REGIME CHANGE AND REGIME MAINTENANCE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES

Number 10

Universal Suffrage in Western Samoa: The 1991 General Elections

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JQ 6651 .A95 S66 1993

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In recent years there have been some dramatic changes of political leadership in the Asia-Pacific region, and also some drama without leadership change. In a few countries the demise of well-entrenched political leaders appears imminent; in others regular processes of parliamentary government still prevail. These differing patterns of regime change and regime maintenance raise fundamental questions about the nature of political systems in the region. Specifically, how have some political leaders or leadership groups been able to stay in power for relatively long periods and why have they eventually been displaced? What are the factors associated with the stability or instability of political regimes? What happens when longstanding leaderships change?

The Regime Change and Regime Maintenance in Asia and the Pacific Project will address these and other questions from an Asia—Pacific regional perspective and at a broader theoretical level.

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ISSN 1037-1036 ISBN 0731515463





UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IN WESTERN SAMOA: THE 1991 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Since 1962 Western Samoa has been an independent state with a parliamentary system of government. The one-chamber parliament consists of a House of Assembly with 47 members, whose composition and method of election has reflected a specifically Samoan form of political democracy which blends tradition with modernity.

In terms of both eligibility for election and eligibility to vote at elections, a dual system operated until 1991. Of the 47 members of parliament (MPs), 45 were required to be *matai* (chief) elected by a system of matai suffrage, while two were non-matai representatives elected by individual voters under a system of qualified adult suffrage. The introduction in 1991 of universal non-compulsory suffrage to elect the 45 matai MPs transformed the electoral system by entitling all persons aged 21 years and over to vote for matai candidates in their electorate, thereby ensuring that all citizens have equal political rights in the election of parliament, and that all members of parliament represent, and are responsible to, their constituency and to the overall Samoan population. Thus, universal suffrage may be regarded as a giant step in the process of democratizing Samoan politics and in legitimizing parliamentary rule. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the composition of parliament remains unaltered: only matai are eligible for election to 45 of the 47 seats in parliament; the political system continues to be based on both traditional and modern forms.

^{*} This paper was first presented, in draft, at the Third Conference of the Pacific Islands Political Studies Association (PIPSA) at Monash University, December 1991.

Background

Before the 1991 elections, qualifications to vote and to be elected were based on being enrolled in one of two electoral rolls — the Matai Voters Roll and the Individual Voters Roll.

Every person shall be qualified to be an individual voter and have his name entered on the individual voters' roll if he is a citizen of Western Samoa or over the age of 21 years and not disqualified as a candidate for election by virtue of any of the provisions of the 1963 Electoral Act, and if —

- (a) His name was entered on the European electoral roll on the 30th day of November 1963; or
- (b) (i) Is the child of a father whose name was entered on, or who if alive on the 30th day of November 1963 would have qualified to have his name entered on, the European electoral roll on the 30th day of November 1963; and
 - (ii) Was unborn or had not attained the age of 21 years on the 30th day of November 1963; or
- (c) He acquired his citizenship of Western Samoa by naturalisation, or
- (d) He acquired his citizenship of Western Samoa by birth and is the child of a father who is not a citizen of Western Samoa or of a father who, if alive at the date of the commencement of the Citizenship of Western Samoa Ordinance 1959 would not have automatically qualified to be a citizen of Western Samoa by virtue of any provision of that Ordinance (1963 Electoral Act, Section 19).

Under the constitution, individuals registered on the Individual Voters Roll could nominate as candidates for the two non-matai seats in parliament, and individual voters on the Individual Voters Roll could elect any two of such candidates as their representatives in the 47-seat parliament.

Thus, two of the 47 members of parliament could be Samoans or Europeans who were Samoan citizens or permanent residents, and who were elected by voters who were enrolled on the same basis.

Qualifications to vote and be elected for 45 of the 47 seats was based on a system of matai suffrage. The Matai Voters Roll included all Samoan men and women who had been bestowed a matai title.

Unlike the Individual Voters Roll which was national, the Matai Roll for voting and candidature was based on electorates. Under the Faipule Election

Ordinance 1939, the country was divided into 41 territorial constituencies which were really subdivisions of the eleven traditional districts (Davidson 1967:226). The same number of constituencies was adopted by the 1954 and 1960 constitutional conventions and later endorsed in the 1962 Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa.

Each of the 41 constituencies was initially entitled to return one *matai* member of parliament. However, the *Constitution Amendment Act 1963* provided for an additional seat in each of the more populated electorates — Falealili, Vaimauga West, and Aana Alofi No. 1, on the island of Upolu, and Faasaleleaga No. 1 on the island of Savaii (*ibid*.:423). Accordingly, by 1991 the 41 electorates returned 45 members of parliament under the system of matai suffrage.

Voting for the 45 matai MPs was restricted to those matai registered on the Matai Voters Roll. Advocates of matai suffrage tried to incorporate the *principle* of universal suffrage within the *practice* of voting restricted to matai. They maintained that, since a family *elected* its matai, it was reasonable that he/she should have the right to cast a vote on the family's behalf (*ibid*.:318). In other words, the Matai Voters Roll was predicated on a two-tier selection system — the first tier being the selection of a matai on the basis of his family's consensus, the second tier being votes cast by the matai to elect members of parliament from among themselves.

More conservative Samoans claimed that universal suffrage could never be reconciled with Samoan custom. They maintained that Samoan tradition should be perpetuated, and that the *matai* only should vote at national elections, as one person stated, 'until the end of the world' (*ibid*.:328).

Since at this time the case for universal suffrage was unacceptable to most Samoans, a compromise solution was advanced. This compromise involved distinguishing between the universal right to vote and the universal right to stand for elections.

The compromise which was advocated was that a single roll of electors be compiled for all Western Samoan citizens aged 21 and over, but that eligibility for nomination as candidates to sit and vote in the legislative assembly be restricted to holders of matai titles (*ibid*.:389-390).

Those who advocated this compromise solution maintained that universal suffrage would not harm Samoan customs and traditions, that a growing proportion of untitled Samoans possessed a good education and wide — often



including overseas — experience, and that Samoa would not be able to retain many of the most talented of its young people if they remained unfranchised. Notwithstanding these arguments, the Constitutional Convention of 1960, whose main task was to draft a constitution, decided in favour of the matai suffrage system. But the issue of universal suffrage continued to be the subject of community and political debate over the next three decades, and popular opinion gradually shifted from former hardline conservative views.

In mid-1990, the government decided to hold a referendum to ascertain public opinion on two issues: first, whether a second (upper) house should be introduced, and secondly, whether future elections should be held under a system of universal suffrage, but with only holders of matai titles eligible for nomination and election to parliament.

Before the plebiscite in October 1990, community awareness of the cases for and against universal suffrage was promoted by public debates broadcast on the national radio station. The government's arguments echoed those of the 1960 Constitutional Convention, but with one significant addition: that universal suffrage with candidature for election restricted to matai would put a stop to the proliferation of matai titles, which was a major political and social problem.

The reasons for splitting and creating titles were, and are, complex (Powles 1984). The desire to increase the number of votes for political purposes was one of these reasons, and was certainly the most controversial. This problem was illustrated as early as 1964, during a by-election in one of the electorates. For this by-election, many new matai titles were created, many of them being conferred on women and children (including a boy of 7 years and a girl of 12 (*ibid*.:426). Moreover, since voters did not have identification cards until the 1991 general elections, many matais cast votes for matais who were either overseas at the time or even deceased.

The government in 1990 thus justified universal suffrage on the grounds that it would curb the proliferation of matai titles and corruption, maintaining that these together contributed to the erosion and disrepute of the matai system itself and to the eventual downfall of Samoan customs and culture. This argument expressed what was already a public concern.

The results of the plebiscite indicated firm support for the government's proposal. At the referendum 19,392 votes were cast in favour of universal suffrage; 17,464 against; with 2,472 informal votes (Savali 31 October 1990). Accordingly, the government successfully passed a bill to amend the 1963

Electoral Act. Under the new (1990) amendment, all Samoan citizens aged 21 years and over have the right to be registered as voters on the electoral roll, although voting is still not compulsory.

The debate concerning matai/universal suffrage, the 1990 referendum, and the 1990 amendment to the 1963 Electoral Act, have been concerned exclusively with the system of electing the 45 matai members of parliament. The Matai Voters Roll has been replaced by a single electoral roll based on universal adult franchise for all Samoan citizens resident in Western Samoa. The electoral reform involving universal suffrage has in no way affected the Individual Voters Roll. The constitutional provision for electors on the Individual Voters Roll to elect two members of parliament has remained intact. This was still the situation for the 1991 general elections, and presumably will continue so long as the present system of matais only being eligible for election to the other 45 seats remains in operation.

Political parties

The first officially registered political party in Western Samoa after independence in 1962 was the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP).² Its first (unsuccessful) contest was for the office of prime minister in parliament in 1979, following the general election in that year. The HRPP won the general election for the first time in 1982 when it secured 24 seats to the outgoing prime minister's 23.

The general election of 1985 was the first in which two political parties publically contested the 47 seats of parliament. Tupuola Efi, who was prime minister for two consecutive terms from 1976 to 1978 and 1979 to 1981, established the Christian Democratic Party (CDP) just before the 1985 elections. For the first time the two parties published their manifestos. The HRPP published the photographs of all its candidates for the elections.

The HRPP government was brought down later in the year when eleven of its members left the party and formed a coalition government with fifteen members of the CDP who rejected the HRPP's budget.

The HRPP won government again in 1988 when it secured the support of a member it needed a few days before the election of a prime minister, giving it a one-vote majority. Soon after the general election, when the HRPP assumed government, the coalition renamed itself the Samoa National Development Party (SNDP). SNDP became the opposition and remained so until the 1991 general election.

The results of the 1990 plebiscite could also be seen as a reflection of public support for the HRPP. In parliament all HRPP members, as expected, voted in favour of the 1990 amendment to the 1963 Electoral Act, although, in private, some HRPP members and even some cabinet ministers strongly disagreed with the idea of universal suffrage. One minister said in private that he objected to the introduction of universal suffrage as this could threaten his chance of being reelected. Under the matai suffrage a member would know most of the electors from his/her constituency. With universal suffrage on the other hand, the electors' roll doubled and sometimes tripled, so that, compared to the old system, it was harder to have an idea which way the electors would vote.

With the party system becoming a part of the country's political culture, there was no doubt that it was going to play a major part in the 1991 general election.

The 1991 general election

Citizen involvement in Western Samoa's political decision-making process began with the registration of all adults over 21 years of age for the plebsicite held on 29 October 1990. When the outcome of the plebiscite was positive, the government rushed through parliament a bill to amend the 1963 Electoral Act, allowing not only matai but everyone over 21 years of age to vote in the 1991 general election, the matai, however, remaining the only candidates eligible for election.

New electoral rolls for every constituency were compiled. Several registering agencies were set up throughout the country. In order to encourage as many registrations as possible on these new rolls, almost every village had a registering booth. Campaigning for the coming elections was well under way by this time. Candidates for the coming elections organized and financed their own networks for transporting eligible voters in their particular constituencies to these booths. All registered voters were issued identification cards (IDs) to prevent voter fraud, in keeping with the *Electoral Amendment Act 1990* (Section 18[3][a]). These IDs were then kept by the voters' most likely choice for the elections, who was usually the person who offered free transportation, even as far as collecting eligible voters from the doorsteps of their homes and returning them after registration.

Although the election was meant to be a secret ballot, keeping IDs was seen as a kind of 'guarantee' (or so some candidates thought) that their owners would vote for him/her on election day. Also, keeping IDs would prevent rival candidates from enticing voters to the rivals' side. On election day, however, only the voter knew which candidate he/she was voting for. Offering eligible voters soft drinks, food, bus fares (ranging from five tala [\$5.00] to over \$50), transporting them from their homes and back to have their names registered on electoral rolls, handshakes, 'lots of smiles', and a variety of other friendly gestures were all subtle means of winning voters' support.

Satisfied with its achievements during 1988-90, HRPP, under the leadership of Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana, went to the general election confident of a victory, even a landslide majority. Such confidence was publicly expressed by one candidate in his campaign advertisement (*Observer* [Papaliitele Fitisemani] 13 March 1991) where he listed some of the HRPP's achievements, including the provision of loans for constructing new homes, the establishment of an ombudsman's office and the ombudsman's subsequent appointment, the construction of an international airport, the establishment of the National University of Samoa, the introduction of universal suffrage, pensions for adults of 65 years and over, repair of old roads, and an improved economy in spite of Western Samoa's limited resources. Other credits to the HRPP were its electricity programme (which has now reached most villages in the two main islands of Upolu and Savaii) and the establishment of the new Department of Women's Affairs (*Observer* [Papaliitele Fitisemanu] 13 March 1991).

The HRPP's 14-point manifesto, which according to its leader, Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana, would guide the next HRPP government if elected back to office (*Observer* 3 April 1991), promised better public roads in both Upolu and Savaii by the end of 1994, improved water supplies for both the rural areas and the Apia town area, continuation of the rural electrification programme, and the development of port facilities. Under its telecommunication programme, the HRPP said it would introduce commercial television in Western Samoa. The party was also committed to replanting trees along rivers as a major conservation effort and was seeking the support of the villages. Also promised by the HRPP was a review of old-age pensions and the continuation of the bonus scheme for farmers of certain crops. But perhaps HRPP's major election promises were the proposed upgrading of the local technical college at Vaivase

to 'polytech' status and the relocation of the National University of Samoa campus from its present location at Malifa to an area of about 14 acres behind Samoa College.

The opposition (SNDP), under its leader Tupua Tamasese Efi and deputy leader Vaai Kolone (both former prime ministers), also went to election with a good chance of ousting the ruling HRPP. The SNDP's election manifesto covered a range of issues from agriculture, tourism, education, health services, electricity and water to the elderly and youth. The clause in the *National University of Samoa Act*, 1984 which provided for the inclusion of the minister of Education in the University's council as *ex-officio* pro-chancellor-appointed, would be repealed, removing future education ministers from the council. As there were two other politicians on the council at the time, the SNDP called for the removal of all politicians, as a matter of principle, from the university's council.³

The SNDP's appeal to the elderly lay in its promise to lower the current age for old-age pension eligibility from 65 to 55. The SNDP also committed itself to abolishing the arrangement under which permanent heads of department were appointed on a two-year contract basis. But perhaps the most important issue emphasized by the SNDP was the elimination of corruption, which they believed was blatantly the worst feature of the NRPP government. Using the corruption issue, SNDP put forward their plea to the people of Samoa for a 'change of government' and promised that an anti-corruption tribunal would be set up if they were elected to office.

More than 56,000 Western Samoans went to the polls on Friday, 5 April 1991, in the country's first general election since the introduction of universal suffrage (*Observer* 3 April 1991). A total of 156 candidates competed for seats in the 47- member parliament — 60 under the HRPP banner, 40 for the SNDP and 56 independents. Three candidates contested the two seats set aside for individual voters. Two candidates were elected unopposed (Leniu Avamagalo from Vaimauga East and Vaai Kolone from Vaisigano No.1).

Polling booths were open from nine o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon, with provisional results starting to come in over the two local radio stations at about six o'clock. By midnight provisional results for all the territorial constituencies and two representatives for the individual voters were known.



The HRPP won 26 seats, which included 9 members elected to parliament for the first time and 17 re-elected members. Of the 17 re-elected members, 9 returned for their third or more terms. The SNDP won 18 seats and 3 were won by the independents. Two of the independents had been founding members of the HRPP. Tofilau Eti Alesana's announcement on election night, when the provisional results were known, that the HRPP had won 28 seats implied the inclusion of two independents in his party.

Among the prominent HRPP members who lost their seats were Aeau Peniamina Leavaiseeta and Tanuvasa Livigisitone, the speaker of the House of Assembly, and minister of Trades and Industry respectively. The prominent SNDP MPs who lost their seats were Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, Vailolo Filipo (under his new title, Vui) and another seasoned politician, Aualiitia Pinati. Some candidates who lost their seats after the announcement of provisional results, including the leader of the opposition, Tupua Tamasese Efi, and the speaker of the house, Aeau Peniamina Leavaiseeta, were still hopeful of regaining their majorities even after the official recount and the counting of special votes.

At the completion of recounts and addition of special votes, confirmed on 22 April 1991, there was only one change to the provisional results, which concerned the constituency of Gagaemauga No. 2. The third-ranking and HRPP candidate, Faasootauloa Pati edged ahead of the SNDP candidate, Fepuleai Samuelu, who was leading on election night, by a 51-vote margin, representing additional votes of 102 to HRPP, and 12 to SNDP candidates. In the Anoamaa East constituency, newcomer Moananu Salale increased his election-night lead from 27 votes to 34 against the leader of the SNDP and former prime minister, Tupua Tamasese Efi. The speaker of the house, an HRPP candidate, reduced his election-night deficit from 102 to 15 against another newcomer, Mafasolia Papu Vaelupe, the son of SNDP's deputy leader, Vaai Kolone.

With the general election out of the way, the two main political parties entered the second phase of their campaigns before parliament convened to elect a prime minister and speaker of the house. This second phase involved HRPP members trying to convince SNDP members to join their parties and vice-versa. On previous experience, it was possible for the minority party, on election night, to end up forming the new government. At the end of 1985, eleven MPs of the HRPP government left the party because of a disagreement on the leadership



issue. They formed a coalition government with the CDP's fifteen members. After the 1988 general election, and before the new government was sworn in, an MP who had contested the election under the SNDP 'ticket' joined the HRPP's camp. He became the twenty-fourth member that the HRPP desperately needed to form a government.

After election night all 27 HRPP members had stayed together at their recently-completed headquarters at Mulinuu to try and avoid members defecting to the SNDP or declaring themselves as independents. Three newly elected members had recently joined the HRPP camp, including the two independent members, Nonumalo Sofara and Fuataga Ioane Alama; the third, Teoleafoa Faafisi, had contested one of the two seats for Aana Alofi No. 1 as an SNDP candidate but decided to change allegiance.

Once it had the numbers to form a government, the HRPP's next strategy was to convince two more members to join them, in order to get the two thirds of the house needed to change the constitution. The HRPP would then be able to add one additional seat each for the constituencies of Salega and Safata, given their big population sizes, something previous HRPP governments had not been able to do because they did not have the numbers to change the constitution.

The introduction of universal suffrage made the 1991 general election an historic one, as the privilege of electing members of parliament, accorded to matai since independence in 1962, was now shared by untitled men and women over the age of 21. A number of important developments resulted from this. The percentage of eligible voters, in relation to Western Samoa's population, had increased from about 14 in 1988 to about 34 in 1991.6 In the eyes of the democratic world, this was an important development in Western Samoa's political history; but some Samoans feared it as a threat to local traditions.

For the SNDP, the defeat of their leader, Tupua Tamasese Efi, was a classic example of universal suffrage as a force destructive of Samoan traditions. As the holder of the royal title (tamaaiga) Tupua, which literally meant the 'king of the Atua' district (though perhaps the title means less now than it used to), one would have expected the leader of the opposition to have been elected unopposed, as was the case in 1988 when only matais were voting. Or if the 1991 election went ahead, Tupua should have won by a big margin. Neither of these results transpired. As untitled men and women were not as sentimentally attached to traditions as the matai, they felt freer to vote for whomever they

preferred. Was Tupua Tamasese Efi so unpopular in his constituency, or was this an effect of the polarization of society into two main political parties? Each of those factors contributed to Tupua's defeat, together with the fact that he neglected his constituency, as he admitted on radio after the announcement of the provisional results, in trying to help other SNDP candidates campaign. The conflict between 'traditionalists' and 'modernists' (advocates of universal suffrage) would continue to be a fact of life in Samoan society, with the latter eventually gaining the upper hand in general elections.

The irony about universal suffrage, which supposedly champions the ideals of individual right and freedom of choice, was that after the elections some voters suspected of voting for candidates other than those agreed to by the village council of chiefs (fono) were punished. At Tupua Tamasese Efi's constituency of Anoamaa East, a prominent campaigner for Moananu Salale, from the village of Lufilufi which bestowed the title 'Tupua', was expelled (faatulai) from the village. At Savaia, a village in the constituency of Lefaga and Faleseela, where the HRPP candidate lost to a SNDP candidate, the members of a family who were taken by the SNDP candidate's vehicle to vote for him, were punished. They were asked to provide ten pigs and 100 taros, and when the exact amount was not supplied, they too were expelled from the village. The village council had made a decision before the elections that everyone was to vote for their HRPP candidate, Taula Ierome.

Of the four constituencies that elected two representatives each, two elected candidates with the same title who belonged to the same family. Tofilau Eti Alesana and Tofilau Tauvage, both HRPP candidates, were elected by Faasaleleaga No. 1 from among the six candidates who contested the two seats. These results reflected the solid support for the prime minister and the HRPP. In Falealili, one of the two constituencies that elected two MPs with the same title (Fuimaono), the majority supported Fuimaono Mimio and Fuimaono Lotomau. The 'Fuimaono' title, one of the highest ranking in the district, belonged to the Sa Fenunuivao family. It was this family's prerogative to decide who among its members should hold the royal title, 'Tupua'. In 1987, the 'Tupua' title was bestowed on Efi. Mimio and Lotomau, who were re-elected from the six candidates that contested the two seats, belonged to different political parties. In the 1988-90 parliament, Lotomau, an HRPP MP, put forward a motion recommending Tupua Tamasese Efi, the leader of the opposition, as

one of the members of the Council of Deputies. Tupua and Mimio objected on the ground that their opinions were not sought on the matter, and that it should have been discussed privately beforehand.

Of the four female candidates (all from the HRPP), only two were successful. Matatumua Maimoaga was one of the two MPs from Aana Alofi No. 1. Her niece and daughter of Western Samoa's first prime minister, Mataafa Fiame Faumuina Mulinuu II, Fiame Naomi, was returned for her third consecutive parliamentary term by the Lotofaga constituency. With Nonumalo Leulumoega Sofara (Matatumua Maimoaga's brother-in-law and former speaker of the house for two consecutive terms) and the prime minister, Tofilau Eti Alesana, one family now occupies four seats of the 47-member parliament. Le Mamea Ata Matatumua, Matatumua Maimoaga's brother, was one of the two unsuccessful HRPP candidates in the constituency of Lefaga and Faleseela. Traditionally, family alliances were the most important feature of Samoan politics. Although this is still sometimes the case (as in this instance), the existence of political parties will gradually change the situation (as in the Fuimaono instance).

By the deadline on 1 May, eleven election petitions had been filed in the Supreme Court (Observer 3 May 1991). The seven petitions against HRPP MPs included three against cabinet ministers. The four petitions against SNDP MPs included two by the former speaker of the house, Aeau Peniamina. Among the illegal practices cited in the petitions were bribery, personation and treating. (In some cases, names that appeared on the electoral rolls were those of deceased people or people who were overseas on election day. Some candidates and their campaign committees arranged for non-matai supporters to use these names to vote on election day. This is referred to as personation.) The hearing of these petitions was expected to begin on 16 May 1991. Meanwhile, with a majority of 30 MPs when parliament convened on 7 May, the HRPP elected a speaker of the house and Tofilau Eti Alesana as prime minister.

One of the strongest arguments for universal suffrage (if not the most important one) was that it would curb the proliferation of matai titles. As the registrar of land and titles noted, pre-election-year appointments far outnumbered those of election and post-election years (Legislative Assembly 1988:3). The matai population by 1990 was 21,649 (figures from the Registrar of Land and Titles, April 1991), which included about 1,000 titles conferred on women. Only 302 new appointments were made in 1990 compared with the usual figure of about 2,000 in previous pre-election years. Two thousand other new titles

were withheld by the registrar of titles in 1990, on the grounds that they were not 'founding titles (mataifaavae). With universal suffrage, no pressure was put on the registrar of titles by candidates to have these 2,000 titles registered for the 1991 general election. Hence, while universal suffrage has been largely responsible for Tupua Tamasese Efi's defeat (an event critics of universal suffrage would cite as 'eroding of traditions'), it has also prevented the proliferation of matai titles, as its advocates correctly envisaged, thus upholding the dignity of the matai system and faa-Samoa (Samoan ways).

Conclusion

Universal suffrage represents a major move towards democratization of the political system, by providing all adult citizens the right to elect their representatives in government. However, there are still a number of limitations. Although, in theory, individuals could vote according to their own judgment, in many constituencies their village councils stipulate the choice of candidate. Failure to abide by the villages' rulings can result in various forms of traditional punishment, which include banishment, having to provide food for the whole village, or paying a fine. In most families, informal discussions are held to ascertain whom to vote for on election day. Thus, it is possible that every member of the family goes to the polls under instructions from its matai or its elders about whom to vote for. Wives and children rarely vote differently from their husbands or fathers.

The right to stand as candidates in an election (as distinct from the right to elect) has not been opened to all citizens. Candidature remains restricted to matai. It is difficult to predict how long it will be possible for the Western democratic concept of universal suffrage to co-exist with the Samoan traditional concept of political rule by matai only. Universal suffrage is commonly regarded as one of the chief indicators of a democratic political system. The main reasons for the introduction of universal suffrage in Western Samoa were to curb the proliferation of matai titles for political purposes (therefore maintaining the dignity of the matai system) and to promote democratic behaviour. Just as Samoans have absorbed Christianity into the Samoan traditional belief and behaviour system, so they have produced a Samoan form of compromise between Western and traditional political cultures, and between theory and practice.

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Postscript

For parliament to amend the constitution, a two-thirds majority of the 47 members is required (Part XI, Section 109[1]). By the second parliamentary session of 1991, the HRPP had secured this number, enabling it to put through parliament three constitutional amendment bills. The amendments included an extension of the parliamentary term from three to five years, the addition of two new electoral constituencies, and an increase in the number of cabinet ministers from eight to twelve. Having passed the third reading in parliament and having received the head of state's assent on 28 November 1991, the three amendments became law.

The extension of the parliamentary term puts the next general elections in early 1996. The by-elections for the two new electoral constituencies held in early 1992 added two new members of parliament to the HRPP government. In the by-election for the constituency of Salega on the island of Savaii, which was contested by candidates from each of the two political parties, the HRPP candidate won comfortably on the first ballot. At Safata on the island of Upolu, a second ballot was required when the court, after hearing an election petition filed by Pulaa Vaea against Lesa Farani Posala (the only two contesting that seat and both HRPP candidates), declared the election of the latter void. Lesa Farani Posala was returned with an increased majority in the second ballot.

The four additional cabinet ministers were sworn in by the head of state on 20 August 1992. Among them were two former cabinet ministers in the previous HRPP government, an HRPP member in his first term as member of parliament, and a SNDP member of parliament who had been elected in 1985 but after the appointment of the initial eight cabinet ministers in 1991, switched to the HRPP. Three other SNDP members of parliament joined the HRPP before their colleague, who had now been appointed a cabinet minister. With two more members following the creation of the two new electoral constituencies, the HRPP now has 35 of the 49 seats in parliament.

Notes

- 1 The 1960 Constitutional Convention anticipated subsequent changes by leaving the question of method of election to be decided by the legislature without the need for constitutional amendment. It was possible, therefore, to introduce universal suffrage in 1991 by amending the 1963 Electoral Act without the difficulties involved in changing the constitution.
- The provisions for registering political parties are contained in the constitution (Section 13.1[b]) and The Incorporated Societies Ordinance, 1952. Under the 1952 ordinance the registrar of the Justice department can officially register a political party by issuing a certificate of incorporation provided:
 - (i) there are at least fifteen people in the party;
 - (ii) the party has a constitution; and
 - (iii) that in making its application for registration, the party has the consent of the majority of its members.
- The professor of Samoan Language and Culture at the National University of Samoa was dismissed by the vice chancellor in late 1989. The vice-chancellor argued that the professor was redundant as the government, earlier in the same year, had banned the teaching of Samoan courses at the university. On the university's council at the time were two members of parliament together with the minister of Education. The presence of three politicians on the university's council made the issues of the professor's dismissal and government meddling in the university's affairs among the most significant political issues since 1989.
- The three independents were Le Tagaloa Pita, Nonumalo Sofara and Fuatage Ioane Alama. The first two were founding members of the HRPP. Le Tagaloa Pita left the HRPP after the 1985 general elections, together with ten other HRPP members, and formed a coalition government with the Christian Democratic Party's fifteen members. After the 1988 general election Le Tagaloa became an independent MP and had since remained so. Nonumalo Sofara had been the speaker of the house for two consecutive terms from 1982 until he lost his seat in the 1988 general elections. Because HRPP had a new candidate to contest that seat in the 1991 general election, Nonumalo Sofara had to stand as an independent. The third independent, Fuataga Ioane Alama, had to stand as an independent because an HRPP MP was then the representative from his constituency and was therefore the HRPP's official candidate in 1991 as a matter of party policy.
- 5 Tanuvasa Livigisitone was an ardent HRPP supporter. In the 1988 general elections he became the SNDP's candidate when his constituency's former MP contested a seat in another constituency. Tanuvasa Livigisitone's switch to the SNDP was probably to improve his chances of getting into parliament. Once this was achieved, he changed to the party which truly had his loyalty.



- 6 The 1987 estimate of Western Samoa's population was 162,000 (Pacific Islands Yearbook, 16th edition) with the matai population 23,203 (Legislative Assembly 1988:3). The matai population increased gradually from about 6 per cent in 1957 to its 1988 proportion due to the proliferation of matai titles for election purposes, beginning in a by-election in 1965 (Davidson 1967:336, 426).
- 7 The author's 1991 estimate of Western Samoa's population was 165,000, with about 56,000 of those registered for the 1991 general election (Observer 3 April 1991). Considering that voting was not compulsory, the percentage which turned out to cast their votes was high (the exact figure was never worked out).
- Tofilau Eti Alesana, Maimoaga Matatumua, Le Mamea Ata Matatumua, Fiame Naomi (daughter of Laulu Fetaui present high commissioner of Western Samoa in New Zealand) and Maimoaga Matamua's other sister, Eni (Nonumalo Leulumoega Sofara's wife), all belong to the Petaia family.
- 9 In 1987 (before the 1988 general election) 2,395 new titles were bestowed
- 10 'Non founding titles' included created titles such as Ofa, the name of a recent cyclone but which has been made by some families a matai title name.

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