Development Discourse and the Politics of Environmental Ideologies in Samoa

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The demise of Samoa’s native forests and coral reefs is suggestive of similar environmental transformations occurring in rural areas throughout the Pacific and the world. The more conventional explanations of why such transformations occur do not hold when applied to Samoa, yet they are commonly invoked within development policy debates affecting the local politics of land. The latter are far more salient to understanding why things are the way they are in Samoa. But then this is likely to hold true for other areas of the Pacific or the extent that such policies are entwined with the politics of island governance. And they likely play a central role in similar ways whenever customary rules matter and people are dependent upon the control of land for their power, prestige, and survival. Conventional explanations provide valuable insights, but they do not adequately account for the effects of local (unwritten) policies and the ways in which administered policies infuse the social relations mediating local environmental practices.

Keywords: co-management, conservation, customary land, Pacific islands, Samoa

We Pacific islanders share a common aspiration for sustainable development. For thousands of years we lived a relatively sustainable way of life at a fairly low level of material well-being—a level we no longer consider adequate. We are strongly committed to maintaining the harmony which has characterized Pacific island peoples’ relationship with their environment; we do not want the pursuit of material benefits to undermine our cultural systems and values nor to cause any permanent harm to the land and marine resources which have allowed us to sustain island life for many centuries. Therein lies our dilemma. (Pacific Island Developing Countries 1992, 8)

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Regional policy references to the more adverse environmental effects of development in the Pacific tend to refer to the depletion of forest and coral reef resources by rural villagers. That is, they refer to the actions of those people, or those groups of people, who are generally the most dependent upon their islands’ ecology for their well-being. The dominant explanations for such actions focus on human population pressures, knowledge, and necessity, or the domination of state and other external interests. Thus, for example, there may be too many people, or too many people who do not understand the effects of what they are doing, or who have little choice in what they do or little control over what is happening to them. None of these explanations hold more than tangentially when applied to Samoa, nor are they likely to hold any more so when applied to most islands of the Pacific. They are, however, repeatedly invoked in policy debates in ways suggestive of their currency within a more global discourse of development. The perspectives promoted privilege specific interpretations while negating others, and they invoke often hidden assumptions justifying the policies with which they are associated. They also tend to obscure any potent understanding of the social relations mediating local natural resource access and use. Yet, as I argue here, such understanding is essential to explaining Pacific island transformations, and its relative absence in development debates explains, in part, the discrepancies between the intended and actual effects of state and regional policies.1

A recurring theme at the center of the debates concerns the appropriate balance between state and local control of natural resources. Shifts between centralized and decentralized forms of control characterize the history of development administration in general, but they generally occurred as a means of promoting state interests when state capacity to obtain direct compliance varied (see Olson in press c.f. Romm 1996). The more recent shifts, promoted widely in the form of cooperative (or co-) management, have a similar aspect to them, yet they often include postcolonial perspectives of community-based management and thereby suggest an altered element. In the extreme, these perspectives depict rural communities “as sites of consensus and sustainability” as a means of promoting greater local control, and in ways challenging, if not challenging, images, promoting the legitimacy of greater state control (Li 1996). Accuracy in these descriptions, however, seems to be less of a consideration than effecting a political purpose through the institutions of the state. The stakes concern as much, if not more so, the control over rural people as they have any apparent concern with environmental conditions. Similar images of rural communities, with seemingly similar intent, were invoked by colonial authorities as early as two centuries ago when justifying colonial interventions in precolonial forms of local domination (e.g., see Bremen 1988; Kemp 1991). Their persistence within current policy debates suggests the strategic value of promoting competing images. But such strategies do little to promote an understanding of the local effects of development policies, nor do they inspire much confidence in the corresponding analyses of environmental practices and rural life.

Pacific island villages tend to exercise the degree of discretion those promoting local resource control advocate. Colonial authorities in the Pacific, in general, established central government protections of the local control of land, and they governed through administrative structures, of villages and district, dependent upon an authority derived from custom (Olson in press). Where this structure of authority did not exist prior to colonialism, the colonial states created it (e.g., see France 1969). But the practices also occurred from below, both as a means of negotiating state power and as a means of establishing claims locally (as in Keezing 1992). Today, in excess of 80% of the respective island’s lands are customary lands, or lands held from the respective states under principles of custom.2 As a result, and as an attempt to show in the context
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of Samoa, tensions with respect to issues of governance in the Pacific tend to emerge within a politics of custom, a discourse of contention over the meaning of custom, where land is the geopolitical referent of contention and the literal field upon which the tensions play out.

Rural communities of people possess the degree and character of control that Samoan villages commonly do. Samoan villages commonly control radial divisions of land, from mountain ridges to the sea, or areas, such as watersheds, with little likelihood of ecological effects being displaced to one group by the actions of another. Comprised of kin groups, they are, in relative and general terms, highly autonomous and cohesive. Little evidence exists to suggest they lack the capacity to control the adverse effects attributed to them, nor is there much evidence to suggest they lack sufficient understanding of the effects of their actions with respect to the deme of their native forests and coral reefs. To the extent that such transformations are problematic within Samoan villages, the problems are posed in ways more suggestive of the shifting currents of development discourse than any emergent shift in Samoan values. And yet, Samoans perceive themselves to derive sufficient benefits from their native forests and coral reefs to suggest that they would seek to maintain these resources’ viability, but, in general, they do not (Olson 1995).

Local control of natural resources may be a necessary condition for maintaining the cultural and ecological integrity proposition of community-based management evi-
sion, but at least in Samoa it is not sufficient. In Samoa, local institutions function with far less integrity in the east, but the environmental transformations are far more pronounced in the west. The different institutional effects are a product of different colonial histories.12 The different environmental effects are a general by-product of different political economies. Eastern Samoans function primarily within a wage and welfare economy generally dependent upon the state. Most western Samoans func-
tion primarily within rural village economies, where one’s social position and power remain generally dependent upon the local structure of control over land resources. Such patterns of control are more general to the Pacific (cf. Ward and Kingdon 1995), and the relationships they suggest, between land, power, and identity, are such that the tensions described are likely to have played out in similar ways in more places than Samoa. But they also likely play a central role wherever customary rules matter. By customary rules, I refer primarily to the social relations of power negotiating the rights and obligations operative within a group of people, such as a village community. The basic tensions between state and local control commonly refer to the mode of such rules’ expression and enforcement, and in the absence of external control, such as that affected by the state, customary processes tend to be controlling. I address these themes next in terms of colonial conceptions of community and communal land, state environmental policies, and the politics of Samoan transformations, before concluding with some comments on the more general implications of current development politics.

Colonial Conceptions of Community and Communal Land

In the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, while colonial authority spread rapidly throughout the world, the dominant ethos of colonialism was the protection of the indigene. In terms of policy, this meant the protection of local institutions controlling native lands and customs. The model to be avoided, at least in the Pacific, was what had happened to the Maori of New Zealand and Hawai‘i and to the Indians of North America. The reference was to the general separation of people from their lands. Just after 1900 the dominant ethos shifted again, to one of more forced assimilation and
civilizing of the "native races." The strategies implemented included both the removal of native lands from native control and the promotion of changes in native land tenures. At the time this shift occurred, native populations had experienced unabated low levels or continued rates of decline beginning with European contact. Vast areas of land were typically seen as empty, lying idle or in waste, and native races as ending to extinction. Saving the natives in this logic meant modifying local councils of native lands, primarily as a means of increasing agricultural production. Land was removed from native control throughout the colonized world, and changes in native land tenures were directed at making them more consistent with the colonizers' conceptions of social justice.

The conceptions of justice promoted were generally based on common conceptions of natural law, as expressed, for example, within English common law and its recognition of the rights of individuals to their land, to convey land to one's heirs, and to control exclusively the benefits derived from one's labor (cf. Hooker 1975; Arneil 1992). In Samoa, as in the Pacific, the greatest tensions arose when colonial authorities attempted to appropriate local authoritative resources in ways threatening local structures of control (cf. Hempenstall and Rutherford 1984). But the level of resistance in Samoa was minor in the east compared to what occurred in the west. American authorities successfully promoted the separation of the judicial, executive, and legislative powers of the governing councils of Samoan villages, and they succeeded in making customary authority generally dependent upon the authority of the state (Olson 2000).

New Zealand authorities attempted political intrusions of equal or greater magnitude in the west, where their German predecessors had not, but the tensions their policies created resolved with opposite effect into greater village autonomy (Olson in press; see also Meleisea 1987).

As in the east, New Zealand authorities attempted to restructure the authority of district and village councils in ways that increased their effectiveness as instruments of centralised control. They did so both as a means of implementing their development policies and as a means of achieving what they characterized as "a drastic change in the existing land system" (New Zealand 1925, 16). As was common to colonial regimes in general, their concerns for Samoan lands centered on the extent of land not under commercial production and on the structure of local customary, or chiefly, or (in Samoan mana, authority. As they noted in their annual reports:

To hold a (matua) title carrying with it the pole of ownership of a large area of land is the highest ambition of the Samuans, not for the purpose of cultivating it and increasing his wealth, but chiefly for the prestige it gives him. Every acre of land is owned by some family. It is divided into areas of varying extent. Each area is owned (a better term would be "controlled") by the Mатаi who holds the title which carries with it the authority to use or control that area. (New Zealand 1925, 10)

The Natives jealously guard against encroachment from adjacent villages, but within their village boundaries large areas of land are lying idle. The planned areas are, however, assigned to some chief or Matai, who in turn sub-divides his land amongst the members of his family. It is this system, which offers no encouragement or incentive for individual enterprise, that is holding back the development of new areas of Native lands. (New Zealand 1926, 7–8)
While the specific policies were not implemented in the ways in which they were intended, colonial authorities promoted similar conceptions of development in Samoa from the earliest inceptions of the state. They did so by privileges the rights of individuals over the rights of groups with respect to land, in both their administrative policies and judicial decisions. In doing so they promoted a conception of law providing the philosophical basis for institutions of private property, the antithesis of their conception of Samoan "custom" the conception of rights they attempted to effect when adjudicating Samoan land and chiefly title disputes (Olson 1997b). While they tended not to view their actions in political terms, their policies had both political and ecological effects.

State Environmental Policies

Under colonial authority, Samoa’s environmental transformations were generally consistent with colonial conceptions of development. And under colonialism in general, environmental policies tended to be integrated with development policies promoting commercial agricultural production. Where separate or separable, they were usually associated with colonial concerns for soil erosion, water quality, timber supply, and other intensities associated with forests and human health, but not as something distinct from colonial conceptions of development (cf. Grove 1985). With the rise of counter-colonial discourses of development globally, the form of environmentalism promoted in Samoa, as in the islands of the Pacific, began to shift toward conceptions of cultural and ecological integrity. But the policies promoted were similarly dependent upon modifying local structures of control, and in the Pacific they were particularly constrained by the extent of customary land (cf. Carew-Redd 1989). In their most extreme, but dominant, form, the policies sought, through a network of protected areas, to exclude people from lands they claimed by ancestral rights, except, in limited instances, from “customary use in accordance with traditional cultural practices” (United Nations Environment Programme 1987). While seldom defined, “customary use” and “traditional cultural practices” were most often associated with the policies’ proponents with a precolonial past, and were often erroneously understood to be less invasive in ecological terms.

Recent policies are often strikingly different when compared to the past, but their more local effects are not. Jaju is the colonial state in Samoa intent on effecting the conversion of native forests to landscapes characterized by commercial agricultural plantations, colonial policies promoted the extinction of wildlife seen as limiting agricultural productivity. While this was more true of the west than of the east, early conservation policies generally met with little interest, let alone compliance (see, e.g., American Samoa 1954: 22). Samoans, east and west, needed little encouragement to consume their wildlife, especially those thought to interfere with their agricultural production. Nor did they appear to exhibit any great attachment to the specific character of their forests, having died of long before European arrivals, major changes in the ecology of their forests (Olson 1997a). And while both states banned such destructive practices as the use of dynamite and poisons in fishing, such bans appear to have had little measurable effect, nor have similar bans on hunting effected the targeted species’ protection from hunting or from hunting’s more adverse ecological effects (Olsen, 1995).5

Given the history of state policies, it is somewhat ironic that deforestation is now most often identified as Samoa’s major environmental problem. But use of the
term deforestation to characterize the changes in Samoan's forests is misleading, as are the estimates and common explanations of Samoan's native forest clearance. Were one to evaluate the changes in terms of forest cover, there would be no essential difference from 50 or 100 years ago to today (see Olson 1995). What has occurred is something akin to colonial decline: a conversion of the native hardwood forests to an agricultural forest, a forest composed of trees, albeit not the same species, but not deforestation in the literal sense of the term, nor in the sense of a reduced capacity for a specific forest type to regenerate. The distinctions in meaning are more than semantic. The discussion of deforestation in Samoa tends to be framed in terms of what rural people do in effecting it. Thus, in most analyses, villagers are the causal agents, and their agricultural practices, especially on steep slopes, erode the soil, pollute water environments, reduce freshwater quality and quantity, and contribute to the most general adverse effects associated with forest clearance through shifting cultivation (e.g., see Tuite‘alo 1993). These arguments are commonly applied to other parts of the world. They have saliency in Samoa, but not to the extent that one would be led to believe by the frequency with which they are invoked.

Rural villagers in Samoa are effecting the forest conversions described. It would be difficult to convincingly argue otherwise. But they have been doing so, in similar ways over a similar extent of land, for centuries (Olson 1997a). Samoans tend to view the changes as temporary and describe them, much as soil scientists do, as areas that will revert to native forest. If not "within a short time," then soon thereafter, although some persistent problems in forest regeneration occur (see Wright 1963, 39; Nakamura 1984, 34; Olson 1995). Samoans continue to reflect the changes through means generally consistent with their precolonial past (as described in Green and Davidson 1969), and they commonly do so in ways "well adapted" even to Samoa's steepest slopes, or in ways having a negligible effect on soil erosion rates (Nakamura 1984, 31).

The current patterns of forest conversion in Samoa have occurred with increasing rural populations. But forest conversion has occurred at times of reduced rural populations, as in the 1920s and 1930s. And it has occurred under conditions of high emigration since the 1950s, with increasing shortages of agricultural labor in rural areas, and very low, if not stable or diminishing, rates of resident population growth since the mid 1970s (see Olson 1995). Thus, if population pressures were the determining factor, the changes in forest cover would directly correspond to changes in population. Forests would wax and wane with the directional changes in population levels, depending upon the regenerative capacity of the forests. But this is not what happened. People continued to clear additional lands despite the lack of people available to work them and despite the existence of previously cleared lands still suitable for agriculture.

Extracting factors, such as changing needs and expectations, or the changing influence of agricultural markets, may mask, or accentuate, the relationships between population and forest clearance. Thus, individuals may clear and farm more land, or anticipate farming more land, as other needs and incentives to do so increase. But this reasoning makes little sense in explaining relatively short-term phenomena. Over the long term, per capita agricultural production in Samoa has diminished or stagnated since the 1920s, or lagged far behind the levels expected in most economic analyses. And yet Samoans have responded to market incentives and demographic changes. They just have not always done so in the ways commonly desired by development economists. Western Samoans increased the size of their coconut plantations during the 1920s and 1930s as a partial response to market opportunities. And they did so much in the way they established banana and cocoa plantations in the 1940s and
1950s and then taro (Colocasia esculenta) and kava (Piper methysticum) production in the 1960s. Each sequence extended production outward from coastal villages inland into different climatic zones. When the long-term market, or market price, shifted, the crops’ production shifted. But the forest conversions continued (see O’Meara 1986; Paulison 1992; Olson 1995).

Those who invoke economic exigencies in their explanations of environmental degradation focus on the lack of choice rural people have in how they survive. And those who invoke theories of state domination and the domination of both the land and labor by the state focus on the political economy of surplus extraction, for example, in the term of taxes and commodity price differentials, or in the different capacities to affect what people do with their labor. When applied to Samoa and the Pacific, however, two basic problems with such reasoning arise. First, Samoans, as with most Pacific islanders, control the means of their production. They control the land upon which they live and from which they survive. Second, they generally live within what many have characterized as subsistence affluence (see O’Meara 1986). They do not need to keep clearing their forests to survive. And if they did, we should expect to see evidence of more intensive cultivation and diminishing agricultural yields from declining soil fertilities, but, in general, we do not (cf. Paulison 1992). In Samoa, as in the Pacific, the general flow of money (or surplus) is downward from the state, and not upward from rural villages (cf. Carey-Reid 1989). Western Samoans have not paid local taxes, of any kind, so the state since the 1920s. And like their counterparts throughout the Pacific, they have extended their social networks, reaped the remittance benefits from the export of their labor, and diversified their income-generating opportunities in ways that lessen the pressures to farm intensively, rather than increase them (cf. James 1993).

In the late 1960s a state-sponsored forest industry facilitated the harvesting of western Samoa’s forests. In doing so it enabled villages to land projects, such as schools and churches, through timber receipts, as described, for example, by Cox and Elmqvist (1991). But it is misleading to assume, as these authors and others do, that the general process of forest clearance was tied to a forest industry or coerced by state and external interests. The majority of timber cut after 1978 was located on lands controlled by villages, and from lands leased by villages to the state for production forestry. But villages, in general, resisted efforts to maintain production forestry on newly harvested lands, and, in some cases, they physically “repossessed” land leased to the “Government” and land claimed outright by the state (Setag 1990:20; Zdanovitch 1997:258). Villagers destroyed equipment of a company appearing to have state approval to log, but not the approval of the district, and villagers have repeatedly encroached on protected areas and agricultural areas under state control, through dynamiting fish or cultivating land, with few repercussions (Elston 1985; Paulison 1992; Reit 1985). The evidence suggests, albeit not in such simple terms, that when western Samoans want their land back, they take it, and when they want the logging to stop, they stop it. This is hardly the image of an oppressed people.

The Politics of Samoan Transformations

The patterns of landscape change in western Samoa are tied most closely to the changing nature of local land rights, and the destruction of coral reefs and the depletion of inshore fisheries are tied most closely to the reduction of group control over the benefits derived from land and sea resources. The most marked changes occurred during the past 45 years. They began during a period of increasing Samoan migration to urban areas and as western Samoans prepared for independence. That is, they occurred
during major changes in the external conditions within which Samoan villages are situated, not unlike those experienced by rural communities within states emerging from colonialism the world over. The external changes were accompanied by major social changes within Samoan villages. The latter occurred as a partial response to internal pressures pertaining to the control of land, and as a function of the proliferation of chiefly, or māui, title holders. Māui numbers have increased fivefold in the west since 1962, while remaining relatively stable in the east over a far longer period due to the strength of the state’s authority (Olson 2000). The rate of increase in the west accelerated with competitive pressures to control who the district representatives to Parliament would be within an independent state. But the process was and is inseparable from the pressures to obtain the land rights a māui title conveys (Olson 1995; cf. O’Meara 1986).

The patterns of native forest clearance in Samo are closely related to the patterns of land classified as suited for agriculture (see Olson 1995). That is, the remaining areas of Samo’s native forests tend to be on soils unsuited to agriculture. While this suggests an agricultural rationale to forest clearance, it is somewhat misleading. Not all lands suitable for agriculture are used by villagers for agricultural production, nor are most of the cleared lands farmed intensively, as development economists have been fond of noting. As suggested earlier, the patterns of forest clearance have a distinctly political element to them. A māui title legitimates one’s claim to land and strengthens one’s attempt to control the benefits derived from land use. But it also includes the right to establish a separate political unit, such as a household, which in turn requires control over sufficient land to maintain and increase the unit’s social standing. People claim land through removing native trees and replacing them with agricultural crops. This may include planting (native and nonnative) trees and only partial clearing, for example, of the boundaries of the claim. The difficulty lies in how the claims are recognized within Samoan villages. Clearing forest and planting trees is just one common way of making them.

Within Samoan customary rights to access and use land (fा) in its productive sense are controlled mostly directly by those to whom the land has been allocated. The more fundamental rights to the soil, rock, or earth (the éle’éle) are vested with the controlling village or the district. Thus the trees that regenerate or grow naturally on the land, as with the fish within the sea belong most directly to the entire village or the district. And these parcels of land allocated to individuals or groups are done so principally as a means of enabling them to meet their needs and fulfill their obligations to the broader groups of which they are part (see Olson 1995). The normative order reinforces pressure; to claim land suitable for agriculture and to legitimize these claims through a māui title, both for current and for potential use by the members of the group the title represents. Thus, demographic and economic variables influence current practices in terms of the need to be able to accommodate the group, including the descendants of current group members, and to enable the group to meet future economic uncertainties. But these are more potential than realities today, and they more or less recognize the primacy of changing social relations in explaining the current environmental transformations. The transformations are occurring in ways consistent with the normative order operative within Samoan villages, and in ways suggestive of attempts to modify the social relations of power which give them their respective expressions. That is, they are occurring as an effect of people’s attempts to reposition themselves socially within the groups of which they are part. And people are attempting to reposition themselves socially by leveraging whatever resources may be available to them, just as they have been doing when seeking recognition of individual land rights.
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generally questionable in the absence of the state's judicial backing (as in Olson 1977b; see also Olson 2000).

With increasing pressures to individualize land rights and with greater social nucleation, pressures on communal resources have increased. In terms of natural resources, this means greater pressures have been placed on native forests and coral reefs than on areas under more direct exclusive control, such as land under agricultural production. With greater incentives and pressures to claim land exclusively, the ability to maintain land under native forest cover has diminished. Incentives to divide village lands have increased, and maintaining village control over intact areas of native forest on agriculturally productive land has become virtually impossible. With increasing commercialization of agriculture, wage incomes, and social nucleation, off-reef fishing, which was almost a daily activity for every able adult male 40 years ago, has virtually disappeared. With the decline of off-reef fishing, greater pressures have been placed on lagoon resources. With increased pressure on lagoon fisheries, pressures to dynamite and poison fish have increased. But the dynamiting and poisoning of fish in rural Samoa are occurring, not because villages cannot contain it, or because it is economically and individually rational to do so, as economic models would suggest. It occurs primarily as a means of providing large quantities of fish, quickly, for group ceremonial needs, or necessities that could readily be provided for were people still fishing off-reed (Olson 1995). All of this suggests that the privatization of natural resource control in western Samoa increases the likelihood of greater depletion of communal resources as a means of maintaining the integrity of the group and the group's integrity, or social standing.

Environment, Development, and Postcolonial Politics

For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, development in the Pacific meant a loss of cultural and ecological integrity, often by design, but seldom framed in such terms. Colonial discourse framed development in terms of a unidimensional shift in cultural values, and it framed an interpretation of the shift in terms of the changing patterns of what land and sea. Cultural norms associated with the precolonial past were generally perceived as the principal impediment to development, and land areas under native forest cover were generally equated with unproductive lands limiting development's potential. The model of development promoted tended to promote, in its most extreme form, monocultures in both human and vegetative terms. That such perspectives characterized development discourse under colonialism is perhaps less problematic than the extent to which they continue to garner currency today. The perspectives were not, nor were the policies they generated, often designed to be politically neutral in their effects.

The dominant environmental perspectives in the Pacific have tended to be equally biased in their conceptions of rural landscapes and societies, if not always in the same ways. A more distinct form of regional environmentalism emerged with colonialism's passing, but the form of environmentalism promoted tended to promote a conception of landscapes devoid of people, if not also, at times, romanticized notions of people living in harmony with nature. This dependence on affecting how people should live with nature has not diminished with the more recent elevation of sustainable development as the guiding policy principle globally. In nonindependent Pacific island states, such as American Samoa, the model of environmentalism promoted tends to reflect the basic elements represented in the policies of their controlling authorities. Independent Pacific island states, such as western Samoa, have greater discretion over the policies they choose to implement, but the extent of their dependence on foreign aid limits the-
explicit forms such policies take, if not always as a condition of the assistance, then as a by-product of the politics of foreign aid consistently among the highest in the world in per capita and percent of gross production terms (Carew-Reid 1989).

Pacific islanders may share a common aspiration for economic development, as suggested by the introductory statement, but then Pacific islanders have been incorporating external relations within their local politics for a period far longer than European arrivals to the islands. And they have consistently demonstrated their willingness to sacrifice aspects of their culture and ecology as a means of improving their material and social standing every step along the way. Current conditions have merely raised the stakes and the benefits to be gained from doing so. Today, interests of far greater diversity than ever before are inserting themselves into rural areas, and rural people are experiencing a far greater dependence on manipulating the external resource flows and relations for competitive gain. Rural communities throughout the world bear the fractures of similar politics from prior relations. The questions are not likely to lessen in the near future. Nor is it likely that those who project their agendas into rural communities today do so with any greater knowledge about the political landscapes they enter than those who preceded them, nor do they seem likely, as a result, to possess any greater ability to predict the social and ecological effects of their actions. The mere presence, or availability, of external resources, such as foreigners and foreign money and authority, changed internal village dynamics in Samoa in ways undermining Samoan’s cultural and ecological integrity. It is equally, if not more, likely to be true that rural communities with less discretionary control are encountering, or are likely to encounter, similar or greater difficulties. And it is equally likely that such difficulties will involve in some central way similar aspects of such internal dynamics as in Samoa, where people are dependent upon natural resource controls for their power, prestige, and survival.

Notes

1. By the islands of the Pacific and the Pacific islands, I mean those islands located within the Pacific Ocean, except those islands or parts of islands commonly associated with countries of Asia. I also tend to exclude New Zealand and Hawaii from my more general statements, but I am not explicit about this in the text.

2. The principal exception is the Kingdom of Tonga, where all land is held directly by the crown. Tonga alone of all the Pacific island nations, never experienced colonialism in its more direct forms.

3. Samoa was partitioned in 1906 following an 1899 agreement between Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. Germany took control of the islands of Samoa west of the 171st meridian; the United States took control of the islands to the east. New Zealand replaced German control with the outbreak of World War I, and continued to administer the western islands until their independence in 1962. The eastern islands remain a territory of the United States. In 1997, “Samoan” was officially adopted as the name of the independent state of the former “Western Samoa.” For clarity and consistency, I refer here to these two states as western Samoa and American Samoa, and I use the term “Samoan” to apply to the entire archipelago. The history of state administration in Samoa is addressed in Olson (in press). Samoan’s legal history with respect to the regulation of customary land rights is addressed in Olson (1977b). And the corresponding history concerning the creation of customary authority is addressed in Olson (2000).

4. The general statements being made additionally reflect the influence of my current research concerning Fiji’s colonial history and my attempt to understand the patterns described in other histories concerning other regions of the world.

5. A more accurate assessment, within the context of the understanding of the period, would be to say that all land is controlled by villages constituted by extended families, or by districts