

Mulumulugaveve A Tupulaga

Critical Conversations Among the Youth

Tupulaga Tai'ala Peer Leadership Program
operated by Intersections, Inc.

In collaboration with
American Samoa Community College
Samoan Studies Institute

Funded by
Amerika Samoa Humanities Council
Cares Act Heart Grant

INTRODUCTION

It was a hot summer morning in June of 2020, and a group of college age students congregated indoors to take advantage of the cool air conditioning unit in our office. They meet twice a week to connect, to fellowship, and to plan for their community service projects. They are members of the American Samoa Community College, Samoan Studies Institute, Ta’iala Peer Leaders*.

This morning was different. It was not a discussion of their projects. It was a conversation about a word they heard on the radio. The word was ‘*uolo*’. They soon realized that the word ‘*uolo*’ is a phonetic transliteration of the word ‘wall’ that is translated as ‘*puiipui*’ in the Samoan language. They started tossing similar words that have already been translated in Samoan, such as ‘plan’ that is translated to ‘*fuafuaga*’ and now phonetically translated to ‘*pelegi*’ (*peleni*).

Some of them expressed concern and asked, “What will happen to the Samoan language, in the next 20 years, if we continue to replace the actual translation with phonetic transliteration?” Others seemed to agree that the language will continue to evolve as society progresses with modern technology. This dialogue helped to shape *Mulumulugaveve A Tupulaga* (MAT) literally translated as “Discussions/Critical Conversations among the youth”. As a term, this is a combination of words - *mulu*, which is to handle, and *veve* which is to break.

The peer leaders’ interests spanned from language to the arts. They talked about various cultural art forms and, most particularly, the progression of the *nifo’oti* to the *ailao* to the *siva ailao afi*, known as the fire knife dance. This summer, in particular, was quite unusual. The world was battling the Covid-19 global pandemic that also impacted our island territory. It brought a lot of abnormalities, such as the ban of public gatherings, border closure, and cancelation of graduation, to name a few.

In May of 2020, our ASCC Ta’iala Peer Leaders and I conducted a fire knife drive-by to the four high school campuses that house our Ta’iala Peer Leaders Program: Leone High School, Tafuna High School, Nu’uuli Vocational Technical High School, and Fa’asao-Marist High School. Since graduation was canceled in 2020, they wanted to recognize the Ta’iala Peer Leader graduates. The motorcade, loaded with drummers and musicians, was welcomed at each site where Justin Isileli performed the *siva ailao afi*. Justin, a senior in high school, is a former student of mine who learned the *siva ailao afi* when he was an elementary student. Certainly, Justin gave his best performance and created memories for our graduating Ta’iala Peer Leaders Class of 2020. The drive-by project, consequently, led to inquiries as to why there are only a few fire knife dancers in American Samoa.

MAT is a research project led by college students with a desire to initiate discussions on two areas: 1) **Phonetic Transliteration** to provoke critical thinking of young people to take another look at how phonetic transliteration may impact the preservation, maintenance, and development of the Samoan language, and 2) **Ai-lao Afi** to identify the names of the *siva ailao afi* dance moves.

It is our hope that MAT will increase dialogue in our community about the health or condition of our language, as well as the *siva ailao afi*, in the next 20 years.

Manuia tele lau faitau,

Aulosoloso F. Paulualo
Project Director
Mulumulugaveve A Tupulaga

**ASCC Ta’iala Peer Leaders are members of the Tupulaga Ta’iala Peer Leadership Program, that is operated by Intersections, Inc., in collaboration with ASCC Samoan Studies Institute, and funded by the U.S. Administration for Native Americans.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Intersections projects and programs are built around this principle and understanding that we can *Touch the Future Today*. And it is that future that moved our youth to bring their ideas into reality, and find the confidence to act. They were not afraid that they did not have enough experience or well versed in the Samoan language. They were not afraid that their voices wouldn't be listened to. They were not afraid that they couldn't make a difference or that it wasn't worth trying. They thought about what they heard and looked at what they had; and then stopped to reflect.

If we keep silent about the things that are stirring in our hearts regarding our language and culture, what are the results 10 or 20 years from now? What are the possibilities, opportunities, or dangers that may occur if we choose this way or that way?

For allowing our youth to provoke critical thinking and explore their ideas through research, we extend our sincere and deepest Faafetai Tele to Executive Director, **Tauaisafune Niualama Taifane**, and the Board of Directors of the Amerika Samoa Humanities Council for funding our program.

Our heartfelt Faafetai tele to **Aiono Keseta Okenaisa Fauolo-Manila**, Director of Samoan Studies Institute of the American Samoa Community College (ASCC) and your amazing staff for your invaluable input, review, and edits of our book. Faafetai tele Tupaisiva **Tamari Mulitalo-Cheung** for serving as our humanities scholar and providing resources for our Ta'iala Peer Leaders.

We are grateful for the rare opportunity of learning from the late HC Galea'i Pulefano and collecting personal interviews from his home in Laie, HI, before he moved on to eternal glory. May he rest in peace. Faafetai tele to all the fire knife dancers in Hawaii for your willingness to share information: **Mr. Isitolo Oloa, Mr. Peter Whitney, and Mr. Mika Oloa**.

We want to extend our sincere gratitude to the following people for their love and support: **Mrs. Evelyn Lili'o Satele**, Director of Territorial Administration On Aging, for providing shelter for our youth during the many months of practice at your compounds; **Mr. & Mrs. Manu'a and Michelle Chen of Manu'a Store** for providing towels to burn during *ailao afi* practices and materials for the uniform; **Mr. & Mrs. Ben and Tutuila Sauvao of Tutuila Store** for printing our uniform; and all of the parents that have provided food and drinks for afternoon practices. Faamalo! Faafetai Tele for all your love and support. You made our lives less stressful.

We live in a culture that glorifies the latest I-Phone and the newest technology. The Bible says 'ask for the ancient paths where the good way lies. The good way is not one that is hidden but it may not always be easy. Faafetai tele ASCC Ta'iala Peer Leaders for not only asking the questions, but for taking action and taking responsibility of the idea that connects all of us together. They are **Kesilolynori Mamea-Salavao, Faith Fetoailagi Seiuli, Fetoai Agnes Kapisi, Take Masina, Talofa Fe'a, Henry Collins, Perosiomelemaofeira Vaofanua, Geraldine Aliitaeao-Ofisa, Silivelia Robertson, Avery Maloata, Lolua Leomiti, and Aroma Leupolu**.

Faafetai Tele to the young tama ma teine of American Samoa who heard the sounds and responded to the beat of the drums and became the first group of MAT *ailao afi* performers: **Alvin Talataiga, Amelie Chen, Angela Chen, Cornelius Satele, Damien Kostelnik, Leitualasā Malieitulua, Jr., Lenix Chen, Logan Chen, Taimane Sauvao, Tasi Sauvao, Tony Tomasi, Tutuila Sauvao, and Victor Chen**.

My sincere gratitude and Faafetai tele to Intersections Board of Directors for your incredible belief in the Ta'iala Peer Leaders and Mulumulugaveve A Tupulaga programs: **Rep. Larry Sanittoa, Chairman; Mr. Niunitone Tamaalii, Treasurer; Mrs. Siniva Samoa, Secretary, and Mrs. Poulima Lagafuaina, Board Member**. Without your invaluable support, the research in this book would not be possible.

Much appreciation and Faafetai tele to our Intersections staff for your support in discussions, outreach, and logistics. Thank you for your love and commitment to mission and our youth: **Aulosoloso I'aulualo, Punaloa Gary Tipa, Oneata Rosie Soi, Frances Tala-taiga, Lomialagi Sanelivi, and Lemalie Puni-Taala.**

May the God of Truth and Revelation be praised. It is He who fulfills all our needs and continues to instruct us to, "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls." Jeremiah 6: 15-16

May you never stop asking questions that turn challenges into opportunities.

Sincerely,

Tauiliili Moelili'a Aulagiainuuese Seui
Executive Director
Intersections, Inc.

FAAFETAI

O loo fausia porokalama ma poloketi a le Intersections i luga o le malamalama ma se talitonuga e mafai ona tatou faapea "O le Asō, e mafai ona e pa'i atu i le lumana'i". O le lumana'i lena o loo uunaia ai a tatou tupulaga e aumai o latou manatu ma maua le faatuatuga e faatino ai. E le'i popole i latou ona o le lē lava o le poto masani poo le lelei i le gagana Samoa. E le'i popole i latou pe le amanaia o latou taofi. E le'i popole fo'i ne'i le mafai ona o latou faia se suiga pe maumau lo latou taumafai. Na mafaufau i latou i mea sa faalogo ai ma vaai i mea ua latou maua; ona tu lea ma manatunatu i ia mea.

Afai tatou te gūgū i mea o loo faaosofia ai o tatou loto e uiga i la tatou gagana ma le aganuu, o a ni aafiaga i le 10 pe 20 tausaga o lumana'i? O a ni mea e mafai, ni avanoa, poo ni lamatiaga e ono tutupu pe a tatou filifili i le auala lena, poo lena?

E momoli atu la matou Faafetai Tele i le Faatonusili, le tofa i le Tautootoo Tauaisafune Niualama Taifane ma le Komiti Faatonu o le Amerika Samoa Humanities Council mo le avanoa mo a tatou talavou e lagalaga ma faalautele o latou manatu 'anoa e faavae i sailiiliga maumaututu aemaise le faatupeina o le matou porokalama.

Matou te momoli fo'i le agaga Faafetai Tele i le Faatonu o le Ofisa o Aoaoga ma Suesuega Samoa a le Kolisi Tuufaatasi o Amerika Samoa, le afioga i le Laaunafusia Aiono Keseta Okenaisa Fauolo-Manila ma le aufaigaluega mo le iloiloiga ma faasa'osa'oga o le tusi. Faafetai tele i le tamaita'i sikola, le susuga Tupaisiva Tamari Mulitalo -Cheung mo le faasoa o puna'oa aua Tupulaga Ta'iala.

Ae le mafai ona galo ma le loto faafetai a'oa'oga ma avanoa faafale-tui sa maua mai le afioga Galea'i Pulefano i lona maota i Laie, HI, ae le'i tuua le malo ma valaau iai lona Matai Sili. Ia manuia lau malaga. Faafetai tele i 'au siva ailao afi i Hawaii mo lo latou loto malie e faasoa faamatalaga: **Mr. Isitolo Oloa, Mr. Peter Whitney, and Mr. Mika Oloa.**

E momoli atu le agaga faafetai i a i latou nei mo lo latou alofa ma le soosootau'au: **le faletua ia Evelyn Lili'o Satele**, le Faatonu o le TAOA, mo le faaavanoaina o le nofoaga mo faaitaiga a le fanau i masina e tele sa faatino ai. **Mr. & Mrs. Manu'a ma Michelle Chen** o le faleoloa o Manu'a mo solo sa faaoga e tutu aua faaitaiga o siva ailao, atoa ai fo'i ma ie mo togiga; **Mr. & Mrs. Ben ma Tutuila Sauvao** o le faleoloa o Tutuila mo le lolomiga o o matou mitiafu, atoa ai ma matua sa lima foai i meaai ma vaiinu i taimi o faaitaiga a le fanau i aoauli taitasi. Faamalo! Faafetai Tele le alofa ma le lagoonua. Na outou faafaigofie la matou galuega.

O loo tatou ola i se vaitau o telefoni feavea'i I-Phone ma le saosaoa o le tekonolosi. E pei ona ta'ua e le Tusi Paia, "ia outou tutu i ala, ma vaavaai, ma fesili i ala o le vavau, po'o i fea le ala lelei". E le 'o natia le ala lelei ma e le faigofie pea. Faafetai tele i Tupulaga Ta'iala a le Kolisi Tuufaataasi o Amerika Samoa, e le gata ina outou tuufesili, ae ua faatino, ma tauave lo outou tiute i le manatu e fesoota'i ai tatou uma. O i latou nei e aofia ai: **Kesilolynnori Mamea-Salavao, Faith Fetoailagi Seiuli, Fetoai Agnes Kapisi, Take Masina, Talofa Fe'a, Henry Collins, Perosiemelemaofeira Vaofanua, Geraldine Aliitaeao-Ofisa, Silivelia Robertson, Avery Maloata, Lolua Leomiti, ma Aroma Leupolu.**

Faafetai Tele mo tama ma teine nei o Amerika Samoa na lagona le leo ma talia le ta atu o talipalau ma avea ai ma ulua'i vaega e faatinoa le ailao afi i le MAT: **Alvin Talatāiga, Amelie Chen, Angela Chen, Cornelius Satele, Damien Kostelnik, Leitualasā Malieitulua, Jr., Lenix Chen, Logan Chen, Taimane Sauvao, Tasi Sauvao, Tony Tomasi, Tutuila Sauvao, ma Victor Chen.**

Ne'i ta'ai faafala ma galo i ala o lupe lou agaga Faafetai tele i le Komiti Faatonu a le Intersections mo lo outou faatuatuga i fanau o le Tupulaga Taiala ma le porokalama Mulumulugaveve a Tupulaga: afioga i le Sui Mamalu Larry Sanitoa, Taitaifono; susuga Niunitone Tamaalii, Teutupe; susuga Siniva Samoa, Failautusi; ma le susuga Poulima Lagafuaina, Totino. Ana le seanoa la outou lagolago, e le tino i siuga galuega su'esu'e i totonu o lenai tusi.

Faafetai tele i le aufaigaluega a le Intersections mo le lagolago i faatalanoaga, faasoa i tua ma fetufaaiga i lavelave o le galuega. Faafetai alofa ma lo tou agaga tuuatoa i le manulauti ma a tatou talavou): **Aulosoloso P'aulualo, Punaloa Gary Tipa, Oneata Rosie Soi, Frances Talataiga, Lomialagi Sanelivi, ma Lemalie Puni-Taala.**

Ia faamanuina pea le Atua o le Mea Moni ma le Faaaliga. O lana Afioaga o loo faatonuina ai i tatou, "ia outou tutu i ala, ma vaavaai, ma fesili i ala o le vavau, po o i fea le ala lelei, ma ia outou savavali ai, ona maua lea e outou o le malologa mo outou agaga" (Jeremia 6: 15-16).

Aua ne'i taofia le tuufesili, e liua ai faafitauli e avea ma avanoa.

Ma le faaaloalo lava,

Tauilili Moelili'a Aulagaiinuuese Seui
Faatonu Sili
Intersections, Inc.

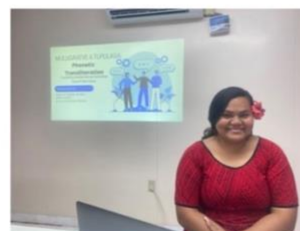
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PHONETIC TRANSLITERATION OVERVIEW

A lei se gagana ua pogisa le nuu –literally, “without language, night descends on a village”. Generally speaking, language thrives in different ways, and the Samoan language is no exception. Taiala Peer Leaders wrestled with the idea whether Phonetic Transliteration, (the translation of a foreign word to Samoan the way it sounds), adds to the erosion of the Samoan language. In this research they’ve come to appreciate the dire need to transliterate responsibly.

The Team Leaders in this Phonetic Transliteration research group are Miss Kesilolynnnori Mamea-Salavao and Miss Geraldine Aliitaeao-Ofisa. Other contributors to this research are Miss Talofa Fe’a, Miss Lolua Leomiti, Miss Aroma Leupolu, and Mr. Avery Maloata.



PHONETIC TRANSLITERATION

Mulumulugaveve A Tupulaga (MAT) is a project led by college age students who were concerned about the condition of the Samoan language. Instead of using the Samoan translation, many people are using phonetic transliteration. These college age students are members of the American Samoa Community College (ASCC) Tupulaga Ta'iala Peer Leaders (peer leaders). The purpose of this project is to explore the Samoan language and how it has evolved throughout the years; efforts are focused on words within the Samoan language with phonetic transliteration. The peer leaders' main objective is to research, compile, and inform people about their findings. In addition, they wanted to provoke young Samoans to think about how phonetic transliteration may impact the vitality and sustainability of the Samoan language. They did this through their daily interactions and conversations with their family members and friends, as well as outreach presentations to their peers and community members.

The most common question asked during this research is the difference between *translation* and *transliteration*. Some say it's one and the same, however, according to Accredited Language Services (ALS), they are two different processes with very different goals:

Translation allows words in one language to be understood by those who speak another language. It is essential that the translation of a foreign word involves the interpretation of its meaning.

Transliteration, on the other hand, focuses more on pronunciation than meaning. It makes a language a little more convenient to people who are unfamiliar with that language's alphabet. It is a type of a conversion of a text from one script to another that involves swapping letters.

Phonetic Transliteration helps people speak a language by showing the pronunciation in the language they understand. For

example, the word "Ruler" is translated as "Vase" in Samoan, but its phonetic transliteration is "Lula". Several of the commonly used phonetic words that the students came across were unpublished so the peer leaders decided that this would be the focus of their research; that they would work diligently to ensure that the words are compiled and published in a report.

Among other transliterations the students found problematic was the word "Gender"—which is usually translated as "Itupa" in Samoan. The question of why it was translated thus was touched upon by invited Humanities Scholar for MAT, Tamari Mulitalo-Cheung, a Researcher and Translator from Samoans Studies Institute (SSI) at ASCC. During her presentation on the topic: *Transliteration, Phonetic Translation: Friend or Foe of the Samoan Language?*, she cited "gender: kenera" as listed in Rev. George Pratt's bilingual dictionary.

"You will find gender and kenera only in the English section (Pratt 1911, 72), with "itupa" not even included in the "I" entries of the Samoan section of Rev. George Pratt's dictionary (1862, later editions ...1911). The second popular bilingual dictionary by G.B.Milner does not include both "itupa" or "gender" in its "I" and "G" entries (G.B.Milner 1966, 89).

In addition, despite people going up in arms about newly coined slang words like *sekulakā*, largely frowned upon during Faleula 2003, 2005 commission conferences (Ripine, 2003, 2005) but it has been said that if a word remains "in use for 50 years it becomes part and parcel of the vocabulary of that place (Le Tagaloa 2003)."

Not much thought is given to the origination of Samoa's language as most scholars of the Pacific domain accepted the majority of islands lingua franca belong to the Austronesian family of languages. Samoan was and still is an oral language society. The introduction of the written island languages is a scattering attempts and contributions of Euro-American "beachcombers" explorers and more dominating were the Christian missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Samoa's written language is the work of the early LMS mis-

sionaries such as Misi Papu, Misi Sitea and Misi Parate. A small text that was used to teach the Tahitian language as authored by Rev. Charles Barf and printed in Huahine was brought to Samoa to assist Rev. John Betteridge Stair with developing the written language and building the Printing Press at Falelatai in 1834. (Fauolo, 2005, 74)

The missionaries' efforts in creating a Samoan written language were to better communicate with the natives and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While the missionaries with background in linguist (they are named *Misionare o le Tusi Pa'ia*) and seven Samoans took up on the task to translate the Bible into Samoan in the 1800s, it is noted with gratitude the great feat they pioneered for Samoa. For a person to work for more than eight hours every day, for a time of more than nineteen years is outstanding. Much of the Samoan Bible translation relied heavily on the Hebrew, Greek, Latin languages and sometimes other island languages. The Bible gives us such examples of phonetic transliteration of the books Genesis (Kenese), Exodus (Esoto), and Leviticus (Levitiko) and the Samoan translation of Judges (Faamasino), Proverbs (Fa'ataoto), Ecclesiastes (Failauga), and Revelation (Fa'aaliga.) There are Hebrew words that we have made Samoan such as arasi, aruna and kerupi. There are Greek words such as areto, satauro, agelu. Even English words with telefoni, uaina and naifi. (Fauolo, 1999, 19)

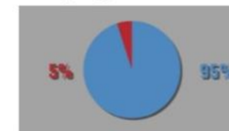
For over a period of six (6) months, the peer leaders set out to collect and compile these words that have been replaced with phonetic transliteration. They were able to identify them from conversations with friends and family members, as well as listening to the local media via radio, television, social media, and newspaper.

They took the list of 66 words to SSI to find out if they were printed in any publication. They were able to access their library and publications and came across the book Enugagana Samoan Glossary (ASCC-SSI, 2019). They matched 27 words on their list that were already published in Enugagana. As the group continued their research, challenges were inevitable. Some people were very comfortable with using phonetic transliteration because it's easier to say it rather than translating the word. Others did not see why phonetic

transliteration is a topic of discussion.

This resulted in having to conduct a more careful and thorough research. The peer leaders furthered their research by seeking other primary sources that would correspondingly help them go into deeper context. Some of the sources used included Samoan dictionaries such as Pratt (1911) and Milner (1966), published Samoan books such as Enugagana Samoan Glossary, online sources such as Central Bank of Samoa glossary, websites such as Google Translate, and interviews served as substantial number of resources for the project. After compiling these words, they presented their findings to 63 high school and college age students about the pros and cons of phonetic transliteration. After their presentations, 95% of the students said they want to preserve, maintain, and grow the Samoan language; about 87% said that many Samoan youth cannot carry conversations fluently in the Samoan language; and 94% agree that the Samoan language will deteriorate in the next 10-20 years.

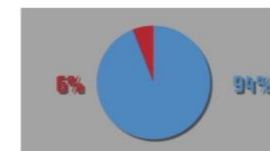
Graph 1. 95% of the students said they want to preserve, maintain, and grow the Samoan language



Graph 2. About 87% said that many Samoan youth cannot carry conversations fluently in the Samoan language



Graph 3. 94% agree that the Samoan language will deteriorate in the next 10 years.



From this data, the 63 students overwhelmingly acknowledged a concern for Samoan language preservation. Of the total, 95% of the students said they want to preserve, maintain, and grow the Samoan language. They foresee the deterioration of the language in the next 10-20 years as shown by the 94% who agreed since 87 % can no longer carry out a complete conversation in the Samoan language only.

Phonetic transliteration is unavoidable but must be seen also as growth of any different language. It is a reality of life and it can incite welcome conversations from different perspectives. One of the students commented, “I use it all the time, but never thought about how phonetic transliteration can change our language over time.”

- 1). Phonetic Transliteration is a sign of growth and evolution of society. No language can escape it
- 2) It is a convenient way of keeping conversation flowing, especially in bilingual and multilingual societies.
- 3) The user may become lazy and not bother to look for any native equivalents for it.
- 4) If one is not competent in the native language, it would be easier to switch to a loan word

Overall, the significance of this project is to provide vital information for our generation so they are aware of the constant changes in our Samoan language. As it continues to evolve and reform as time advances, *MAT* serves as an effort to promote awareness, in hopes of sparking the initiative to expand the research on the impacts of phonetic transliteration on our language.

In the following pages, we have provided for you some examples of phonetic transliteration. These words, however, have already been translated in the Samoan language. See also Table 1. Phonetic Transliteration and the Samoan Translation.

PHONETIC INTERACTIVE GLOSSARY

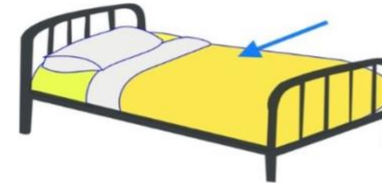
1. **accident** (fa'alavelave fa'afuase'i, lavea)



Phonetic Transliteration: esikegi

Sentence: Na *esikegi* le ta'avale ina ua saosaoa tele lana alu.

2. **blanket** ('ie mamoe)



Phonetic Transliteration: palanikeke, palagikeke.

Sentence: Sa faamealofa mai e la'u uo se *palanikeke* mo lo'u aso fanau.

3. **call** (valaau, vili)



Phonetic Transliteration: kolo

Sentence: Ua fafia le loomatua ina ua *kolo* mai lana tama o le a toe fo'i mai.

4. **drawer** (pusa toso)

Phonetic Transliteration: koloa

Sentence: Ou te mana'o i se *koloa* fou e tu'u i totonu o lo'u ofisa.



5. *friend* (uo, pa'aga)



Phonetic Transliteration: feleni

Sentence: Ua ia faamavae ma musumusu atu, "O le a ou misia oe la'u *feleni*."

6. *gang* (vaega)

Phonetic Transliteration: kegi

Sentence: Ou te fiafia e eva ma la'u *kegi*.



7. *hanger* (tautau ofu, tautau lavalava)

Phonetic Transliteration: hega

Sentence: Aumai le *hega* e tautau ai le ofu tino.



8. *interview* (faatalanoaga)

Phonetic Transliteration: initaviu

Sentence: E le'i pasia le *initaviu* a Ioane ona e lē iloa tautala faaSamoa.



9. *limit* (fa'agata, tapulaa)

Phonetic Transliteration: limiti

Sentence: E *limiti* i le 55 maila i le itula le saosaoa o ta'avale i le ala tele.



10. *messy* (gaogaosā)

Phonetic Transliteration: mesi

Sentence- Ua oso le ita o le tinā ina ua taunu'u mai o lo'o *mesi* le fale.



11. *national* (tagatānu'u)

Phonetic Transliteration: nesionale

Sentence- O lo'o vaaia pea le fealofani o tagata *nesionale*.



12. *oven* ('ōgaumu)

Phonetic Transliteration: 'ōveni

Sentence: Se'i tao ifo ni 'ulu i totonu o le 'ōveni.



13. plan (fuafuaga)

Phonetic Transliteration: peleni, pelegi

Sentence: Fai sau pelegi pe faapefea ona toe faaola le vai.



14. queen (masiofo, tupu tama'ita'i)

Phonetic Transliteration: kuini, kuigi

Sentence: O Elisapeta le *kuini* o Egelani.



15. ruler (vase)

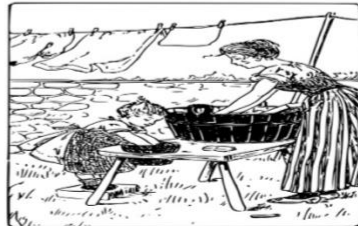
Phonetic Transliteration: Rula, Lula

Sentence- E fa'aaoga le *lula* e fua ai le 'umī o le pepa.

16. soak (fa'amoli / fa'avai)

Phonetic Transliteration: Soka

Sentence- Sa fesoasoani Sina i lona tinā e *soka* le tagamea.



17. Tenor (ato)

Phonetic Transliteration: Tena

Sentence: E leo tele atu le *tena* a Sione i lo le vaega a le malū.



18. Volunteer (ofo atu / galue aunoa ma se totogi)

Phonetic Transliteration: Volenitia, Volegikia



19. worry (popole)

Phonetic Transliteration: uoli

Sentence- 'Aua e te *uoli* i se mea e tasi.



Table 1: Phonetic Transliteration and Samoan Translation

WORD	PHONETIC	SAMOAN
1. Admit	Ekemiki	Ta'utino/Tautala Sa'o/
2. Alphabet (Samoan)	Alafapeti	Pi Samoa, Pi Faitau, Pi Tautau
3. Appeal	Apili	Tagi, Tauanau
4. Area	Eria	Vaega/Pito Vaega
5. Army	'Ami	'Au Tau/Vaegā'au
6. Baby	Peipi	Pepe
7. Bleed	Piliki	Toto
8. Bluff	Palafu	Pepelo, togafiti
9. Broom	Pulumu	Salu
10. Brush	Palasi	Selu
11. Boss	Posi	Ta'ita'i/Pule
12. Budget	Paketi, Pakeki	Tupe Fa'asoa
13. Camera	Kamela	Mea Pu'eata
14. Cheeky	Tiki (slang)	Tautalaititi, gutu oso
15. Citizen	Sitiseni, Sikisegi	Tagatanu'u
16. Click	Kiliki	'O'omi, fetai, faamau
17. Comment	Komeni, Komegi	Manatu, Tala
18. Concept	Konesepi, Kogisepi	Manatu, Ata faalemafaufau

WORD	PHONETIC	SAMOAN
19. Conference	Koneferenisi	Fonotaga
20. Confess	Konofesi, Kofesio	Ta'u, Ta'utino
21. Connect	Kogeki	Feso'ota'i/Fa'apipi'i
22. Cookie	Kuki	Masi Keke, Masi suamalie
23. Cover	Kava	Ufi, Ufiufi, Pupuni, Pulou, Faapulou
24. Crook	Kuluku	Tagata amio fa'api'opi'o
25. Deny	Tinai, Kigai	Fa'afiti, Te'ena
26. Dirty	Teti	Palapala, Ele'elea
27. Error	'Ela	'Ela, Lape, Sese, Sasi
28. Fair	Fea	Sa'o, Talafeagai, Faaaliga (oloa m.i)
29. Farmer	Fama	Faifa'ato'aga
30. Fertilizer	Fetilaisa	Faalelei eleele/palapala
31. Flame	Felemi	Afi, Mumū
32. Flick	Filiki	Emo, Fiti
33. Floor	Foloa	Fola
34. Fluke	Fuluka	Mea mao
35. Follow	Folo	Mulimuli
36. Force	Fosi	Malosi'aga, Fa'amalosi
37. Free	Fulī	Sa'oloto, Fa'agafua

WORD	PHONETIC	SAMOAN
38. Freezer	Fulisa	Pusa 'Aisa, Tuu 'aisa
39. Fresh	Felesi	Fou
40. Genesis	Kenese	Amataga
41. Group	Kulupu	Vaega
42. Helicopter	Helikopa	Ituaiga Va'alele, Vaalele To'ito'i
43. Honey	Hani	Manamea, Pa'aga, Meli
44. Increments	Initalameni,	Fa'aopoopoga, Tului
45. Infection	Inifeti	Siamā, Ma'i, Afaina
46. Insure	Inisiaua	Inisiaua
47. Interest	Initaresi, Igikalesi	Naunauta'iga, Tupe Tului
48. Invest	Inivesi	Faafaigaluegaina o le Tupe
49. Item	Aitema	Faatinoga e pei o le siva, Mata'upu
50. Kill	Kili	Fasioti
51. Leak	Liki	Mama, Tutūlu
52. Lick	Liki	Eto
53. Lover	Lava	Manamea
54. Maintenance	Meniteni, Megikegi	Fa'aleleia, Tausia
55. Micronesian	Maikorōnesia, Mai-	Nu'u Laiti
56. Military	Militeli	Vaega 'Au

WORD	PHONETIC	SAMOAN
57. Napkin	Napekini	Solo Fafano/Pepa
58. Panadol	Pegikolo	Fualaau
59. Pediatric	Piliaki	Tamaiti (Itu)
60. Pillow	Pilo	Aluga
61. Plan	Peleni, Pelegi	Fuafuaga
62. Plaster	Palasa	Simā
63. Plate	Peleti, Peleki	Ipu Mafolafola
64. Pledge	Peleki	Osi feagaiga, Ta'utino Atu, Ta'utinoga
65. Plow	Palau	Sua palapala; suotosina
66. Plug	Palaka, Poloka	Momono, Sulu i totonu
67. Plumber	Palama	Fai Paipa
68. Polish	Polesi	Fa'amatagofie, Fa'aaulelei
69. Polynesia	Polenisia, Polegisia	Nisi o tagatanuu o le Pasefika
70. Power	Paoa	Malosi, Mana, Pule, Uila
71. Primary	Palaimeli, paraimeri	Vaega Muamua, Tulaga Muamua, Ulua'i
72. Pretty	Puliki (slang)	Aulelei
73. Private School	A'oga Palaiveti	A'oga Tu Ma'oti
74. Profit	Polofiti	Tupe Maua
75. Quick	Kuiki	Vave, Taalise, televave

WORD	PHONETIC	SAMOAN
76. Quit	Kuiki (slang)	Faamavae, Tuu le galuega
77. Repair	Līpea	Fa'afou, Toe Fausia
78. Ringing	Tiligi	Tatagi
79. Rubber	Rapa	Pa'u, Titina
80. Sandwiched	Faasanuisi	'Omia
81. Scholar	Sikola	Matuaofaiva
82. Screw	Sikulū	Fao vili
83. Shorts	Sioti	Ofuvae Pupu'u
84. Show	Siou	Fa'aali
85. Slow	Silou	Telegese
86. Smart	Simati, Simaki	Poto
87. Soak	Soka	Fa'amoli, Fa'asusu, Fa'avai
88. Spirit	Sipili	Agaga
89. Sticker	Sitika	Pepa Fa'apipi'i
90. Suffer	Safa	Mafatia, Puapuaga, Tigaina
91. Summer	Sama	Tau Mafanafana
92. Supper	Sapa	Tausamiga o le afiafi
93. Sweet	Suiti	Suamalie
94. Training (Fitness)	Toleniga, Kolegiga	Faamalosi Tino

WORD	PHONETIC	SAMOAN
95. Tsunami	Sunami	Galulolo
96. Tylenol	Tailenō	Fuala'au o mea Tigā
97. Volunteer	Volunetia, Volegikia	Ofo Atu, Galue Fua
98. Website	Uepesite	Upega o Tafa'ilagi
99. Wipes	Uaipa	Solo
100. X	Ekisi	Mata'itusi o le Ekisi (X)

Modern technology can slow or speed up the process of language spread. There are technical terminologies that are difficult to translate to Samoan, or Samoa lack words for. However, words must be created, even transliterated words, so the meaning of the technical terminologies are not lost.

It's not a new idea, but perhaps our community should reconsider setting up a Language Commission to preserve, promote, standardize formal language and to foster language growth. There are words that have not been translated in Samoan, such as ipad, iphone, imac, to name a few. Is there a place for phonetic transliteration? Absolutely! Perhaps we can use it to grow our language and can apply phonetic transliteration to the new words that have not been translated. Table 2 offers more words with phonetic translations.

Table 2: New Words with Phonetic Transliteration

English Word:	Phonetic Transliteration:
1. Alloy	Aloi
2. Antenna	Enetena
3. Carnivore	Kanivoa
4. Facebook	Fasipuki, Api o Foliga
5. Hamburger	Hamupeka
6. Humanities	Humanitī
7. Insulin	Inisulini
8. Onomatopoeia	Onomata
9. Prosthetic	Poroseteki
10. Plastic	Palasita
11. Polygon	Polikone, Tafatele
12. Scanner	Sikena
13. Semantic	Semanati
14. Trolley	Tololi, Kololi
15. Ultraviolet	Tuāviole
16. WiFi	Uaifai

This research teaches us that confidence and knowledge of our language contributes to the youth identity and wellbeing. When the peer leaders stepped out to share their findings, they found themselves using phonetic transliteration and speaking bilingually (English and Samoan). In their search for the pros and cons of phonetic transliteration, they concluded that there are times there is a need for loan words, for ease of communication. At the same time, they became more aware of their responsibility towards language development and/or perpetuation of language decay.

For further research, in addition to phonetic transliteration, it is important to note that there are other factors impacting language, such as code-switching. In bilingual speech communities such as American Samoa, speakers often adopt a speech variety that involves alternating between languages in the same conversation, as in: “Faamolemole, ua *cancel* le vasega *History* lea e fai i le *Room 7? (Seven)*”. Code-Switching is always triggered by a systematic alternation that occurs between systems in a discourse community (target language spoken by people in the community). The discourse community in this case, is the commonly spoken language understood by all Samoans (Feleti, pers comm).

Overall, students acknowledged their proverbial tents were extended by undergoing this research. Whereas they set out in on a quest in the beginning to learn more about phonetics translations, they got to appreciate that it was also digging up nuggets about their own identity. Samoan Language is one of the four pillars upon which Samoan faasinomaga or identity rests. Searching and learning about the dynamics of their own language usage, then sharing it with their peers is part and parcel of being responsible stewards of their own heritage.

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OVERVIEW

“*Ua alu atu le afi*” -literally the fire (torch) is coming your way is a commonly used phrase during *aiava* –the final gift exchange of gifts between host and visitors on the last day or night before the guests depart. However in this context, the passing of the torch is from the Ailao expert (Loso P’aulualo) to the adventurous young that participated during the 2021 *MAT* Summer program.

AILAO AFI PARTICIPANTS

1. Alvin Talataiga
2. Amelie Chen
3. Angela Chen
4. Cornelius Satele
5. Damien Kostelnik
6. Leitualasā Maliecitulua, Jr. aka LJ
7. Lenix Chen
8. Logan Chen
9. Taimane Sauvao
10. Tasi Sauvao
11. Tony Tomasi
12. Tutuila Sauvao
13. Victor Chen.

AILAO AFI SUPPORTING PERFORMERS

1. Apollonia Seva’aetasi
2. Lagi So’oalo
3. Owen Fe’a
4. Simon Tipa aka JC
5. Tasi Ifopo

AILAO AFI STUDENTS IN ACTION



MAT Ailao Afi students perform Amerika Samoa Humanities Council management, during the first site visit at Territorial Administration on Aging (TAOA).



L-R: Henry Collins, Cornelius Satele, and Take Masina practice a routine.



Ailao Afi Instructor Loso P'aulalo pictured here with Leitu'ulasa Malieitulia, Jr (center) and Damien Kostelnik (kneeling)



Lenix Chen on fire



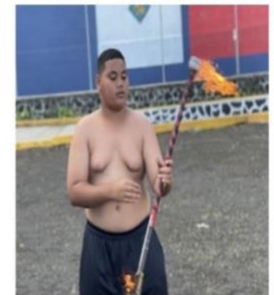
LJ and Damien



Practicing the kakai -lalo o vae



Damien on fire



Alvin Talataiga's first time on fire



Cornellius handles it like a pro



Angela Chen on fire



Trying to fit in at the Intersections Office before we found a practice home at TAOA. Thanks Director Lili'o Satele.



L-R: Faith Seiuli and Fetoai Kapisi practicing their routine.



L-R: Damien and LJ suit up for their routine tik tok

Sitting L-R: Faith Seiuli, Damien Kostelnik, LJ Malieitulia, Loso I'aulualo, Fetoai Kapisi
 Standing L-R: Perosi Vaofanua, Henry Collins, Take Masina, Tony Tomasi

Taking them out of their comfort zone at TAOA to try dancing *ailao aji* at the beach.



Instructor Loso I'aulualo works with LJ Malieitulia using the practice stick.



Learning the Kakai and putting it into a routine as a group.
 L-R: Fetoai Kapisi, Faith Seiuli, Loso P'aulualo, Alvin Talatāiga,
 Henry Collins, Take Masina



They wanted to drum so they agreed to pose for a picture.
 L-R: LJ Malieitulia, Tasi Sauvao, Lenix Chen, and Logan
 Chen.



Group picture taken before the drummers went on summer vaca-
 tion. Front Row L-R: Amelie, LJ, Tasi, Logan, Lenox, and Angela
 Back Row L-R: Faith, Fetoai, Henry, Cornelius, Take, Alvin, Vic-
 tor, and Loso.



Group Picture of MAT Participants

Sitting L-R: Logan Chen, Damien Kostelnik, Lenix Chen, LJ
 Malieitulia, and Tasi Sauvao.
 Second Row L-R: Faith Seiuli, Lagi Soalo, Kesi Mamea-Salavao,
 Apollonia Sevaetasi, Angela Chen, and Fetoai Kapisi



Group picture of MAT participants and Support Staff

Sitting L-R: Logan Chen, Damien Kostelnik, Lenix Chen, LJ Malieitulia, and Tasi Sauvao.

Second Row L-R: Loso P'aulualo, Faith Seiuli, Lagi Soalo, Kesi Mamea-Salavao, Apollonia Sevaetasi, Angela Chen, and Fetoai Kapisi

Back Row L-R: Henry Collins, Alvin Talatāiga, Cornelius Satele, Tony Tomasi, Tasi Ifopo, Take Masina, Owen Fe'a, and Simon Tipa

Standing L-R: Frances Talatāiga, Punaloa Gary Tipa, and Oneata Rosie Soi



OVERVIEW

The brandishing of a knife or an axe is common sight in certain villages of Samoa like Palauli, Siumu and Falealili. However the addition of the fire to the *nifo oti* originated from a son of American Samoa –Olo Letuli in 1946.

AILAO AFI RESEARCH TEAM:

The Team Leaders for the Ailao Afi research are **Miss Faith Fetoailagi Seiuli, Miss Fetoa'i Agnes Kapisi, and Miss Perosiemelemaofeira Vaofanua**. Other contributors to this research are Mr. Take Masina, Henry Collins, and Silivelia Robertson

THEORIES OF THE AILAO AFI

The knife dance originates from the Samoan islands in ancient times. Within this time period, familial and communal village men would raise war not only against foreigners, but other local groups. These wars were raised regarding chiefly titles, lands, family bondages, murderous crimes and authority. These wars cost great amounts of material and the lives of Samoan warriors who willingly went into battle to defend their purpose against their enemies.

According to Pulefano Galeai, the victorious side usually performed this ritual, which was known as the *'ta'alolo'* or *'the pounding waves'* symbolizing the idea of Samoa's victory returning to its shores through its men. Here, the leader of the group, is the frontline of his men whose weapons are swiftly tossed and twirled into the air. As they chant and dance around their shores, they would ailao (acknowledge) in celebration of their victory. These actions are accompanied by the warrior cry, commonly known as the *'fa'aumu'*. This is the vocal oppression of the vocal cords formulating the *'ch/ee-oo'* sound to warn the enemies of their strength and might (2018, 36-37).

The *ta'alolo* practice is a form of victory possession where warriors would chant, dance and parade around, honoring their victory. The villagers honored the tradition and sought it as an expression of their gratitude towards a war well fought and a victory well-earned. The men would utilize the same materials from the war, to slay plant and animal life that came close to the ceremony. This is done to establish the intention that no enemy could defeat them or compare to their strength and might. To conclude the ritual, the leader who supported their efforts and waited patiently for their arrival, honors and welcomes them home; the real jewel in this ritual is the weapon held by the chief or lead warrior, the infamous *'nifo 'oti'* (more commonly known as the *'ailao'*). This weapon was a large war club that consisted of a sharp-edged hook at the top. It was believed to have been used to cut the throats and behead the army of enemies in battle. According to High Chief Gale'ai Pulefano, this weapon was only possessed by the highest chief who led his men to battle. This specific war club is entangled with its controversial issues of name origin. In a personal interview with High

Chief Gale'ai Pulefano, he indicated that the weapon has been traced in oral history, myths, and chief accounts to its Samoan roots.

Samoans understand that an oral culture means there are usually different versions that exist of stories. Ailao is a normal act of acknowledgement for any feat or exchange that is expressed in a chant, praise or a dance. A person who is skillful at chanting is very expressive and emotional as they deliver their message. Examples of sula (praise), and 'ailao honoring paramount title holders such as Malietoa, TuiManu'a, TuiAtua, TuiAana are as follows.

TuiManu'a e lo'u alii e ...

TuiAtua e, TuiAana e, Gatoaitelē, Vaetamasoali'i e, or

Malietoa e, Malietoa e, faafetai le teu, faafetai le faaloalo.

Ailao also takes place when a team wins in any sport. Upon their return to their supporters, they acknowledge their victory by *tuliususū*, or the victory whoop. This act is highlighted in a line of the popular lyrics *"faato'a vivini o le toa ina ua mālō"*, literally "the rooster crows only when it is victorious." (Fauolo, O.K 2021. Personal Comm)

There are two main origins that are still being explored for accuracy. First, the *nifo 'oti* name is believed to have originated from its main material for structure, the goats' teeth. Being that the Samoan translation for goat/oxen is *'oti* and the Samoan translation for teeth is *'nifo'* the combination of these terms show truth (Buck, P.H, 1920, as cited in Letuli, 2004.)

However, highly celebrated and most common in chiefly accounts and oral history, its name derives from the *'taalolo'* and Samoan men warfare. The weapon is believed to be primarily composed of the boar's jagged teeth and the distinctive designs were carved out by the weapon holder themselves. Additionally, the name derived from the swift blows of the warrior to the enemies' bodies', causing death, translated *oti* in Samoan. Therefore, the name signifies the lives claimed by the holder from a weapon composed mainly of boar's teeth. Signifying and concluding this idea as, 'the teeth of death'. In relation to both standing accounts of name origin, one thing is common; the utilization of teeth to sever a life (Letuli, 2004, 15).

The nifo 'oti was 'sometimes thrown and caught in the back, as cited by Letuli from Malama Meleisea's book 'The Making of Modern Samoa'. Here, Meleisea explains that the heads of the slain enemies are brought to their home fronts, in the presence of the villagers and their chiefs. The individual warriors are shown honor, gratitude, and are thanked for their bravery during war. Each warrior would then grab on to an enemy's head and drag it across the crowd of high titled chief, men and common peoples, showcasing their 'bleeding trophy', 'blackened face' and 'oiled body' (Meleisea, M. 1986, as cited in Letuli, 2004) . Lastly, the war club is thrown high into the air and caught above the head or between the legs. Then, it is twirled, stricken and tossed as the excited warrior has his moment of glory. Sometimes, while carrying the head of the enemy, their voices utter '*ou te mau tagata*', translating as, '*I have my man*'. 'To a young Samoan, this is the realization of his highest gratitude,' as it means that 'I have brought home the corpse of the enemy that I have slain'.

Samoa designs are embedded in the war club that symbolizes and highlights important traits of a Samoan warrior. This Samoan warrior, or '*Toa*' are men amongst the mightiest population of Samoa who have been selected to fight on behalf of their brethren and kin. These symbols allude nature, family, and strength. It is believed that they are carved on to the weapon to remind the warrior not only of personal gain, but also for the benefit of his homeland. Therefore, they will fight and draw blood until they have fulfilled their purpose. Uttered today as a prominent reminder to Samoan descendants, '*Ia toa lou loto, ia tau le taua*', translated in English as, '*one's soul must be brave to conquer the war*'.

However, there is a different belief that the Samoan Siva Afi and Ailao relations date back to the time of the Expulsion of Tui Tonga Talakaifaiki (Talaifeii) and the birth of the Malietoa title. It is believed and documented that Tui Tonga Talakaifaiki was the greatest King of Tonga because of his might and will to draw blood to secure the Tongan heritage. It is also believed that the birth of the title Malietoa was also the birth of the Ailao Afi. The King of Tonga spent most of his time residing in Safotu, Savaii, Samoa. During one of his birthday celebrations, the king invited a manifold of entertain-

ers across the islands to entertain his guests, including Samoan warriors. Among these Samoan warriors are the sons of Atiogie, named Savea, Tuna, Fata and Ulumasui. When these warriors were preparing their entertainment, they buried their 'nifo oti' in the sand along with other weapons. They chose this weapon for their 'entertainment' because it was favored by headhunters for millenniums due to their ability to behead the enemy and drag their corpse as a 'bleeding trophy'.

When it was time for their performance for the King, they disguised the nifo oti with coconut sensor wrappings along the edges of the weapon still existent today on the ailao. Then, they dipped the edges in blazing fires to create an illusion among the crowd, simultaneously pointing to the parts of the sand where their weapons were buried. Adherent of the signal were the Samoan warriors who snuck in on night's end and took position with the weapons that were covered. Storming the beach, the hidden warriors indulged in a blood bath, driving the king and his guards away from Samoa, and East of the Pacific. King Talakaifaki fought on sea, until he reached his mighty vessels where he fled. The Tongan population proceeded to board canoes and paddles back to their homeland. Upon the great departure of the King, he delivered a speech that commended the might and wit of Samoan warriors and conceded the victory of this 'once-subjects'. He opened his speech with 'Malie toa, Malie tau', meaning 'great warriors, well fought' (Samoa na Galo, 2010 cited in Letuli, 2004).

The nifo 'oti has become embedded and is a symbolic part of the Samoan culture. It is no longer used to take a life but is another emblem of Samoan culture. Today, it is held proudly by *alii* (high chief) and the *taupou* (daughter of the alii); both roles that are known as royalty in the Samoan culture; it is seen during the Samoan ceremonial practice of the 'ava. On the other hand, it is also used as an object of entertainment, as it is carried gracefully by the Samoan taupou or manaia during the *taualuga*.

The use of this war club has evolved and expanded throughout the generations of Samoan descent. However, it still holds its sacred and sentimental value. This weapon or knife is a significant part of the Samoan culture that is used to depict the warrior-like

quality of the Samoan people. The most clear and accepted theory of how the name 'nifo 'oti' came to be, is extracted from a war-influenced perspective. The hook on the knife was used to drag corpses from the mount of the slain, and the jagged teeth of the knife was used to behead the enemies. The knife was then called *nifo 'oti* (nifo as in 'teeth', oti as in 'death'), simply, the teeth of death. (Letuli, 2004.15)

The features of the war club progressed over time, ending up with the look of a modern steel knife. The Hybrid Knife which was originally created partially using material from coconut trees, was the first ever nifo oti created and it ranged from 24-25 inches. Along the varying progressions through time, it was then increased in a range of 40 inches. With its top left side cut into beveled teeth; the flat surface on the right and the distal end is typically ear shaped with the angle more concave forming a hook. Now, its uppermost section is mainly forged using steel; accompanying its wooden handle. This knife was used for the Ailao dance. (Letuli, 2004, 15-16)

Since *ailao afi* dance moves originated from war and usually resembles that of a warrior's attacks. For example, one of the most renowned movements in *siva ailao afi*, known as the *kakai* was used in battle to distract the enemy. Other moves were used to demonstrate vigilance and awareness; all qualities that a warrior should possess. Moves like the frontal round spin were critical in a battle because it distracted the enemy so that the fatal blow could be struck and this move helped recognize a warrior's versatility. Many of the other motions and forms served as motivation for the warriors, as well as to provoke their enemies. They demonstrated the physical prowess of a warrior and helped them prepare for many confrontations in battles.

The Ailao Dance

In the years before the fire knife dance took the stage, the *ailao* dance was only a simple routine of using just the *nifo 'oti* during the performance. The dance then became a lore, quickly inhabited as an occasional performance at parades, chief bestowment, weddings, and other Samoan celebrations; the performer jumps, throws,

catches and twirls his or her weapon; which portrays warrior skills during a war or battle.

The Origin of Ailao Afi

It was not until the year of 1946 when the legendary fire knife dancer, Freddie Letuli, decided to enliven the image of the *ailao* dance. During his performance in San Francisco, Freddie astounded his audience when his *nifo 'oti* was lit with fire on each end. To his surprise, the idea took off and was marked as his prominent legacy that lives on until this day. Letuli's legacy was inspired while he was observing two entertainers practicing their routines. One was a girl who was twirling her baton while the second was a Hindu man who was a "fire eater". The combination of their acts gave rise to the *ailao afi* or the fire knife dance. As Letuli tells it, he cut his towel into strips and tied it to both ends of his knife, doused with kerosene, then lit it. His act was a success and this was the beginning of *ailao afi*, a feat for which he was known worldwide, as the Father of Fire Knife Dancing.

Although the fire knife dance presents danger and perilous sequels, it was actually the catch that drew in the attention and the admiration from the crowd. The concept of adding fire to the knife portrays how fearless the dancer is, which evidently shows how Samoan warriors are brave. Usually, the fire knife dance is executed by males and with the modernized alterations, females are now a significant factor added to the *ailao afi* dance.

Father of Fire Knife Dancing

Samoans everywhere in the world are proud to know that Olo Freddie Letuli, a son of Samoa is the founder of fire knife dancing. He was a typical Samoan young man that started with a dream of becoming just like the TV dancing sensation Fred Astaire', but he later made a name for himself. He is celebrated as one of the important influential figures within the entertainment industry. His contribution to the advancement of the *ailao afi* (fire knife dance)

became his legacy, and that legacy is perpetuated in the Polynesian performance industry, fire knife dance competitions around the world, and in the heart of every fire knife dancer that dance with the ferocious flames of this unique art; this unique cultural art will continue to inspire and influence future generations.

The Fire Knife Routines

Despite the many stories and accounts of the evolution of the *nifo 'oti* and *ailao afi*, one thing that unravels a connection, are the moves and the routines in fire knife dancing. Below are lists of dance moves and expressions that were shared through interviews of traditional and contemporary dancers. Table 1 lists different types of single knife dance moves that students must practice, as the first step of learning the *ailao afi*. These movements are demonstrated by *ailao afi* students, Henry Collins, Take Masina, and Solitamali'i Daoung Iaulualo.

Table 1. Ailao Afi Dance Moves

SINGLE KNIFE DANCE MOVES	
SAMOAN	ENGLISH
Vili Tasi	One Hand Spin
Vili Lua	Two Hand Spin
Kaka'i	Figure 8
Kakā	Leaning Catch
Vili i Luga	Over Head Spin
Vili i Tua	Spin Around The Back
Togi i Luma & Sapo i Luma	Front Throw & Front Catch
Togi i Tua & Sapo i Tua	Back Throw & Back Catch
Togi Fa'ata'amilo i le Ua	Throw Around The Neck
Mimilo	Twist



Henry Collins demonstrates the 'vili tasi', or commonly known as the 'one hand spin'. Here, the performer spins the nifo 'oti in circular motion utilizing one hand. Simultaneously, the opposite hand is raised to assist in balance.



Take Masina demonstrates the 'vili lua', translated as the 'two hand spin'. Here, the performer spins the nifo 'oti in circular motion using both hands. While doing this move, the performer twirls the nifo 'oti between his/her hands, creating a circular illusion from the blaze at the lit end caught in front of the performer. Thus, completing another move, 'sapo i luma' or 'front catch'.



Henry demonstrates the 'kakai' or the 'two circle spin'. Here, the performer holds the nifo 'oti with either the right or left hand, grasping it closer to the fingers. Utilizing the preferred hand, the performer spins the blade in Figure 8 motion, while ensuring that the blade is faced outward and away from the performer.

Henry demonstrates the 'kakā' or the 'leaning catch'. Here, the performer rotates the blade around his/her knuckles and receives it on the opposite palm. Simultaneously, the performer leans towards the receiving side, until the blade is completely aligned with the performer.



Take demonstrates the 'vili i luga' or the 'overhead spin'. Here, the performer does the 'vili tasi' above his head. This move requires consistent speed during rotations as the nifo 'oti is mostly in the air.

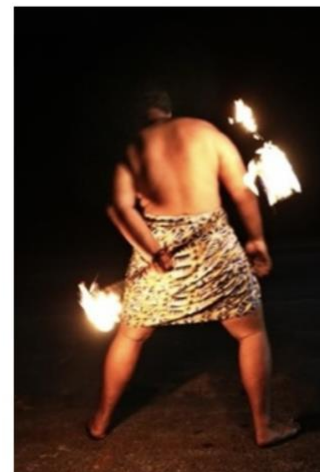
Dayton Solitamali'i demonstrates the 'vili i tua' or the 'spin around the back'. Here the performer twirls the nifo 'oti behind his back. As the blade reaches mid-back the performer transfers the blade to the opposite hand in order to continue the circulation fully around his body.



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It is impossible to completely demonstrate this move in still pictures. Therefore, Faith Seiuli demonstrates the 'togi i luma' or the 'front throw' and while Damien catches the nifo 'oti with the preferred palm after a full rotation of the blade. Thus, completing another move, 'sapo i luma' or 'front catch'.



This picture demonstrates the 'togi i tua' or the 'back throw'. Here, Take tosses the nifo 'oti into the air and catches it at his/her back. Like shown above, the performer receives the nifo 'oti with an open palm facing upward. This completes another move; the 'sapo i luma' or 'front catch'. This move is usually accompanied by the 'kakā'.

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This picture demonstrates the ‘togi fa’ata’amilo i le ua’ or the ‘throw around the neck’. This complex move includes three actions. First, the performer twirls the nifo ‘oti around the head using the preferred arm. Second, the performer crosses their arms near the head (shown here). Lastly, the blade is received with the opposite hand after it has twirled around the back portion of the neck.

Once the student is able to master movements listed on Table 1, they may proceed to use the combination of ailao moves listed on Table 2 below.

Table 2. Ailao Moves – Combination

SAMOAN	ENGLISH
Kakai, Togi i Luga, Sapo i Tua	Figure 8, Toss it up catch in the back
Kakai, Vili Tasi, Kaka’i Lalo o vae, (Mālōlō)	Figure 8, 1 Hand Spin. Figure 8, Under the Legs, Rest
Togi i Luga, Kakā, Vili Lua, Vili i Tua	Front Toss, Two Circle Spin, Two Hand Spin, Around the Back
Vili Lua, Vili i Tua, Vili Fa’ata’amilo i le Ua	Two Hand Spin, Around the Back, Around the Neck
Vili i Luga, Vili i Tua, Vili Lua	Top Spin, Back Spin, Two Hand Spin
Kakā, Vili i Tua, Vili Lua	Two Hand Circle Spin, Around the Back, Two Hand Spin

When the student is able to comfortably move through the combination moves on Table 2, he/she is ready to put together their own dance routines, or they may select from the dance routines listed on Table 3.

Table 3. Routine Single Knife Examples

Togi i Luga, Sapo, Kaka 4x, Vili Lua 8x, Vili i Tua 3x
Kaka’i 4x (i le itu taumatau), Togi i Luga, Sapo i Tua
Kaka’i 3x (i le itu tauagavale), Se’i Mai i Lalo o le Vae
Kaka’i 2x (i le itu taumatau), Vili Tasi 8x
Kaka’i 2x (i le itu taumatau), Se’i Mai Lalo o le Vae Kaka’i 2x (i le itu tauagavale), Se’i Mai i Lalo o le Vae
Vili Lua 4x, Togi Faataamilo i le Ua, Vili Lua 4x
Kaka’i 3x, (i le itu taumatau), Malolo i Lalo o le Vae, Se’i Mai i Lalo o le Vae
Vili Lua 4x, Vili i Luga 4x, Faataamilo, Kaka’i (i le itu taumatau)
Vili Tasi 4x, Kaka’i 4x (i le itu taumatau), Malolo i Lalo o Vae

Performers of the siva ailao afi enjoy using various movements listed below to express themselves before their audiences.

Table 4. Ailao Afi Dance Expressions

SAMOAN	ENGLISH	MEANING
Tatū	Stamp feet	Expression of power, alertness and quickness
Fa'aumu	War Cry	A call of warrior ready
Ta'alolo	Procession	Expressing victory
Vili Tasi, Vili Lua, Vili Tua	One hand spin, two hand spin, backhand spin	Intimidate the opponent
Folifoli	Movements	Movements leading up to a battle
Geno	Head Movements	Warriors use to confuse the enemy
Kaka'i	Wrist twirling or Figure 8	To distract the opponent
Ta'amilo i le Ua, Ta'amilo i Tua, Lalo o Vac	Neck motion, back throw, leg motion	Demonstrates alertness and quickness, leading to a fatal blow

In the recent years, performers have also included the new freestyle movements to the ailao afi as listed on Table 5.

Table 5. Modern Freestyle

SAMOAN	ENGLISH
Oso	Jump
Tipi	Chop
'Alo	Dodge
Siva Maulalo	Dance Low
Puna	Leap Higher
Togi i Luga	Throw High Above
Helikopa	Helicopter

Depending on the level of mastery of the *nifo oti*, performers of the *siva ailao afi* can perform a one knife dance routine to the most complex using three knives in a dance routine as described below:

THE THREE ROUTINES

ONE KNIFE DANCE ROUTINE

Usually in a fire knife dance routine, there is always a big entrance. Subsequently, the dancer starts off with the first basic move, which is the one hand spin or the *vili tasi*. This helps the dancer settle down after the intense entrance and to prepare him for submerging into more complicated moves later on in the routine.

TWO KNIFE DANCE ROUTINE

This routine comes after the one knife routine. It involves utilizing two knives and repeats all the possible moves with two knives.

THREE KNIFE DANCE ROUTINE

Just as the name suggests, this complex routine involves using three knives. The dancer usually spins the two knives holding one knife in his teeth, behind his knee or in between his thighs.



Dolan Manaiaisiva I'aulualo performs the one knife dance routine.

PC courtesy of: John Bilderback



Werner Tumanu performs the two-knife dance routine. *PC courtesy of: John Bilderback*



Werner Tumanu, Dolan P'aulualo, and Alapeti Seui perform the three-men dance routine.

PC courtesy of: John Bilderback

In today's contemporary world of entertainment, many moves have become modernized with creative and expressive motions. Still, traditional moves will always be the foundation of this fearless art known as the *siva ailao afi*. More recently, performers have included a variety of tumbling and baton twirling movements. Today, only a few brave and talented young men take on the tradition of the *ailao afi*, which involves eating the fire, holding the fire to your feet, or twisting.

It is our hope that the information provided in this book will inspire you, the reader, to encourage and motivate young people within your reach, to sustain and grow the *siva ailao afi* and with it, grow and perpetuate the use of Samoan jargon pertaining to this art.



Dayton Solitamali'i P'aulualo-Daoang, Champion, Junior World-Fireknife Dance Competition 2013-2014

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