MUSIC FROM WESTERN SAMOA
FROM CONCH SHELL TO DISCO

Recordings, notes and photographs: Ad & Lucia Linkels
Side 1:

1. Pū
   Conch shell, Lalomalava
2. Lali
   Slit drums, Tanugamanono
3. Pāte
   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 la Aoga
   Religious song performed by a choir of the Congregational Church, Lalomalava
4. Agaga Paia
   Singers of the Assembly of God, Leone, Apia
5. la 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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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 (fu'a'i-fale), headed by an elected chief, a matai.

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 manoia, 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 auvalu is the female counterpart of the aumaga. Nowadays the auvalu 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 auvalu 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 auvalu has special tasks. The members of the auvalu 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’a‘ave 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 philosophical 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 pu, 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, pate 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 'auta. It is believed that the lali originally came from the islands of Fiji. Lali are particularly played to announce religious meetings.

The pate is the smallest of the three slit drums. It was imported from Tahiti. The largest pate is called tu'1 or tu'tu'i. The smallest is called fa'a'felave. Between these two there is another one, just named pate. Although the pate 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 jala, 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.

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 pate.

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 sasa, when performed in bigger groups in the open air, is played on these loud sounding tins, sometimes together with western drums and a pate.

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 brass bands; and electric guitars, bass guitars 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: partsinging 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 men’s and women’s choirs, mixed choirs and children’s choirs. The choir may be a group of village, 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 fuatami - 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 fuatami 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 pate and sometimes western drums.

### Popular music

One of the aspects of popular music in Western Samoa is what the Samoans call 'o le au ili pu, 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 tube player, stop playing and start singing.

In Samoa there are also many small 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.

Casettes 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.

### Religious music

Every Samoan is a Christian nowadays. Religion forms an integral part of daily life. For instance, every morning before 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.
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 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, kneeling 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 sasa. 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 pate, 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
Pate 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 siua 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 Vliga I Le Atua I Mea Auptoaaluga, Catholic Church Safotu, Savai'i. This is a Samoan version of the Gloria.

Band 3
Ave Lou Ola la 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
La Lavalava, by singers and dancers from the villages of Lufilufi, Falefa, Faleapuna and Saluafata, Upolu. La Lavalava is a very popular song for a siua 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
Sasia, 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 Brassband, Fatausi, Savai'i. The disco phenomenon inspired the leader of this band to compose this song.

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