

Introduction

Books are born and grow. This one grew out of the 2007 Macmillan Brown Lecture series, *The Warm Winds of Change in the Contemporary Pacific*. The lectures, and now this book, drew heavily on findings from a 40-year research partnership that developed out of our interest in Sāmoans in both Sāmoa and abroad. This started in the early 1970s when we carried out fieldwork for the first comprehensive study of Sāmoan migrants in New Zealand (Pitt and Macpherson 1974) and has, since then, led us into such disparate areas as the social correlates of youth suicide (Macpherson and Macpherson 1987), medical knowledge and practice (Macpherson and Macpherson 1990), dependency and sovereignty (Macpherson and Macpherson 1998), changing contours of migrant kinship (Macpherson and Macpherson 1999), ethnic diversity in migrant populations (Macpherson and Macpherson 2000), evangelical religion among migrants (Macpherson and Macpherson 2001), fine mats and the valuation of social honour (Macpherson and Macpherson 2005), social dimensions of the Pacific labour migration process (Macpherson and Macpherson 2006a), the nature and limits of traditional dispute resolution (Macpherson and Macpherson 2006b), and the experiences of migrants' children who have returned to the islands (Macpherson and Macpherson 2009). This book provides an opportunity to acknowledge our partnership in a way that the lectures could not: neither of us could, or would, have produced this work alone. The project has given us a chance to bring together a number of ideas and conversations, and is, we hope, more valuable because of the range of research and experience on which it draws, and the complementary skills we have brought to it.

The series emerged from a growing awareness of the impact of global forces on daily life in the village in which we live during annual stays in

Sāmoa. Evidence of their pervasive, and often almost imperceptible, influence is everywhere, and the series provided both reason and opportunity to outline some changes in village life over the past 40 years and to discuss the forces that have produced them. Since we began to think about these issues over an evening meal, the evening itself provides a convenient illustration of both the changes and the processes that are producing them.

Evenings, in the 1960s and 1970s, were typically quiet times spent with family. In the early evening, when the locust chorus began, adults stopped work, returned to their homes, bathed and chatted. Around the house, children talked as they did chores and played games. When the village church bell rang, the family gathered inside for evening devotions and shared a meal interrupted only by adult conversation and laughter. Dinner, prepared over a fire in a small outdoor cook house, included breadfruit and talo from the family gardens, some fresh fish and a crab caught earlier in the day, washed down with tea made from the leaves of the orange tree behind the house, or with cocoa made from beans from the family cocoa plantation. The meal was served from large, smoke-stained aluminium stockpots and eaten from banana leaves on woven mats, and a few enamel plates and mugs; the tea was made in a large, battered aluminium teapot. After dinner children played outside until it became dark and they went inside where, in the dim glow cast by a single light bulb, adults played animated games of cards and draughts, swapped gossip, discussed the day's events, planned the following day and, occasionally, speculated on the religious significance of particular local and national events. News of the world beyond the village was of limited interest, and only those who made the nightly trip to the pastor's house to listen to the news from Apia on the government radio station 2AP, and a very few people who owned shortwave radios, ever heard it.

Evenings in 2008 are very different. On our first evening in Sāmoa that year, we ate a meal of tinned herrings from Malaysia, rice and noodles from China, washed down with instant coffee from the US, sugar from Fiji and powdered milk from New Zealand. The meal was cooked over gas and in a microwave, and water was boiled in an electric jug in the kitchen. Dessert, a new item on the menu, was ice-cream, which had been kept in the fridge. The meal was served from stainless steel pots and eaten

from a floral-patterned Chinese dinner set with matching bowls; the tea was made in a china teapot. With dinner over, we settled down to the Television One news from New Zealand with our family. Adults and children alike watched with great interest and in silence, punctuated only by incoming cellphone calls and text messages. The news was followed by animated discussions over everything from the selection of the latest All Black squad, New Zealand's prospects in the Bledisloe Cup, the wisdom of becoming involved in the Iraq war, Barack Obama's prospects in the US presidential elections and the Labour party's prospects in the forthcoming New Zealand election. The conversation ended with a debate about possible causes of simultaneous floods in England and Bangladesh: were they the consequence of global political inaction on climate change or divine intervention in the biblical tradition? The family spent the rest of the evening watching world news, a BBC documentary on global warming, an Indian television movie and a televised rugby match from Sydney. From time to time people flicked between the Samoan Broadcasting Service channel and the new Chinese channel, CCTV, which offers a broad range of English-language programming.

In a relatively short time, the world beyond the village, as seen on TV, has become for many families in Sāmoa the focal point of the evening. Families even move meals and evening devotions, previously the high point of the day, to accommodate the evening news in both English and Sāmoan. This change reflects the growing interest in events beyond the village and, indeed, beyond Sāmoa. Discussion of these events reflects a new knowledge of the outside world and a growing awareness of its influence on their daily lives.

The 'global' economy has a direct and obvious impact on 'local' daily life, controlling the market for the village's main cash crop, copra; demand for labour from the village both in and beyond Sāmoa; and the prosperity of expatriate relatives. These factors in turn influence opportunities for local employment and the level of remittances received from expatriate relatives, which then determine whether or not people can pay school fees, extend their homes, renovate the village school and buy new uniforms for the village rugby team. World food shortages now translate into rises in

prices of new 'staples' such as flour, rice and sugar, and impact in new ways on household economies, which were once almost self-sufficient. Shifts in world currency exchange rates impact on how much foreign currency will be worth and how much wages and remittances from relatives abroad will buy in Sāmoa on any given day. Rice, at one time a luxury, is now such a staple that the cost of a sack, which is influenced by both currency exchange rates and world food supply, has become the new index of the cost of living in the village.

These 'global' influences are changing the rules of social, political and economic organisation in ways that neither of us anticipated even ten years ago, and the pace of change seems to increase each year. The lecture series and now this book provided reason and opportunity to discuss changes in village life over the past 35 years and the forces that produced these changes. The book has given us an opportunity to expand and develop our ideas, and invariably led us back to the growing impact of three factors on both the village and the nation: the movement of people, the introduction of ideas and ideologies, and the development and spread of technologies. These themes framed the lectures and now frame this book.

One of the risks inherent in such projects is the tendency to romanticise a society's past and to lament its passing. This is particularly true where a society's 'tradition' is fundamental to its national identity and leads, in many cases, to 'explanations' that place responsibility for change on external agencies bent on remaking smaller, less powerful societies in their image. While not disputing the significance of the power of large states and international agencies, the risks inherent in such explanations are that they often understate the active role small societies play in embracing and shaping the direction of social change. Explanations that require external agencies, such as the World Bank, to explain change ignore, or at least understate, the significance of internal agency and the fact that social transformation is a continuous process that occurs where external forces meet internal ones.

We have tried to avoid this in three ways: by identifying the role of both external and internal agency, by avoiding passing judgments on the desirability of changes and by placing contemporary change in historical context. Rather than depicting change as 'loss of tradition', we have focused

instead on the ‘dynamism’ inherent in social organisation, and on how and why change is embraced and shaped by people in the village. We have refrained from judgements of whether change is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for the village: change happens and is the consequence of people making decisions about what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for them. We have tried to contextualise contemporary transformation: the changes outlined here, and the forces producing them, are simply the most recent manifestations of a process of transformation that has been occurring since people settled in these islands some 3000 years ago. In the end, it will be the reader who decides whether we have succeeded.

While this book focuses on Sāmoa, it may have more general significance. Many Pacific states have similar ecosystems, and demographic, social, political and economic profiles. Most confront similar external agencies, expatriate populations, patron states, international financial organisations and global non-governmental organisations (NGOs), all of which constrain their development options. While the importance of each of these factors, and the ways in which they interact, may vary from one location to another, there are likely to be significant similarities in the processes, options and outcomes throughout the region. Factors that impact on contemporary Sāmoa are, for the reasons outlined above, also occurring elsewhere in the contemporary Pacific, albeit at different rates. In concentrating on processes at work in a society with which we are familiar, we hope to identify factors that may throw light on the dynamics of transformation as it occurs elsewhere in the region. However, the way each state reacts to these combinations of circumstances will also be unique, for cultural, historical and political reasons, and the reader is warned that broad generalisations about a region as diverse as the Pacific often founder on the rocks of complex reality.



Churches dominate the landscape and yet they are rarely thought of as evidence of earlier transformations. Christianity has transformed the Samoan worldviews and lifestyle in significant ways.



Young village people periodically visit relatives in enclaves as far apart as Auckland, Los Angeles, Sydney and are much more familiar with the world beyond the village than their parents were.