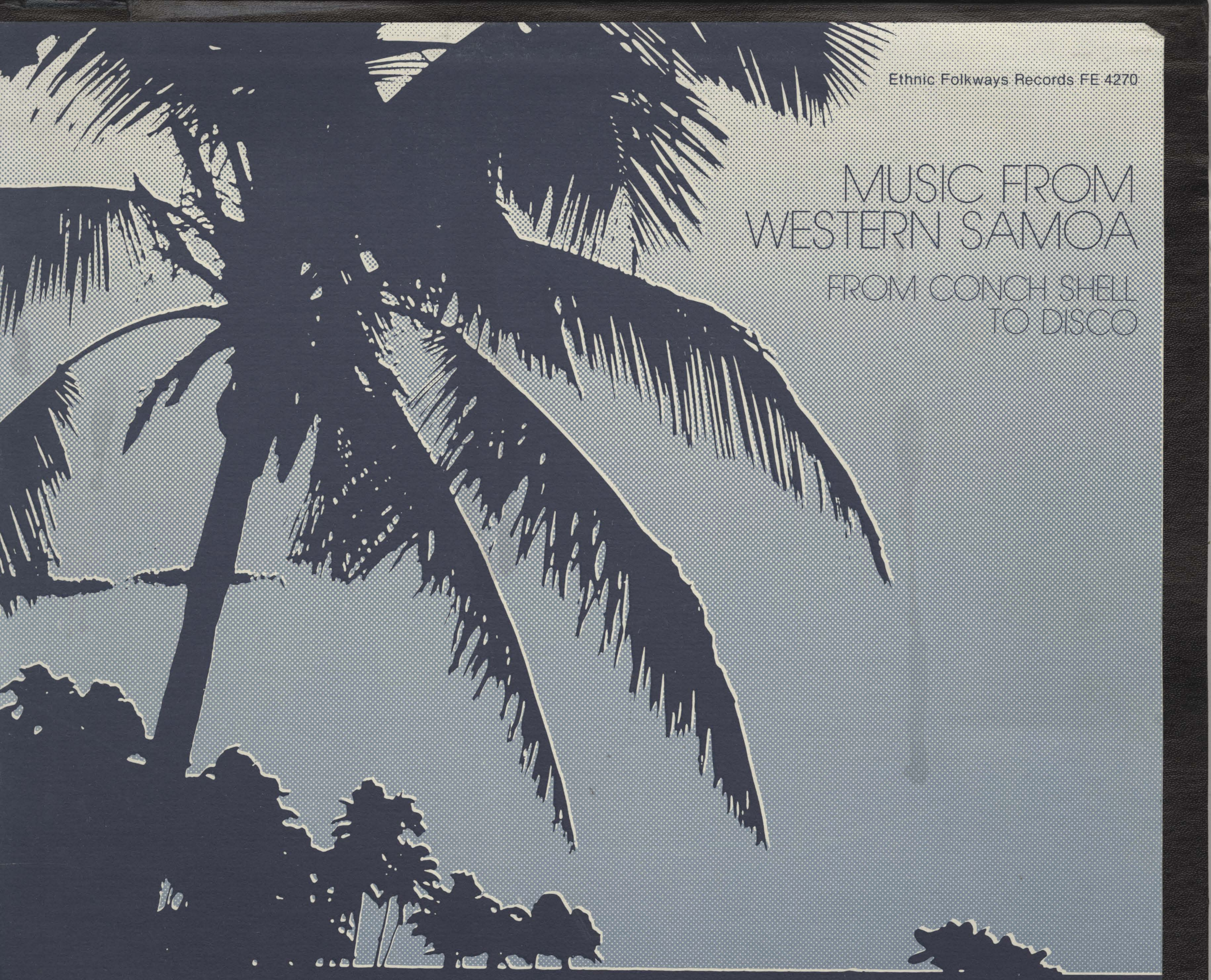


Ethnic Folkways Records FE 4270

MUSIC FROM
WESTERN SAMOA
FROM CONCH SHELL
TO DISCO



Recordings, notes and photographs: Ad & Lucia Linkels

Ethnic Folkways Records FE 4270

Side 1:

1. **Pū**
Conch shell, Lalomalava
2. **Lali**
Slit drums, Tanugamanono
3. **Pātē**
Slit drum, Iva
4. **Logo 'Palagi**
Church bell, Tanugamanono
5. **Laulau Siva**
Song performed by a men's choir, Solosolo
6. **Vi'i O Solosolo**
Song of praise, performed by a men's choir,
Solosolo
7. **Pese Feiloaiga**
Song of welcome, performed by a mixed choir,
Uafato
8. **Pese O Le Fa'aulufalega**
Song performed by a mixed choir,
Malua district

Side 2:

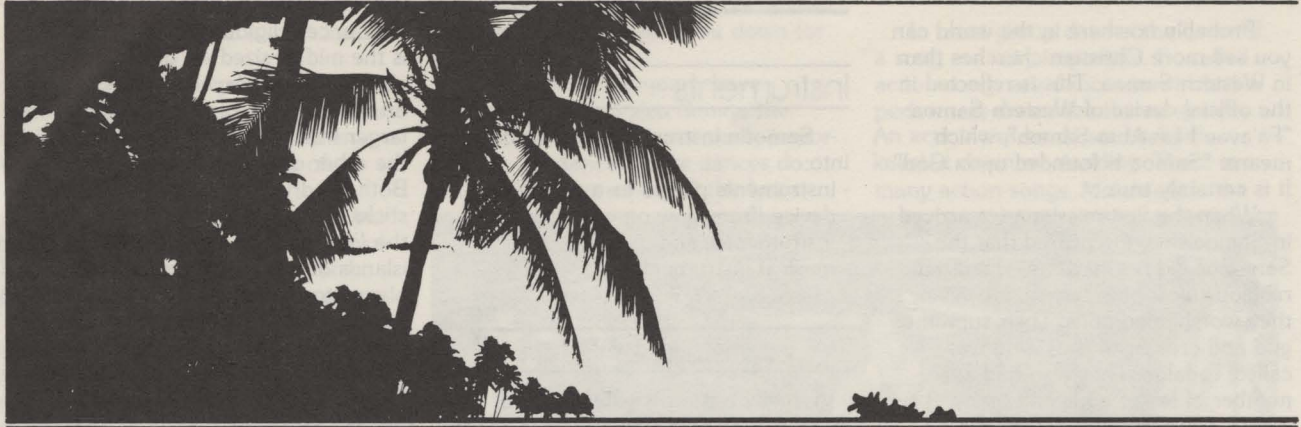
1. **Pese Lotu**
Religious song performed by a small
household, Lalomalava
2. **O Le Vi'iga I Le Atua I Mea
Aupitoaluga**
Gloria, sung by a Catholic Church Choir,
Safotu
3. **Ave Lou Ola Ia Aoga**
Religious song performed by a choir of the
Congregational Church, Lalomalava
4. **Agaga Paia**
Singers of the Assembly of God, Leone, Apia
5. **Ia Lavalava**
Dance song performed by singers and dancers
from the villages of Lufilufi, Falefa, Faleapuna
and Saluafata
6. **Lau Lupe**
Action song, sung and played by an
entertainment group, Saleufi
7. **Sāsā**
Instrumental music for the dance named sāsā
Aggie's Hotel Group, Apia
8. **Solo**
Instrumental intermezzo for an entertainment
night, musicians from Vaimoso
9. **Ua Lata Mai Le Aso Fa'amasino**
Modern song accompanied by guitars,
Le Patiloa, Vaimoso
10. **Velo Mai Lau Disco**
Modern tune played by the Fatausi Brassband

Descriptive notes are inside pocket

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Cover design: Jeroen van Erk



FROM CONCH SHELL TO DISCO

Music from Western Samoa

Recordings, notes and photographs by Ad & Lucia Linkels.
Design Jeroen van Erk.

This record contains old and new music from the independent state of Western Samoa in the South Pacific. The recordings were made during a fieldtrip through the islands in the second half of 1982.

Our aim was not to record only traditional material, as this has been done before by the ethnomusicologist Richard Moyle. We have tried to record all the musical styles that exist in present-day Samoa to be able to paint a musical portrait, a contemporary sound picture of the tiny islands in the sun.

This album includes: old and new secular songs performed in the more traditional as well as in the modern styles of singing and playing; Christian religious songs; music played on old and new instruments; brassband music and popular music.

Our aim is to give the listener an idea of the social and cultural situation in which the people of Samoa live nowadays: between the traditional Samoan life style and the American way of life, between conch shell and disco.

INTRODUCTION

General information

The country, its people and their social structure

The islands of Samoa are divided in two parts: American Samoa and the independent state of Western Samoa, Samoa I Sisifo. Western Samoa consists of four inhabited islands: two small ones and two bigger ones, and a number of tiny uninhabited islands.

Most of the 155.000 Polynesians live in villages along the coast in oval shaped houses without walls, called *fale*. The Samoans are proud of their *fa'a Samoa*, the typical Samoan way of life. Many traditions and ancient ceremonies are part of this age-old life style. Each Samoan belongs to a certain extended family, called *aiga*, but lives in a smaller household (*fua'i-fale*), headed by an elected chief, a *matai*.

The head of each household holds the chiefly title of an extended family or branch thereof. He can either be a "chief" (*ali'i*) or a "talking chief" (*tula-fale*). The nature and status of a given title is largely dependent upon mythological or legendary traditions.

Every *aiga* has a home village but not all of its members live in this village. Members of the same extended family can live in different villages in different households.

A *matai* is responsible for the behaviour and the welfare of all the members of the household who live with him in the village. The *matai* of all those households come together in their meeting house to discuss local affairs. In this village council (*fono*) the *matai* represents his family and household.

The paramount chief of the village, the high chief, *ali'i sili* has the right to appoint his daughter or another relative as a ceremonial village maiden, the *taupou*. His son or another person, whom he considers to be equal, acts as *manaia*, leader of the organization of untitled men of the village, the *aumaga*.

The *aumaga* operates as a cooperative workgroup. This organization has both labor and ceremonial tasks and serves the village council and the village in general. When necessary the *aumaga* also entertains visitors from other villages or countries, for instance by performing group dances.

The *auluma* is the female counterpart of the *aumaga*. Nowadays the *auluma* consists of unmarried, older girls and widows from the families of the village. By performing several social economic and ceremonial activities they contribute to the common welfare of the village.

The *auluma* nowadays forms part of a larger organization which is called the women's committee. Married women also take part in this organization. The women and girls have many tasks concerning public health and child welfare. They also organize fund raising events and entertain visiting groups from other villages. Together they weave mats or make windshields which they use in the houses or sell.

Within the women's committee the *auluma* has special tasks. The members of the *auluma* do the heavier work and perform the group dances when necessary.

CHRISTIANITY

Probably nowhere in the world can you see more Christian churches than in Western Samoa. This is reflected in the official device of Western Samoa: "Fa'avae I Le Atua Samoa", which means: "Samoa is founded upon God". It is certainly true.

When the first missionaries arrived in Samoa they discovered that the Samoans did not have an organized religious philosophic system. However, they worshipped gods. Their supreme god and creator of the world was called Tagaloa. They also had a number of lesser gods and many spirits, or ghosts. But they did not have temples or priests. Thus the missionaries did not have to fight a well-organized religious body. With little effort the Samoans were converted to Christianity. The Samoans saw the beautiful clothes the visitors wore, their tools, the ships that had brought them from England and they felt they would receive the same: things from the god the white men worshipped if they would do the same.

Another reason why the Samoans turned to Christianity was that the missionaries proved to have big oratorical talent, like their own talking chiefs, the official orators. They were impressed by the sermons and the ceremonial atmosphere of the religious services.

The Wesleyans were the first missionaries to visit the island in 1828. Two years later John Williams, Ioane Viliamu, as the Samoans called him, arrived in Samoa and introduced the London Missionary Society, now called Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. It has become the biggest church in the country. The other big churches are the Catholic Church, the Methodist Church and also the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Mormon Church.

Other churches and religious movements that exist in Samoa are: the Seventh Day Adventists, the Protestant Church, the Anglican Church, the Assemblies of God and Jehovah's Witnesses.

THE MUSIC

Instruments

Samoan instruments can be divided into:

- instruments played as a signalling device (from now on called signal instruments), and
- musical instruments

Signal instruments

Usually a triton shell is used to make a *pū*, a conch shell. The instrument is played end- or sideblown. The conch shell is used to call the family home for evening prayers and for spearfishing activities.



The other traditional signal instruments are wooden slit drums. There are three types, *pātē lali* and *logo*.

The *logo* is the biggest of them all. In order to make a *logo* a solid log is hollowed out. The *logo* is usually struck from the side, for instance by sliding the beater across the top of the drums to hit the slit lip on the other

side. Sometimes a stone is used to beat the *logo*. The *logo* is beaten to announce religious meetings. The *lali* is the middle-sized slit drum. *Lali* are almost always played in pairs, by two drummers. One of them beats the larger instrument of the two, the *tatasi*, the other one plays the smaller *talua*. Both slit drums are beaten with two sticks, named *'autā*. It is believed that the *lali* originally came from the islands of Fiji. *Lali* are particularly played to announce religious meetings.



The *pātē* is the smallest of the three slit drums. It was imported from Tahiti. The largest *pātē* is called *tu'i* or *tu'itu'i*. The smallest is called *fa'afelave*. Between these two there is another one, just named *pātē*. Although the *pātē* is, first of all, used to give messages to the villagers (meetings of village- and church groups), it is also often played nowadays to accompany songs and dances, particularly when they are performed outdoors.

Modern signal instruments have also been introduced, especially western church bells or cheaper alternatives like compressed air cylinders. The Samoans call them *logo 'palagi*. *'Palagi* is the Samoan name for a white foreigner, a European.



Musical instruments

The only native musical instrument that still exists in Western Samoa is the *fala*, a rolled floor mat, on which the player beats with two sticks. The mat is woven from the dried and processed leaves of a pandanus. Inside the rolled mat they used to put a few pieces of bamboo to intensify the volume. Nowadays they use empty bottles instead. A rolled mat player accompanies the singing of village choirs.

Normal sitting mats are also used by singers and dancers. While sitting on the mats, they flick them with their fingers in time to the music.



Other instruments that were used in Samoa in the past have become rare nowadays or have even disappeared completely. Endblown-, side-blown-, nose flutes and pan pipes are not to be found in Samoa anymore.

Ipu, two coconut shell halves, being struck together to accompany songs and dances, are still used for instance in a *siva ipu* (dance with coconut shell halves). 'Ofe (bamboo stamping tubes) are also used, but not very often. The jew's harp, *utete*, made from two pieces of coconut palm leaf, is a child's plaything.

Nowadays guitars and sometimes ukeleles are used to accompany modern songs and dances, quite often together with more traditional instruments like the rolled mat and the *pātē*.

The Samoans also use empty biscuit tins, called *atigi 'apa*, on which they beat with two sticks. Especially the rhythm for the lively dance called *sāsā*, when performed in bigger groups in the open air, is played on these loud sounding tins, sometimes together with western drums and a *pātē*.

Another modern instrument is the *selo*, made from a kerosene drum or a plastic bucket. A string pulled tight by a stick held on top of a kerosene drum or bucket is snapped and produces the

bass sounds. Sometimes they also beat a plastic bucket with the hands.

Other imported instruments now found in Western Samoa are the harmonium and the electric organ (both used in churches); several wind instruments that are played in brassbands; and electric guitars, bassguitars and drums, used in a few pop groups, performing in hotels and clubs in Apia, the capital.

The songs and the choirs

Samoan music is mainly vocal. The Samoans themselves distinguish more than 30 types of songs, such as lullabies, juggling chants, marriage songs, songs of sorrow, paddling songs, dance songs, historical songs and songs of praise.

A very important type of song is the *tagi*, the sung portion of the *fāgogo*, a spoken narrative told for family entertainment. A *tagi* is sung by the person who is telling the story. Of course there are more types of songs sung by one person for an audience or even sung privately, but most of the vocal music is performed by choirs. These choirs in particular are among the most interesting features in Samoan music.

Today their singing has been strongly influenced by the music that western missionaries brought with them. Traditional songs were banned quite often and replaced by hymns and psalms. The Samoans easily accepted the new music because it appeared to have some characteristics that they already knew in their own music: part-singing and singing responsively.

European musical idioms and styles were adopted and adapted at the expense of traditional music. Thus post European songs are a mixture of indigenous and western melodies and harmonies.

In the traditional songs parallel polyphony with 4ths and 5ths and melismatic passages were striking. The modern homophonic songs are mostly sung in full triadic harmony. Melodic and harmonic progressions are rather stereotype and melismatic grace notes are rare.



Although the songs and the way in which they are sung have slowly changed in the course of time the meaning of the lyrics is still the vital part. The themes have changed but the importance of the contents still remains. A melody serves only as a carrier of the words that are sung.

The Samoans compose new songs for every important occasion. One of the songs on this album was especially made for the opening of the new central church building of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in Apia (side 1, band 8).

There are women's- and men's choirs, mixed choirs and children's choirs. The choir may be a group of school children, the *matai* of the village, the *aualuma*, the *aumaga* or just a mixed choir of men and women.

When the choirs sing, their members sit on the ground. The leader - called *fuataimi* - stands in the middle of a half circle of singers. The choir leader sets the pitch and tempo and indicates every change of tempo and pitch. He also indicates when the singers are to clap hands or flick the mats.



The choir leader often acts as an intermediary between the choir and the audience. Although the musical styles have changed, the Samoans still perform in big groups with a *fuataimi* leading them and accompanied by a mat player. Certainly on special occasions this is still done.

Entertainment groups

A modern feature is the more or less commercial entertainment group. Usually an entertainment group is a non professional mixed youth group, instructed by an older specialized person. Entertainment groups perform for tourists, or visit other villages or even other countries to collect money for a special purpose, like the building of a new church. They perform traditional and modern Samoan songs and dances, especially action songs. The popular songs they sing are mainly based on western musical scales, western ideas of melody and harmony, and accompanied by guitars, a *pāfē* and sometimes western drums.

Religious music

Every Samoan is a Christian nowadays. Religion forms an integral part of daily life. For instance, every morning before school begins schoolchildren sing the national anthem and one or two hymns.

In the evening the members of every household come together in their own *fale* to pray and sing one or more hymns. At about 7 o'clock in the evening, after the conch shell has been blown, out of all the open houses in a village, one can hear the unaccompanied, beautiful and sincere part singing of all the households.

Sunday is a day of rest and prayer at church. In former days the whole congregation sang together but nowadays in many places a church choir sings the hymns. Here and there the singing is still unaccompanied, but mostly an old harmonium or an electric organ is played.

As the Samoans love singing, many of them disapprove of well-trained choirs singing for them. Quite a number of people have left the church and have turned to religious movements like the Assemblies of God, where individual and emotional experience is part of religious worship and where the people themselves sing the songs.

Popular music

One of the aspects of popular music in Western Samoa is what the Samoans call *'o le 'au ili pū*, a "brassband". It consists of wind instruments such as saxophones, trumpets, trombones, a tuba and sometimes a clarinet as well, plus one or two drummers. The bands play popular Samoan songs and dance tunes. Often, in the middle of a tune, most of the players, except the drummer(s) and the tuba player, stop playing and start singing.

In Samoa there are also many small vocal groups (3 to 5 youngsters, mostly boys), accompanying themselves on acoustic guitars. They play the popular music of Samoa: old popular songs arranged in a modern style, but also newly composed contemporary songs.

Their three- or four part singing in the Samoan language sounds relaxed and happy, sometimes a little sentimental. At least two of the boys sing in falsetto voice. One of the boys plays the lead guitar, another one the "bass" (on a normal acoustic six string guitar) and a third one plays the rhythm guitar. A twelve string guitar is often used.

In Apia there are several night clubs with electric bands playing live music. They sing and play western rock-, pop- and disco songs, available on cassettes and heard on channel two of Radio 2 A.P. But they also play Samoan pop music that is also for sale on cassettes. This is the music that one can hear in Samoan buses and on Radio 2 A.P.'s channel one.

The cassettes are produced in American Samoa and New Zealand and contain contemporary and older popular Samoan songs sung by Samoan boys and girls, often guitar/vocal groups, usually accompanied by studio musicians on electric guitar, bass, drums and even synthesizer. Also many western popsongs from the fifties to the eighties have been re-arranged and provided with Samoan words.

Cassettes with Samoan music are becoming extremely popular all over the country, where cassette recorders can now be found even in the most remote villages.

Up till now the Samoans have preferred their own Samoan songs and, although some young boys and girls in Apia dance like westerners to imported disco music, most of the Samoans are still astonished when they hear this music and watch the strange way of dancing.

THE DANCES

Siva Samoa

Siva is the general word for dance and for the act of dancing, but it is also a name for a special type of dance, the *siva Samoa*.

Most dances are group dances, but the *siva Samoa*, the most important of all dances, is an individual one. The *siva Samoa* is a way of self expression. The dancers react to the music, expressing themselves individually in their movements. Every Samoan develops his/her own typical way of dancing the *siva Samoa*.

There are three styles: the dance of the *taupou*, the dance of the boys and the dance of the jesters. These names suggest that they relate to the status or sex of the dancer, but this is not true. Men and boys can also perform the dance of the *taupou*. Of course most of the girls choose the *taupou* style and most of the boys the boys' style, but the *manaia* for instance, is always supposed to dance in the style of the *taupou*.

The dance of the *taupou* is solemn and fine. Slowly, the knees slightly bent, the dancer moves along the dance floor. Elegant hand and finger movements are essential.



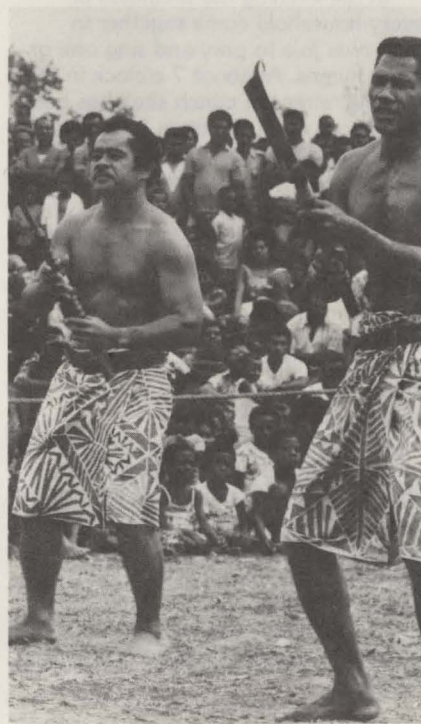
The dance of the boys is much jollier, more cheerful and free. Rhythmic slapping on the unclothed parts of the body forms part of the dancing.

The dance of the jesters serves as a contrast to the dance of the *taupou*. The jesters honour the *taupou* dancers by mocking them.

The contrast between the comic dance of the jester and the stately way of dancing of the *taupou* is most important.

The *siva Samoa* is danced in an upright position, but during the dance the dancers may kneel or sit down for a while.

Although the Samoans have special songs for a *siva Samoa* the lyrics of the songs are not really important for the dance. These dances do not reflect the meaning of the lyrics.



Group dances

In most group dances the lyrics of a song are very important. So-called action songs are dances in which the performers dramatize the sung story. An action can be danced seated, kneeled down or standing. There are many action songs. *Ma'ulu'ulu* is the

most traditional form of action song from which the modern action song developed.

Another traditional dance is called *sāsā*. In this dance the dancers (formerly only men, nowadays men and women) sit on the ground and move their hands, arms and fingers to the fast rhythm played on a rolled mat, an empty biscuit tin, a *pātē*, and/or a western drum.

In a *fa'ataupati* the boys dance in an upright position and slap the hands against the bare parts of the body. Usually this is the only musical accompaniment to this fast dance.

Special dances

Dances in which the dancers move along with some object in their hand(s) include: the knife dance (*siva naifi*), the fire dance (*siva afi*), stick dances (*siva la'au*, *siva ti'a*), a dance with two coconut shell halves (*siva ipu*), a dance in which bamboo tubes are stamped with their ends on the ground (*siva 'ofe*) and a dance performed with fans (*siva ili*).

THE RECORDINGS

Side 1

Band 1

Pū, played by Malufinao Falemai from the village of Lalomalava, Savai'i.

Band 2

Lali beating, by two members of the Methodist Church in the village of Tanugamanono, Upolu.

Band 3

Pâtē beating, by Reverend Tufi Fa'apusa, Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, Iva, Savai'i.

Band 4

Logo 'Palagi, Methodist Church, the village of Tanugamanono, Upolu. This particular *logo 'palagi* is a compressed air cylinder.

Band 5

Laulau Siva, by all the *matai* of Solosolo, Upolu. A *laulau siva* is a short song which introduces an evening of dancing and singing. The singers are accompanied by a rolled-mat player.

Band 6

Vi'i O Solosolo, by the *matai* of Solosolo. A *vi'i* is a song of praise. In this *vi'i* the *matai* honour Solosolo, its lands, its chiefs and other aspects. One of the *matai* beats the mat.

Band 7

Pese Feiloaiga, by the villagers of Uafato, Fagaloa, Upolu. A *pese feiloaiga* is a song of welcome. This one was sung at the beginning of a fund raising event, an evening of songs and dances, arranged to collect money for a special purpose. The song is accompanied on a rolled mat.

Band 8

Pese O Le Fa'aulufalega, by singers of the Malua district, Upolu. A *pese o le fa'aulufalega* is a song of dedication, sung to celebrate the opening of a new church building. This one was composed and sung on the occasion of the Ioane Viliamu Building in Apia, August 1982. A boy beats the mat.

Side 2

Band 1

Pese Lotu, by the household of Malufinao Falemai, Lalomalava Savai'i. A *pese lotu* is a religious song. This one was sung during evening prayers.

Band 2

O Le Vi'iga I Le Atua I Mea Aupi-toaluga, Catholic Church Safotu, Savai'i. This is a Samoan version of the Gloria.

Band 3

Ave Lou Ola Ia Aoga, by the choir of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, Lalomalava, Savai'i.

Band 4

Agaga Paia, Assembly of God, Leone, Apia. At the end of this song the members of the Assembly pass into speaking in tongues.

Band 5

Ia Lavalava, by singers and dancers from the villages of Lufilufi, Falefa, Faleapuna and Saluafata, Upolu. Ia Lavalava is a very popular song for a *siva Samoa*. This song was performed at the Fale Tina, a big hall, in Apia. Listen to the sounds of the jesters and the coins that people in the audience throw onto the stage to show their appreciation.

Band 6

Lau Lupe, Youth Group from Saleufi, Apia. A modern entertainment group performing in the Tusitala Hotel, Apia.

Band 7

Sāsā, Aggie's Hotel Group, Apia. The music is played on an empty biscuit tin, a small slit drum and western drums.

Band 8

Solo, the male musicians of the Catholic Women's League, Vaimoso, Upolu. The performers did not know the original title of this well known tune and called it "Solo". This guitar solo was played as an intermezzo between the songs and dances performed during entertainment nights organized by the Catholic Women's League. The other instruments are a *selo* and a rolled mat.

Band 9

Ua Lata Mai Le Aso Fa'amasino. Le Patiloa, Vaimoso, Upolu. Le Patiloa is one of the many vocal/guitar groups. In this group three boys and one girl play and sing together.

Band 10

Velo Mai Lau Disco, Fatausi Brass-band, Fatausi, Savai'i. The disco phenomenon inspired the leader of this band to compose this song.

Acknowledgements

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