

X. Conclusions

Summary of Findings.

The Samoan Islands lie within the humid tropics and support a characteristically Polynesian range of plants and fauna. Arable land in American Samoa is limited by the dramatic mountainous topography, and in the past Samoans in the eastern islands cultivated lands on some precipitous slopes. The Islands are subject to periodic cyclones, which have changed the landscape and affected patterns of human settlement. Archaeological work is lacking for the Tutuila Unit, but excavation has revealed one of the oldest continuous settlements in Samoa at To'aga, on Ofu. An archaeological survey has been conducted on Ta'u, including some Park lands.

The ethnohistorical literature on Samoa covers the western isles more extensively and in greater detail than Tutuila and Manu'a. However, Eastern Samoa figures prominently in pre-European creation myths. Tagaloa the creator god is said to have established his earthly dynasty near Fitiuta, at the easternmost point in the Samoan archipelago. Because of his relationship to the Tagaloa line, the Tui Manu'a title claimed precedence over all others in Samoa, and has historically been surrounded with special customs and taboos.

Tutuila, Ofu, Olosega, and Ta'u saw visits by the earliest Western visitors, Roggeveen and Bougainville. At the time of European contact Tutuila was politically subordinate to Upolu's Atua District. The Tutuila Unit lands were part of a district called Sua ma Vaifanua. Chief Mauga of Pago Pago was an important political player in early transactions with westerners. The Tui Manu'a asserted separate sovereignty for Manu'a until the American colonial period.

In this century the lifeways and customs of Manu'a were extensively studied and documented by the anthropologists Margaret Mead and Lowell Holmes. Tutuila has received relatively little attention from anthropologists in comparison to Manu'a.

The National Park supports agricultural crops and domestically useful plants and woods that are found throughout the Samoan chain. Before the blight, taro was probably the primary food crop grown on Park lands. Banana and coconut are the two most important crops currently grown in the Park, with ta'amau and breadfruit of secondary importance. Tutuila Park lands are less extensively cultivated at present than Park lands on Ta'u and Ofu. Fitiuta Park lands are intensively cultivated for subsistence crops. The narrow strand of Park land on Ofu supports a more limited range of food crops, but is a source of a number of gathered medicinal plants. Medicinal plant knowledge and treatment is an important cultural resource connected to the

Park, especially on Ofu.

Marine resources are abundant within the National Park, in both variety and quantity. Park reefs and offshore fisheries are heavily utilized by local residents. In preferred species, techniques, and the gender division of labor, there is significant cultural commonality across the three Park Units. Ta'u and Ofu residents rely heavily on marine resources for their daily food; some locally caught species enter into gift exchanges with relatives on Tutuila. Some surplus fish and shellfish are also sold to neighbors and/or buyers in Pago Pago. Given the minor and individualistic scale of this commercial activity, we suggest that Park management carefully consider the extent to which it should be regulated. However, we recommend that current Park policy should be clearly communicated and enforced where scarce species, such as certain exotic shells, are involved.

The lupe and pe'a are the most frequently mentioned animals found within the Park. Feral pigs were cited as more numerous now than previously, and were identified as a destructive nuisance in bush plantations. Of possible concern is the frequent mention of feral cats in the Ofu Unit. Informants discussed past hunting activity, but residents are well aware that this is now prohibited.

Local Perceptions of the Park.

Virtually everyone we interviewed is aware of the National Park, and most respondents feel positively about the Park's presence and the terms of the lease agreement. There are, however, some common misconceptions about the Park and its impacts on local resource use. Several residents asked us when the National Park was "going to start." Many people do not understand that the Park is already present in their area. We did not probe these perceptions in depth, but some respondents evidently expect the Park to bring more tourist traffic. Others expect employment opportunities to materialize and/or Park personnel to be on the scene full-time. Presumably, when Park Service signs or other tangible indicators are put in place, the Park will seem more "real" to local residents. There is also some confusion about where the Park is located. This is understandable since the boundaries are not marked at present.

Most of our informants seem to understand that traditional uses of Park lands and fisheries will continue under the agreement. However, a significant minority expressed uncertainty and concern on this point and further public education is needed. One matai reportedly instructed his relatives not to plant in Park lands, telling them that they are no longer "allowed" to go there and utilize bush resources. Most villagers are not worried about the Park's impact on fishing and reef gathering but, again, a minority expressed fear that such activities may be forbidden

by the Park Service in future, or that an influx of visitors will ruin local marine habitats. Since Park personnel are unlikely to be a significant local presence in the near future, we suggest that the Park Service consider developing a continuing public information program aimed at the participating villages. Relying on village councils, matai, and visiting officials to convey Park policies may not be adequate to dispel misconceptions and allay concerns.

Local residents have other concerns about visitor traffic in the Park: specifically, they worry that visitors may not respect Samoan customs and sensibilities. Informants mentioned such issues as women wearing scanty attire while bathing, women wearing their hair long on Ofu, and anyone making inappropriate loud noises in bush areas such as To'aga.

Residents do, however, appreciate the economic benefits that the Park has brought and is likely to bring in future. Everyone knows that the Park has resulted in the payout of considerable sums of money to local people, and several informants look forward eagerly to future payouts. Some residents are disgruntled about the specifics of the distribution in their village. The people in Faleasao were unhappy that they had not yet received their money. In Vatia, some informants were displeased with the division of the funds; though villagers have undifferentiated access rights in the Park, only households with specific land claims within Park boundaries received money. Other households received nothing, resulting in caused some internal dissension. In Fitiuta, even though only part of the village has land within the Park boundaries, the money was distributed to all of the families in the village; this was perceived as a more equitable arrangement.

Recommendations for Further Research.

To our knowledge, no archaeological work has been done in the Tutuila Unit of the National Park of American Samoa. Archaeological survey of Park lands on Tutuila is needed to document the presence of coastal, interior, and upland sites. Subsequent excavations in selected areas would reveal changes in material culture, settlement, and environment over time. The Park also offers many opportunities for underwater archaeology, which likely would discover some of the oldest habitation sites in American Samoa.

We feel that our ethnohistorical research on the lands of the National Park of American Samoa is adequate for the purposes of an assessment of cultural significance and resource use. But in many ways the ethnographic research conducted for this study falls short of the ideal in anthropology. This report has been based largely on interviews with a small number of local residents over a relatively short period of time. Only a few

days were spent in each village, and our pool of respondents must be characterized as a "convenience sample." We necessarily had to rely on informants' retrospective accounts, which are not considered reliable as documentation of actual practice. A more thorough and accurate account of current use of Park lands and resources would require an extended period of residence in the affected villages, allowing for day-to-day participant observation and systematic data collection over a longer period of time.

In particular, agricultural practices and marine resource use could be documented more fully and accurately by an ecologically-oriented ethnographer with an extended period of research. Our findings revealed cultural continuity in Samoan cultivation practices, fishing, and marine foraging within the Park. A longer period of participant observation and ecological research would document precisely the range of species found and the frequency with which they are taken over the course of the year, rather than relying on verbal reports.

The domain of medicinal plants and traditional healing proved to be an unexpectedly rich area of cultural knowledge and practice. Particularly in Manu'a, this easily merits an extended, long-term study that could be the basis of a dissertation-length report. We felt that we had barely "scratched the surface" of our informants' knowledge on this subject, and we hope that further research can be conducted here in the not-too-distant future. Herbal medicine in Manu'a would be an excellent dissertation topic for a medical anthropology student, or could be the subject of a tightly focused, shorter-term study by an experienced researcher.

American Samoa in general, and Ofu and Ta'u in particular, have encountered relatively little tourist traffic to date. As the Park attracts more visitors, local attitudes will undoubtedly change in some direction. We recommend that periodic on-site assessments be undertaken to gauge the impact of tourism on local resources and residents' perceptions. This seems particularly important if Park personnel will not be on the scene full-time. With periodic short-term research, tensions and potential problems could be identified before they become acute.

Lastly, the freelist technique employed in this study is designed to be the first step in a series of systematic cognitive methods. These methods allow researchers to investigate local categories and distinctions--such as in food crops, edible fish, and ethnobotanical lore--and also to document attitudes more systematically. Future research could begin with the freelist data collected here, and explore Samoan knowledge and ways of classifying the species utilized. Further survey-type research employing these techniques would also be a valuable means of gauging changes in local sentiment toward the Park over time.