

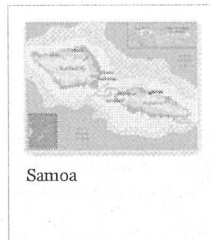
## Story: Samoans

Page 1 – History and migration

# (Anae, M., 2012)

### Who are the Samoans?

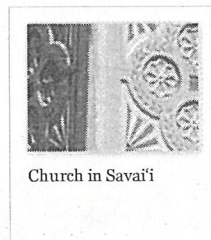
Samoans are the original inhabitants of the Samoa Islands, which lie north of New Zealand between latitude 13° and 15° south. The two large islands are Upolu and Savai'i, and the only other inhabited islands are Manono and Apolima. About 80 km south-east is Tutuila, the principal island of the smaller territory of American Samoa.



Samoa

### The birth of a nation

There are many explanations for the name Samoa. One is that when the earth's centre – known as 'moa' – was born, Salevao, the god of the cliffs, brought water to wash the new child. He made water 'sa' (holy) to the child and all that grew on the earth.



Church in Savai'i

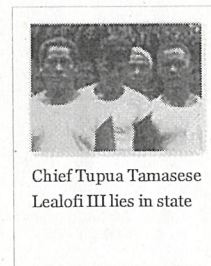
Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests that Samoa, Fiji and Tonga may be the original homelands of the Polynesians. It was from these islands that, some 2,000 years ago, Polynesians settled the rest of the South Pacific, eventually reaching New Zealand.



Raising the German flag, 1900

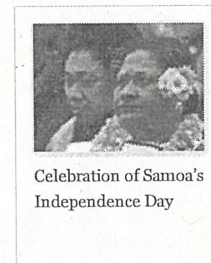
### Contact with outsiders

Over the centuries Samoans exchanged news, trade and marriage partners with neighbouring Pacific peoples (mainly Fijians and Tongans). The first European to sight the islands was a Dutchman, Jacob Roggeveen, in 1722. Later, the French explorer Louis Antoine de Bougainville called Samoa's islands 'the Navigator Islands'.



Chief Tupua Tamasese Lealofii III lies in state

In 1830 the Reverend John Williams landed in Savai'i, bringing the Christian gospel. This was the beginning of the change from the 'time of darkness' to the 'time of light', as most of the population converted to Congregationalism. A 'Samoanised' form of Christianity now exists in the EFKS (Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano o Samoa), also known as the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, or CCCS. This form of Christianity is also found in the Samoan components of the Pacific Islanders' Presbyterian Church. For many Samoans, Christianity and fa'asamoa (Samoan culture) are inextricably interwoven.



Celebration of Samoa's Independence Day

### New Zealand contact

In 1899 possession of Samoa was divided between Germany (Western Samoa) and the United States (Eastern Samoa). At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, New Zealand occupied Western Samoa and administered the islands until 1962, under a mandate from the League of Nations. In 1918 the New Zealand trading ship *Talune* docked in Apia, carrying people infected with Spanish influenza. This led to a devastating and avoidable outbreak of the disease which killed about 8,000 Samoans – over 20% of the population.

### Samoan independence



During the first part of the 20th century, growing Samoan discontent with the New Zealand administration led to an independence movement called the Mau, which was non-violent. However, on 28 December 1929 at least nine Samoans, including the high-ranking chief Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, were shot dead by New Zealand military police during a peaceful demonstration.

In 1962 Samoa became the first Pacific nation to regain independence, and a Treaty of Friendship was signed with New Zealand.

#### New Zealand's apology to Samoa

In June 2002 New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark formally apologised to Samoa for three actions taken by the New Zealand administration between 1918 and 1929: allowing the ship *Talune*, carrying passengers with influenza, to dock in Apia, which resulted in the deaths of one in five Samoans; shooting non-violent protesters in December 1929; and banishing Samoan leaders and stripping them of their chiefly titles.



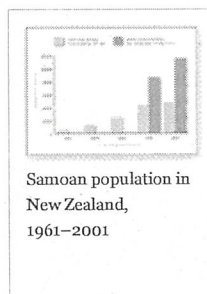
Mua Strickson-Pua and his granddaughter



Protesters outside Parliament

### Migration to New Zealand

Although Samoans have travelled to New Zealand since the early 1900s, it was not until the 1950s that they migrated in large numbers. As New Zealand's industry and the service sector expanded over the next 30 years, the search for labour was extended to territories and former territories in the Pacific. Many Samoans moved to New Zealand for greater opportunities and a better education for their children.



Samoan population in New Zealand, 1961-2001

### Overstayers

Entry was not unrestricted. From 1964, the government issued three-month visas, and from 1967 it set annual quotas for immigrants. As long as the demand for labour was strong, the regulations were not enforced. But when the New Zealand economy declined after 1973, this flexibility ended. Dawn raids on the homes of alleged overstayers began in 1974. Politicians blamed Pacific Islanders for overloading social services, and they shaped a negative stereotype of Pacific Islanders.

Although many Samoans and Tongans were guilty of overstaying their visas, the focus on these two ethnic groups was unacceptable to many. They pointed out that the greatest influx of temporary migrants in these years was from the United Kingdom and Australia. For older Pacific Islanders, the traumatic dawn raids remain bitter memories.

The Polynesian Panthers emerged in the 1970s to support Pacific peoples in New Zealand. They informed people of their legal rights, ran homework centres for school children, visited inmates at Auckland's Pāremoremo prison, put on concerts, and supported Māori protests.

### Continuing migration

Despite the tough immigration laws, Samoans continued to enter New Zealand. Between 1971 and 1981 the number of Samoan-born residents doubled, reaching 24,141. In 1982 the Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act granted citizenship to Samoan-born New Zealanders. After that, new quotas for entry were set. Since 2002 the quota has allowed 1,100 Samoans to be granted residence each year.

In 2006, 131,103 people of Samoan ethnicity were living in New Zealand – about half of all those with Pacific ethnicity. A clear majority of Samoans were now born in New Zealand; those born in Samoa numbered 50,649.

#### How to cite this page:

Misatauveve Melani Anae. 'Samoans - History and migration', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 28-Mar-12  
 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/samoans/1>