholics--are to be debited or credited with regard to the present existence of traditional Samoan tattooing. One of the main reasons for its continuance, lies in some of the attitudes they promulgated which are discussed below.

A. The Influential Sects

(i) The London Missionary Society

Although a Samoan visiting Tonga in 1828 or 1829 is reputed to have introduced Wesleyan Christianity to Samoa in about 1829 (Morrell, 1960: 53), Christianity did not officially arrive until 1830 in the form of the London Missionary Society, and the person of the Reverend John Williams. Unlike their previous efforts in Tahiti, or those of the Wesleyans in Tonga, the London Missionary Society's efforts in Samoa were not to enjoy a similar almost unrivalled sway over that society and its practices. They were being rivalled in 1832 by the Wesleyans, and by 1845 the Catholics

were beginning their work. Thus, while London Missionary Society influence became considerable (by reason of certain powerful adherents), from the beginning it was by no means able to exercise a dictatorial power whereby the predilection for certain customs such as dancing and tattooing might be excised once and for all from the Samoan character.

Indeed, initially the "stamping out of sin" was subordinate to gaining a firm foothold in Samoa (Gilson, 1970:74). By the 1850's, however, the London Missionary Society was openly determined to:

...Christianize the law of the land--to ban activities and relationships, social and personal, that by mission standards were immoral or tainted by 'heathenish' associations, and to prescribe the ethics and conventions of puritanism (Gilson, 1970:96).

Thus, "for the sake of godliness and decency" (Ibid.), the Samoans were prevailed upon to change or to abandon many of their accustomed ways, tattooing included. The Reverend George Turner (1861:181) equated its "heathenish associations" with the ancient world wherein "Herodotus" found among the Thracians, that the barbarians..."would not respect "...the man who was not tattooed among them." He summed up the Society's views on the matter thus (183-184):

The waste of time, revelling, and immorality connected with the custom have led us to discountenance it; and it is, to a considerable extent, given up. But the gay youth still thinks it manly and respectable to be tattooed; parental pride says the same; and so the custom still obtains. It is not likely, however, to stand long before advancing civilization. European clothing, and a sense of propriety they are daily acquiring, lead them to cover the tattooed part of the body entirely; and, when its display is considered a shame rather than a boast, it will probably be given up as painful, expensive, and useless; and then, too, instead of the tattooing, experience, common sense and

education will determine whether or not the young man is entitled to the respect and privilege of mature years.

These were views which in no respect condoned the continuance of traditional Samoan tattooing. Tattooing was to be abolished (Gilson, 1970: 97).

(i) The Wesleyans

Malietao Vaiinupo, John Williams' principal patron, and at that time one of the most powerful chiefs, was unwittingly responsible for the brief, but remarkable growth of the Wesleyan following which resulted from his refusing to share the eight London Missionary Society teachers Williams had brought with other districts wishing to learn Christianity (Gilson, 1970:76). Thus the Wesleyans in Tonga were approached by the annoyed Samoans who also wanted to share in the great benefits Christianity appeared to promise. In response, the Tongan District Meeting resolved in 1834 to send the Reverend Peter Turner to Samoa (Morrell, 1960:55), a move which resulted in great gains for the Wesleyans.

Wesleyan progress was interrupted in 1839 when Turner was ordered to leave Samoa because the Wesleyans and the London Missionary Society had come to an agreement that the latter would continue to operate in Samoa, while the former shifted their efforts to Fiji (Morrell, 1960:56). Thus the Wesleyan following in Samoa, by Turner's report, upwards of 13,000 (Gilson, 1970:85) was left to its own devices, finally being disbanded in 1851-1852 by King George I of Tonga upon Wesleyan instructions (Gilson, 1970:126).

As far as the practice of tattooing is concerned, this lack of sustained formal Wesleyan proselytizing was probably all to the good because Wesleyan preaching had not apparently to that point proscribed tattooing in Samoa. Samoan Wesleyans, therefore, do not appear to have labored under the teaching that it was not Christian. Another ten years of sustained, foreign-directed Wesleyan influence could have resulted in ensuring the abolition of traditional tattooing which in Tonga was made illegal by his Wesleyan Majesty King George I (Pritchard, 1866:146).

An eventual reestablishment of formal Wesleyan efforts in Samoa in 1857 by the Australian Methodist Conference (Morrell, 1960:209) saw the continuance of that sect's identity, but in a far smaller and much less vigorous way.

(iii) The Roman Catholics

When Roman Catholic missionary work was begun in 1845 by French Marist fathers, it was in the face of general opposition inspired by Protestant anti-Catholic propaganda (Gilson, 1970:124). Nevertheless, they labored on regardless to achieve possibly one fifth of Upolu's Christian following by 1865 (Morrell, 1960:209).

In 1848, Father Padel, writing in a letter from Upolu (quoted in Monfat, 1890:71-72) describes his observation of traditional Samoan tattooing. It is an emotional account which well demonstrates how abhorrent the whole practice is to him. He regards the tatau as the "mark of the beast" (72), which he feels some spirit of evil which takes

pleasure in blood and deformity has decreed. Monfat's introductory comments (71) show he regards the practice as a "...palpable proof of the cruel barbaric customs of the old Samoans which are still going on." In addition, he quotes Father Poupinel (71) as calling traditional Samoan tattooing "...a shocking indelible way of painting on human skin."

In view of the preceding remarks it comes as a surprise that the Marists' expressed attitude to tattooing was lenient tolerance, and this was much condemned by the London Missionary Society because of the imagined attraction the, in this respect, less demanding Catholic faith would be to the fickle adherents of their own stricter sect (Gilson, 1970:127). Nevertheless, as it happened, the Marist attitude to traditional Samoan tattooing probably ensured its continuance, though it did not actually cause the feared defection from the London Missionary Society.

B. The Results of Sectarian Attitudes

A unified effort on the part of the three sects may have achieved the abolition of traditional Samoan tattooing. Unity of efforts was, of course, at that time impossible because of sectarian prejudices. Had the London Missionary Society and the Wesleyans, who had so much in common in beliefs and practice, worked together from the mid 1830's, they may have prevailed in getting tattooing abolished. They, between them, would have had relatively unrivalled influence over sufficient numbers to have completely discountenanced the practice by the mid 1840's, but they lacked the unity necessary to such cooperation.

Notwithstanding those possibilities, the London Missionary Society

did manage to abolish tattooing in Tutuila before 1850, but it emerged again in Leone in 1851 (Gilson, 1970:124). In fact, the practice was never again announced as satisfactorily abolished, but flourished from time to time under the patronage of the Catholics and the Wesleyans upon whose books no law declared it heathen to be tattooed. Besides their patronage, there was a gradual decline in what Grattan (1963:205) calls "...heavy pressures..." to make Samoans "...become lower class Englishmen." He continues:

That effort was early revealed to be quite futile. The natives might, to save themselves, have to accept new ways and new social values, though reluctantly, but they really did not have to become indistinguishable from the intruders in dress, housing, manners, work, and expectations in life. The result was that with all the missionary effort, not to mention the other influences at work upon them, the natives were progressively freer to maintain themselves as natives.

As Churchward (1887:392) noted "...in spite of missionary denunciation, (the men) still adhere to the practice of tattooing." Even within the London Missionary Society's fold, tattooing was being done, but the offender was required to forfeit good standing in the Society, becoming thus unable to take part in Communion services (Sapolu, pers. comm.). This was the extreme penalty in Samoa. Kraemer (1903:64) records that by 1898, only in Manu'a had tattooing been successfully abolished. However youths desirous of a tattoo would still go to Tutuila to get it, for which they had to pay a church fine of \$500 which then would have been rather considerable.

Although opposed very strongly to traditional Samoan tattooing,

the London Missionary Society seems to have thought better of instituting in Samoa some of the penalties they had instituted against it in Tahiti. Wright and Fry (1936), discussing the establishment of godly ways in Tahiti, mention the delight of the Reverends Tyerman and Bennet, visiting there in 1821 as a Society deputation to "...encourage the work of God" (54), in discovering that the Tahitian laws (which had actually been given to Pomare II by missionaries):

...were being used to stamp out the practice of heathenism. For example, tattooing, being associated with idolatry, 'was made a crime under the new laws, and when committed (which is very rare indeed) punished with very great severity.' A woman who backslid and had herself tattooed during the visitation of the brethren (i.e. Tyerman and Bennet) 'was immediately brought to trial, convicted, and the next morning, she was at work carrying stones to the pier, which was constructing on the beach at the hands of public offenders like herself. Because she chose to beautify herself in the manner of her ancestors for countless generations, this woman, and many another like her, was condemned to the life-destroying labor of a slave (61).

By this same year--1821--the London Missionary Society in Tahiti had so pressured other chiefs that it was inevitable that they should signify intentions to rule according to Bible-based principles (100). Thus when a rebellious group of Huahine youths decided to get tattooed, they were brought to trial and sentenced to hard labor--an action resulting in near civil strife (101). "Godly forces" prevailed, however, to the breaking of native spirits. In 1822, a woman was put in a deep, well-like pit until she repented two days later, while her tattooer was kept in a similar pit on breadfruit and water until sufficiently contrite (123). The worst example of missionary bigotry in this manner

was that "...of scarifying the tattooing to make 'foul blotches where elegant devices had been pricked in'" (124), this being resorted to when hard labor and confinement were not found to be sufficient deterrents.

Such measures in Tahiti resulted in a reaction against the Society and a general collapse of mission authority in the 1830's, by which time John Williams was looking beyond to Samoa's salvation. Somewhat wiser from the Tahitian experience, the London Missionary Society disapproved of Samoan tattooing, but did not repeat their pathetic and shocking Tahitian errors in Samoa.

C. The Present Situation

There are today (1972), 17 men living in Western Samoa who can do the traditional tatau. Of these, 11 are Roman Catholic, 4 are Methodist (Wesleyan), and 2 are Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (L.M.S.).

That the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa should have only two does not strike me as significant as their having any at all, considering the Church's negative attitude. Furthermore, these men have been practicing for 35 and 37 years, respectively. Cousins, they learned from the same man, the father of the one, the uncle of the other. He was also of the same Church. Between them they estimate having tattooed some 3,000 people, some hundred or so being women. Despite attempts to get them to discontinue the practice, they have felt strongly enough about it to keep it up--even though this means they cannot be granted full membership and the privilege of taking Communion (Tusi & Popo, pers. comm.). Similar strong feelings cause other members of this church to be tattooed

whereas a larger number will abstain. The Reverend Bert Williams Tofaeono, Principal of the Congregational Christian Church's Malua Theological College, expressed it as his opinion that many young people get caught up in the prevailing fad and do it, regardless of consequences. Such people would probably do better to join the Wesleyan Church and thus not compromise their membership (pers. comm.).

It would seem that the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa is possibly disposed to a gradual accommodation to the practice. Where once the church's handbook of regulations spoke out openly against the practice, it now only contains brief instructions that pastors may not receive food from a tattooing feast (Tofaeono, pers. comm.). Perhaps this is because they feel they have the situation under control now, or because Samoans now govern that church's affairs. Some pastors have tatau, but, I am told that that was before they devoted themselves to the ministry (Samatua Maua II, pers. comm.).

The Wesleyans in Samoa (officially called Methodists now) who number four living tufuga tatatau in their membership, cannot be said to have actively fostered the practice--they just did not get around to legislating against it, and so lived with the custom. Lene Milo, Secretary of the Methodist Conference of Samoa, stated that getting or having a tatau or malu constitutes no barrier to membership or advancement within that church (pers. comm.). In his opinion, many young men still like to have a malu.

The four Methodist tufuga tatatau estimate having tattooed some three thousand people, about 250 of whom were women (Isaia, Fa'ate'i,

Falenito, & Aimalefoa, pers. comm.). They believe that the custom is increasing and, certainly in their lifetimes, they have experienced no shame or had any stigma attached to them by their church because they chose to follow the profession of tufuga tatatau.

Of the remaining eleven tufuga tatatau who are Roman Catholics, it should be noted that seven of them inherited their profession through relatives from Tapu who was a member of the London Missionary Society. This group, incidentally, proves to be the most prolific of practicing tufuga tatatau. The other four appear to have inherited their profession through a purely Catholic line. (By "inherited" I mean "were apprenticed to and learned from," although some did do this under their fathers.)

These eleven men account for some nine thousand tattooed people, of whom about six hundred were women. I am at present unable to make any statement concerning the distribution of tattoos amongst the various sects in Samoa, but from the above, it seems possible to assume that Catholics may be more tattooed than members of any other sects. Father Louis Beauchemin, a Marist of forty-three year's service in Samoa, feels that the Catholic Church's apparent indifference to the practice has not only allowed, but also encouraged its continuance amongst Catholics (pers. comm.). That would tend to explain the predominance of Catholics in the profession itself. When important ceremonial events relating to the Catholic Church in Samoa occur, the people prefer those men taking part to be tattooed men. For instance, when Pope Paul VI visited Samoa in 1970, the Samoans involved in ceremonially welcoming

him were invariably tattooed (Beauchemin, pers. comm.). In the Catholic Church, at least, there appears to be a place--albeit not officially appointed--for tattooed men.

Attitude of Government

As far as an officially stated attitude to the practice of traditional Samoan tattooing is concerned, there really is not such a thing. If the wearing of a tatau may be regarded as a sign of approval, then the lack of one may perhaps be a tacit sign of disapproval, and the government leaders of Samoa today do not possess tatau. However, it should be understood that the people involved in the process of government in the independent state of Western Samoa are faced with the difficult task of progressing in the twentieth century as well as preserving the traditional fa'a-Samoa. The two might seem incompatible to outside observers, but to many Samoans, twentieth century progress alone could mean the annihilation of their identity, the uniqueness of being Samoan. The dilemma thus posed is: what do Samoans need from the present, the twentieth century, in order to benefit their way of life, and what do they need from the past, their traditions, in order to retain their identity as Samoans in a world where "sameness" is swiftly becoming the norm? I sought the views of some of those involved in government in one way or another.

In interviewing Acting Secretary to the Government, Karanita Enari, an attitude of indifference to the practice was discerned. He said he doubted whether any of the government leaders even gave it a thought. Indeed, it struck him as strange that anyone would want to bother to write about it. Educated overseas, he represents the view held by a number of similarly educated people: that traditional Samoan tattooing is not one of the characteristics of the fa'a-Samoa that needs to be

retained--especially since today status can be advanced by education, without a tatau (as, incidentally the Reverend George Turner (1861:184) hoped might one day be the case).

Tuiletufuga Henry Hunkin, at the time of writing Private Secretary to the Prime Minister of Western Samoa, as an individual is very much in favor of the retention of the practice. It is, to him, the "distinguishing mark" of the Samoan. He is, at 47, presently considering having his tatau which would not only, in his opinion, add to the dignity of the title he bears, but also contribute to the maintenance of the practice. Much of his thinking is also echoed by Mr. Dick Betham, Government Statistician.

One man who has already done what he believes is Superintendent Pa'u Young of the Western Samoa Police Force who was tattooed in 1960 when he was 37. Superintendent Young's father was a tattooed man, and this was his son's inspiration. A member of the Congregational Christian Church, he has not regretted having it done, and hopes that the custom will be retained for its unique contribution to being Samoan.

Ordinary Samoan Attitudes

It would seem logical for most modern Samoans to concur with Karanita Enari in feeling that there is not great significance in the Samoan tatau today. At least those educated overseas might be expected to be found in agreement with his attitude of indifference to the whole custom--at least that was what I expected to find. However, upon further investigation, it emerged that overseas educated Samoans are perhaps more cognizant of the value of a tatau to their Samoan identity than are others, and educated Samoans in general hold opinions favorable to the custom. This observation is corroborated by a University of the South Pacific researcher who noted in January and February of this year that many of the tattooed men he observed in Apia "were educated in Western ways and held good positions" (Engledow, pers. comm.).

Education has definitely helped to shape basic attitudes to the fa'a-Samoa, Samoan cultural lessons being an important part of the curriculum. With regard to tattooing, the teaching of Father B.X. Dougherty, Principal of Chanel College, has been strongly in support of the maintenance of the traditional practice as an integral part of the fa'a-Samoa. His influential advocacy of Samoan culture has probably been a contributing factor to the marked support of the practice of traditional Samoan tattooing amongst Roman Catholics. Eleven out of the seventeen practicing tufuga tatatau are Roman Catholics, and one of the youngest of these, Paulo Sulu'ape (who is twenty-one) readily ascribes to Father Dougherty the inspiration and encouragement which caused him to become a tufuga tatatau after he finished secondary school. Engledow

(pers. comm.) notes:

Two of the boys I met in the process of having tattoos are in the 6th form at Catholic High Schools (sic.) and are hoping to do well enough on their U.E. (University Entrance) exams to win scholarships. Another who had just finished his tattoos was home from New Zealand where he is taking a law degree.

Samoans who are studying at The Church College of Hawaii generally hold traditional Samoan tattooing in high esteem (although of twenty interviewed only two actually plan to do something about getting themselves tattooed), and will readily admit that the pain to be endured is a contributing factor to their not wishing to be tattooed despite their admiration of it.

Some consideration of the pain (excruciating pain being one of the most significant features of the operation) has caused Paulo Sulu'ape (pers. comm.) to consider buying electric equipment from New Zealand because he does not think pain is a feature necessary of retention in this present age. Although many Samoans will readily agree with him, some will feel strongly that this is "cheating" and it will likely be they who will get tattooed while the others just talk about it. The younger generation would largely like to have a tattoo, but have no desire to endure the pain of getting it.

Women interviewed generally did not feel that a tattoo would add to their husband's or a man's attractions. Fa'ate'i Tanea, a 42 year old villager of Fagae'e, Savai'i, said his wife was not pleased he had just been tattooed. As far as getting a malu for themselves, nearly all were adamant: "Not for me!" One young woman was tattooed by virtue of family majority rule, and would--left to herself--not have had it done (Viliamu,

(pers. comm.).

Most young men interviewed showed a definitely strong interest in having a pe'a, as the tatau is called colloquially. Some were desirous of the prestige, in terms of courage and endurance, which this tattoo could confer, not to mention its significance to them as means of asserting their Samoan identity. Others merely wished to be ornamented since others were being thus ornamented. It is this latter group which tends to nullify the social significance the tatau can have as an index of a man's accomplishment in fa'a-Samoa terms--his dancing ability, knowledge of customs, and correct deportment, for example. Because of the unimpressive example of people like this, some who might otherwise be tattooed will decide not to get tattooed (Atoa, pers. comm.).

V. CONCLUSIONS

That traditional Samoan tattooing should be the only extant example of this once widespread Polynesian cultural characteristic is apparently explicable in terms of the great vitality of the fa'a-Samoa which, despite great influences and pressures of an alien nature for the abolition of tattooing, allowed such modification as was necessary to its continuance to take place. Thus, by making some concessions to changing times, it was possible to maintain a practice that elsewhere in Polynesia was totally wiped out. Of course, the less bigoted approach of the London Missionary Society in Samoa, after their unfortunate experience in Tahiti, could have contributed to its continuance by reason of their not having adopted such extreme measures against the practice as they had in Tahiti. Certainly their not having had unrivalled sway in Samoa, as they had had in Tahiti, allowed for the continuance of the practice under the protection of other sects less stringent in regard to their views about tattooing. Nevertheless, the predominant influence which prevailed for the maintenance of this cultural characteristic would appear to have been the fa'a-Samoa itself, of which tattooing was once a significant and integral part, and which, over the last seventy years, has encouraged its continuance, although its basic reasons for being done have not been totally valid (in traditional terms) during this period.

It is manifestly obvious from travelling extensively in Savai'i and Upolu that the practice of the art of traditional Samoan tattooing is far from dead in Western Samoa. Contrary to my personal expectations,

most of the practicing tufuga tatatau are in Upolu--ten, as opposed to three in Savai'i.

Other significant points are as follows:

- (i) 17 Western Samoan men exist who are tufuga tatatau (5 from Savai'i, 12 from Upolu), but of these, only 13 at present are working, or are able to work;
- (ii) The Roman Catholic Church appears to have fostered the art best, 11 of the living tufuga tatatau being from that Church. (Of the remaining 6, 4 are Methodists, and 2 are Congregational Christian Church.);
- (iii) Interest in having a tatau is definitely strong and increasing--especially amongst young men--while the pe'a malu for women is not at all popular;
- (iv) Traditional methods are maintained as far as the mode of the operation is concerned, the ceremonial parts, however, being neglected;
- (v) Acculturation is evidenced in the use of plastic bowls, corned beef tins, drugs, and other modern items, as well as the use of kerosene soot pigment;
- (vi) While some educated people tend to disregard the significance of tattooing in modern Samoan life, there are others to whom it is a meaningful part of being Samoan;
- (vii) Amongst villagers--especially the youths--traditional tattooing is of increasing significance;
- (viii) Designs are far more intricate, now than was formerly the case, the modern taste tending to elaborate fine patterns as opposed to

the former preference for tapulu, or large dark areas;

(ix) Deaths appear to be rare from tattooing today, probably because anti-biotic tablets and other drugs can be resorted to;

(xi) Painkilling injections, resorted to by some, are believed by some tufuga tatatau to spoil the color of a tatau--in some cases death has resulted from these;

(xii) The gaining of a tatau appears to be popular in the police force--possibly because Superintendent Pa'u Young has one;

(xiii) There are about as many versions of the legend of Taema and Tilafaiga as people who profess to know it, each version reflecting most favorably upon the 'aiga of the teller;

(xiv) The oldest practicing tufuga tatatau is 87, the youngest 18, and of the 11 practicing tufuga tatatau, five are under 25;

(xv) It is estimated, from interviewing the tufuga tatatau, that they have tattooed approximately 15,000 people, roughly 1000 of these being women;

(xvi) Fa'alavelave Petelo, probably the most renowned tufuga tatatau, tattooed approximately 300 people in 1972.

Since traditional Samoan tattooing represents the sole remaining example of what was once a distinctive feature of the cultures of the Polynesian peoples, it is to be hoped most fervently that it too will not die out. Purely from the standpoint of aesthetics, Samoan tattooing, when well executed, is a thing of beauty which has nothing in common with the tradition-less tattooing of sailors, servicemen, and the many so-called "swinging" young people of the United States. Traditional Samoan

tattooing at its best is unequalled for draughtsmanship and design by any tattooing of the European world.

Above all else, the possession of a traditional tatau is now a uniquely Samoan privilege in a world where "sameness" is swiftly destroying the cultural differences which make our world so interesting. As the great pressures of commercialization more and more affect Samoan life, it is a distinct possibility that the continuance of traditional Samoan tattooing may be affected. Western Samoa's former Prime Minister, Tupua Tamasese Lealofi IV (Va'a, 1970), recognizing these pressures in the form of tourism, expressed the fa'a-Samoa outlook with regard to the preservation of Samoan Identity thus:

When you consider that the social rules, traditions and customs of Samoa are something which we use every day and are something which affect our attitude toward most aspects of our life, then you can understand the diffidence which has prompted Samoan leaders in the past, as well as now, to be in two minds about tourism.

To Samoans it is not just a question of choosing between traditions and customs, and money. It is choosing between money and a way of life and that decision is not an easy one to make.

For, if the "free time" of Samoans were "commercialized"--to borrow some words from Sebastian de Grazia (1964:324)--might it not be that Samoans will be caused to conform to international norms, and, since traditional Samoan tattooing would not be marketable on a large scale, it would probably have to go (de Grazia used marble cutting as an example of a Western skill that declined as a result of the commercialization of free time)? Then sameness would triumph again at the expense of a unique

art. Traditional Samoan tattooing distinguishes Samoans from all other peoples in a very beautiful way, and is therefore, a worthwhile characteristic of Samoan culture to preserve.

It would seem safe to conclude from the research thus far done that, the fa'a-Samoa being maintained, tattooing after the traditional manner shall probably continue at least another 50 years, if not indefinitely. The accompanying ceremonial, already neglected, would appear to have no future by reason of its lack of relevance in many ways to the present Christianized attitudes of most Samoans. The wearing of a traditional tatau is apparently significant of a new generation of Samoans who are choosing what they wish to retain of traditional practices within the framework of the fa'a-Samoa. The malu of the women, on the other hand, shall probably not be in existence in fifty years.

Other non-traditional forms of tattooing shall probably long be practiced, for it appears that the Samoans have a decided predilection for tattooing of any kind.



Fig. 11. Diagram showing the position of the
center of the galaxy in the sky.

APPENDIX

| Name of the object | Right ascension | Declination | Magnitude | Distance (light years) | Type of object | Remarks |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------|------------------------|----------------|---------|
| NGC 140 | 12 55 10 | -10 40 00 | 11.5 | 1500 | Spiral | NGC 140 |
| NGC 141 | 12 55 10 | -10 40 00 | 11.5 | 1500 | Spiral | NGC 141 |
| NGC 142 | 12 55 10 | -10 40 00 | 11.5 | 1500 | Spiral | NGC 142 |

Fig. 12. Diagram showing the position of the
center of the galaxy in the sky.

I

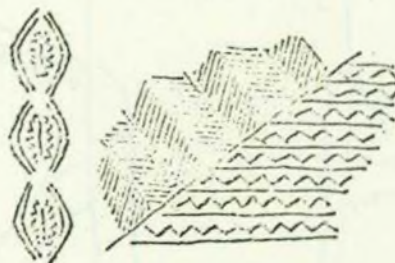


Fig. 1. Fijian Pattern Carved on a Club.
Handle (Edge-Partington, 1898:55)



Fig. 2. Fijian Pattern Printed on Tapa
Cloth (Brigham, 1911:Plate 34)

II

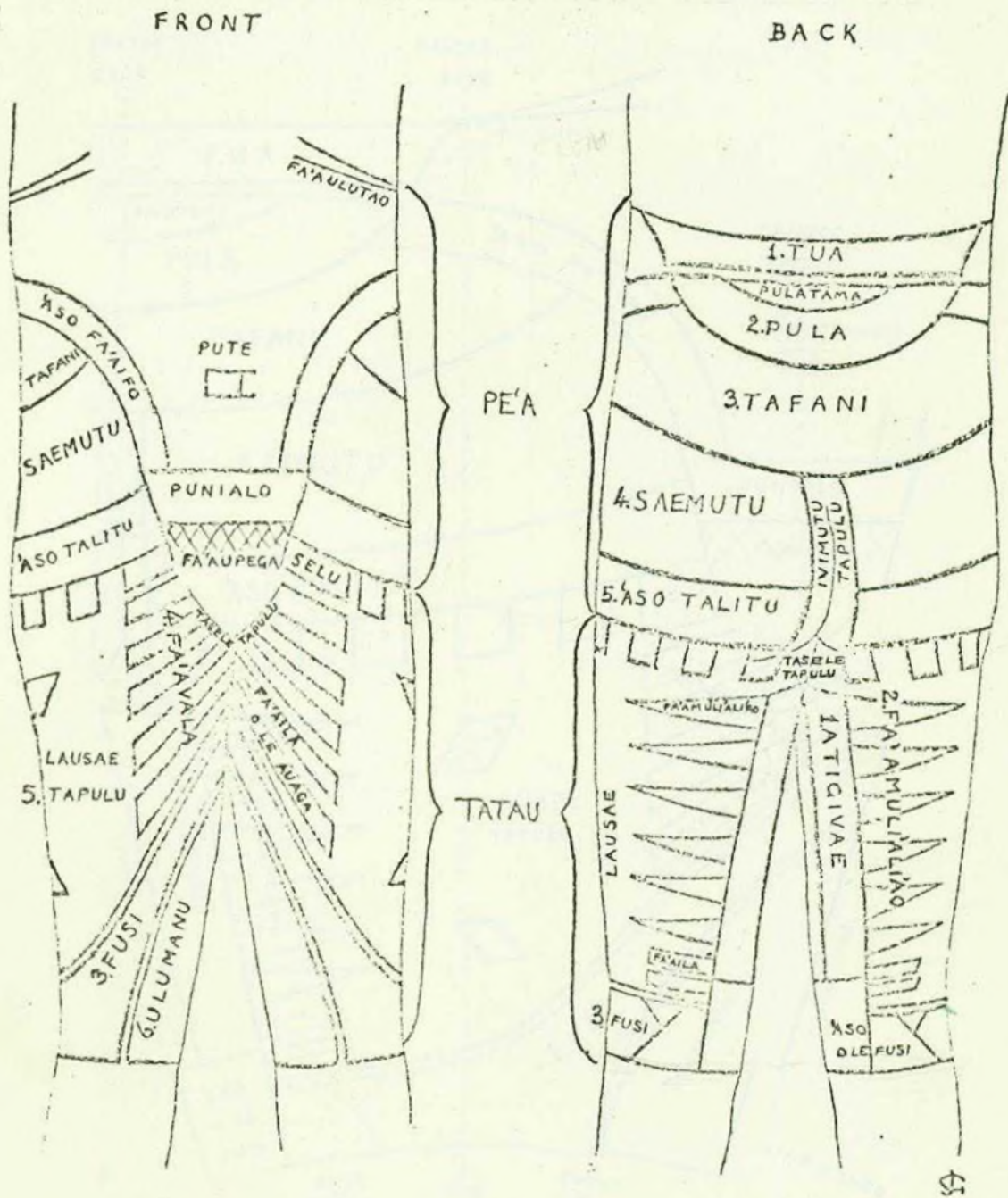


Fig. 3. The Divisions of the Tatau
(Adapted from Groves (ms.) and augmented)

IV




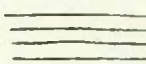


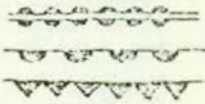
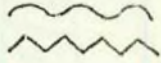

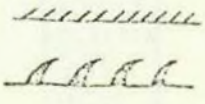
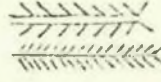
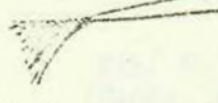

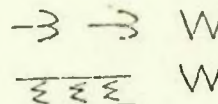
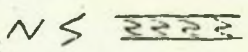

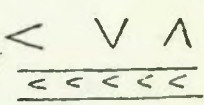

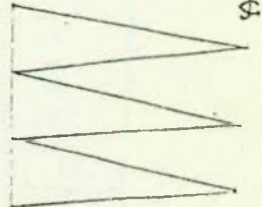
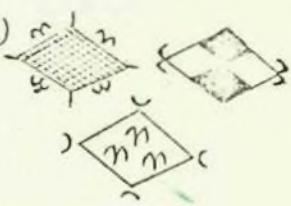
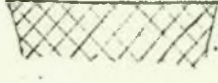
- 1* 'ALU'ALU Jelly fish 
- 2* 'ASO Line 
- 3* 'ASO MOELUA A pair of lines 
- 4 'ASO LAITITI Small lines 
- 5 'ASO TOGITOGI Dotted lines 
- 6 FA'A'ALI Like a headrest 
- 7 FA'ALAUTALAPAOGO Like the barbed pandanus leaf (FA'ATALALAPAOGO) 
- 8* FA'ANUFE Like a caterpillar 
- 9 FA'ASIGANO Like pandanus 
- 10* FA'ATALA Like barbs (thorns) 
- 11* FA'AATUALOA Like a centipede 
- 12 FA'AULUTAO Like a fishing spear end 
- 13* FETI Star (Starfish) 
- 14* COGO Seagull 
- 15* MOELUA (Items) side by side 
- 16* TOGITOGI Dots 
- 17* VAETULT Bird feet (VAEALI) (Headrest legs) 
- 18 FA'A'ILA Like patches (windows) 
- Note that these are grouped together only for example of types of fa'aila. Normally they would not be grouped like this.
- 19 FA'AMULI'ALT'AO Like the end of a mollusc 
- These, of course, are usually filled with other motifs.
- 20* MALU Fish basket (Used only on women) 
- 21 FA'AUPEGA Like a net 
- * Motifs used in women's tattoos

Fig. 5. Samoan Tattooing Motifs
(Adapted from Groves (ms.) and augmented)

V

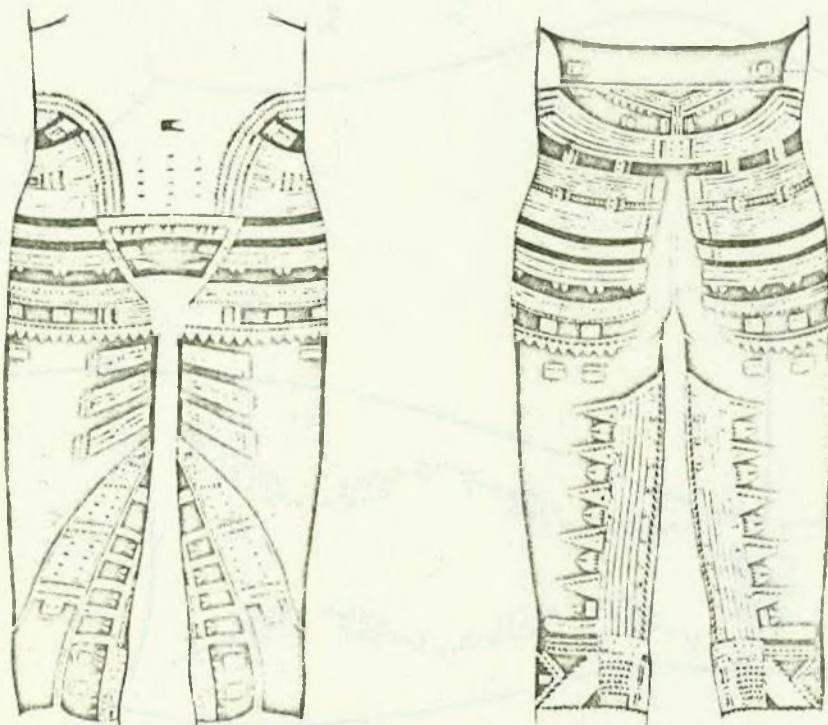


Fig. 6. The Tatau
(Handy, 1924:Plate 6)

VI

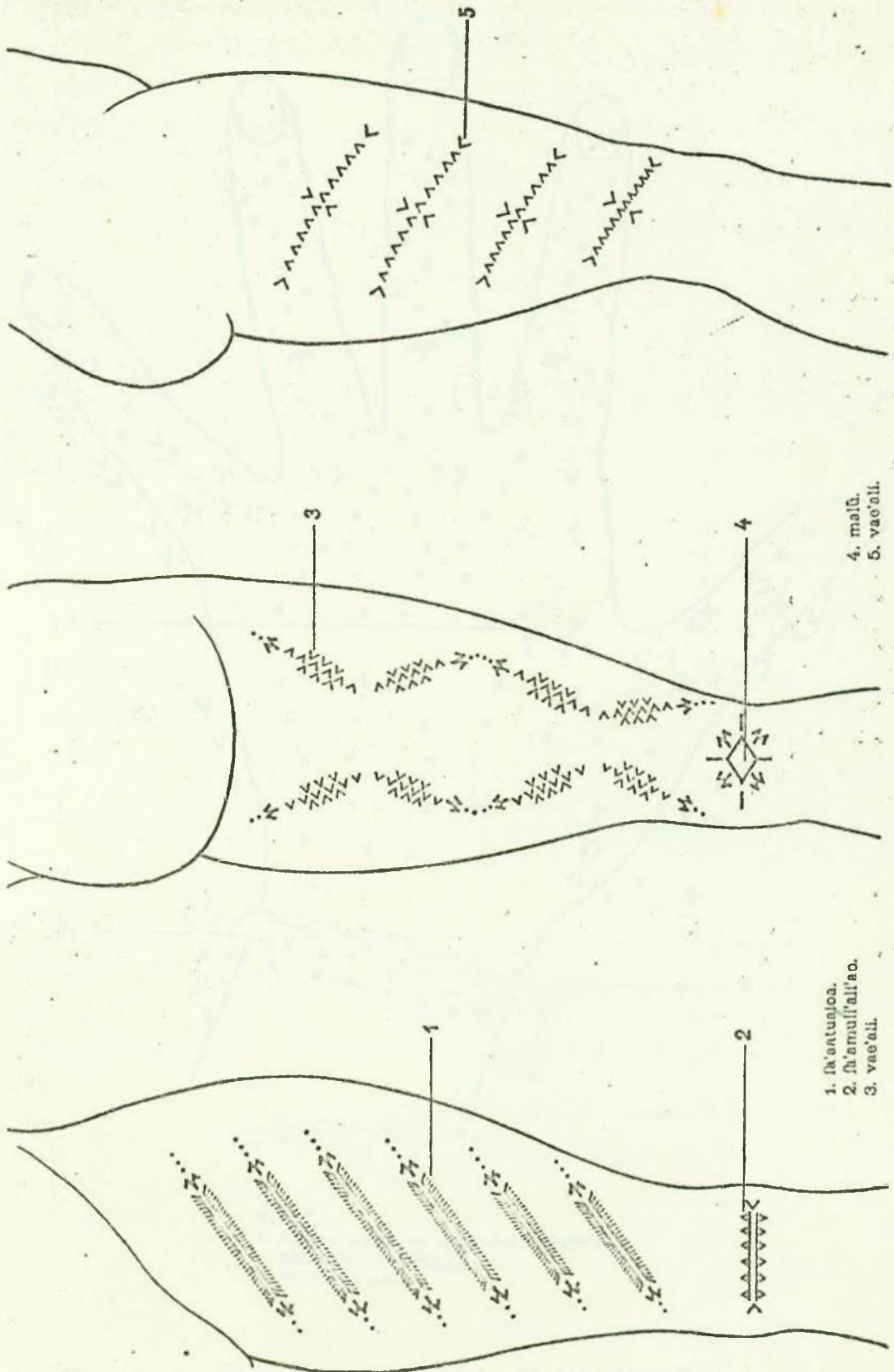
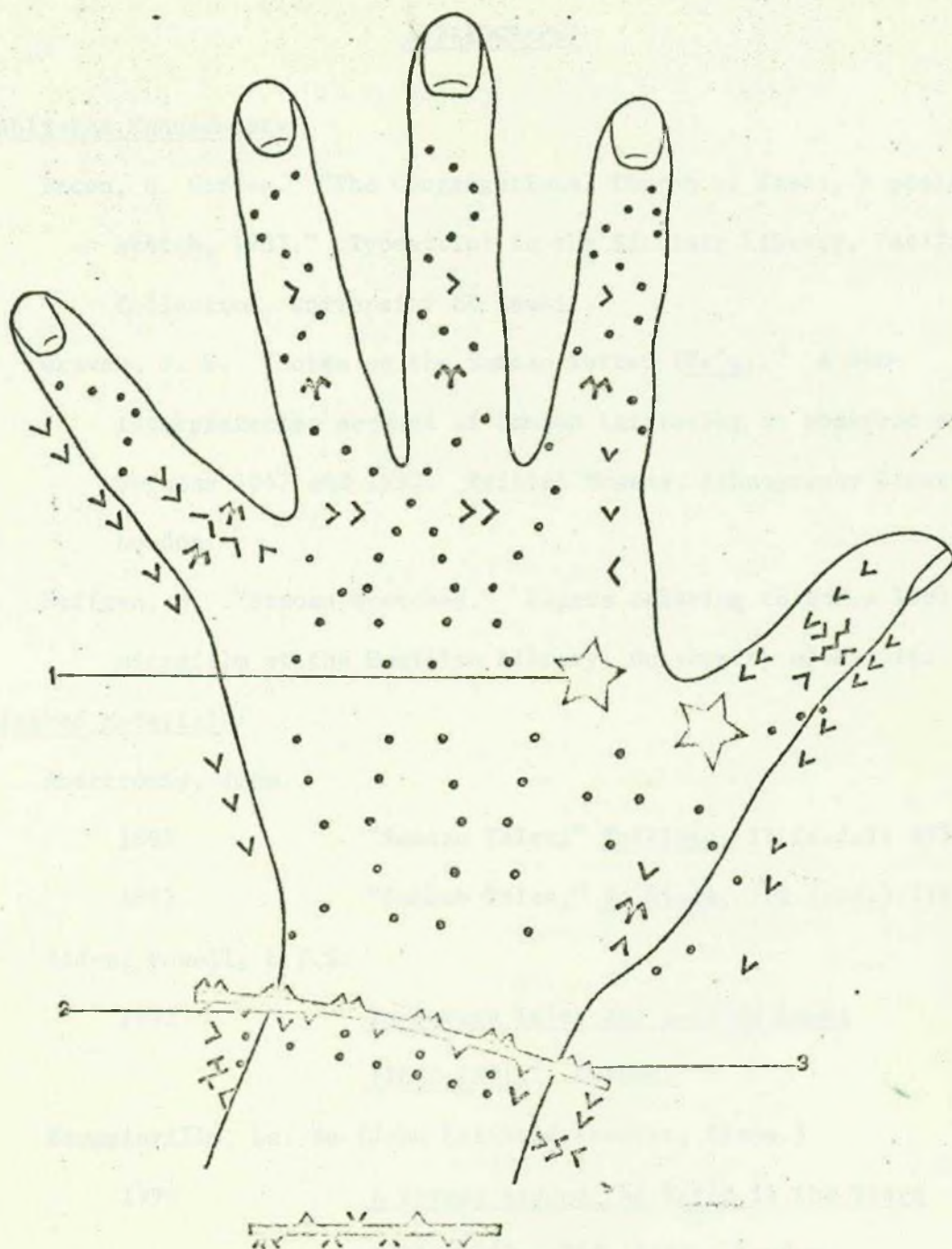


Fig. 7. Details of the Malu
(Marquardt, 1899:Taf. XII)

VII



1. fetā.
2. fusi (so heisst die ganze das Handgelenk umschliessende Binde).
3. fe'amuli'ul'ao.

Fig. 8. An Example of the Malu Nunu
(Marquardt, 1899:Taf. XVI)

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