

## Unit 28: Samoa's Mau Movement:

### Kick them Out!

#### *Lau Asofou So'o & Vaifa'ae'e Okesene*

##### Facts

Location:	14°South of Equator
Current Population:	219,818 inhabitants (July 2009 est.)
Main Language:	Samoan
Date of Independence:	1 January 1962

##### Glossary

<b><i>Fono-a-faipule</i></b>	Traditional council of law makers in Samoa. Its members were <b><i>matai</i></b>
<b><i>Mandate</i></b>	The right to rule a colony, given by the League of Nations
<b><i>Matai</i></b>	People who hold titles in Samoa
<b><i>Non-cooperation</i></b>	To peacefully disobey a government
<b><i>Ordinance</i></b>	A rule or command passed by the Legislative Council
<b><i>Tama-a-aiga</i></b>	The son of high ranking families.

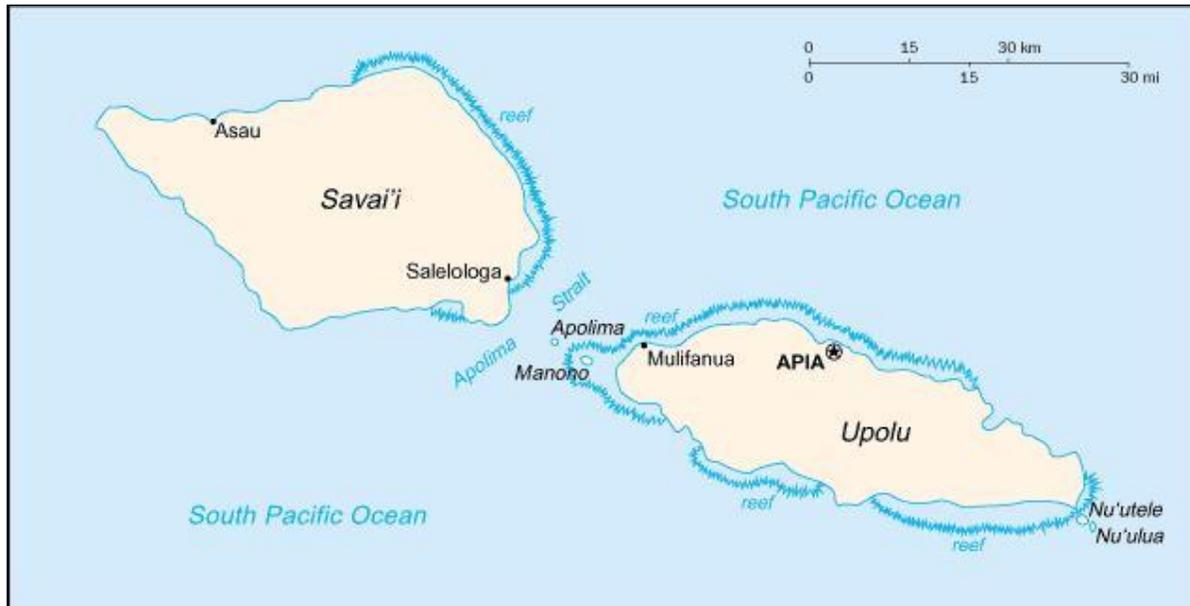


Figure 28.1. Map of Samoa

**After reading this chapter, you will be able to:**

- describe the events and processes that led to the formation of the *Mau Movement*
- describe the role played by the *Movement*
- identify some important participants in the *Mau* struggles
- create a timeline of how Samoa attained independence

**What did the *Mau* Movement mean for Samoans?**

The military and civil administration of Samoa by New Zealand after 1914 attempted to change the lives of Samoans. Not only their traditions and customs were disregarded but Samoans were also prevented from keeping control of their own affairs. It was within this context that the *Mau Movement* emerged, to struggle for Samoan self-determination and independence from colonial rule.

**What changes were introduced in Samoa under New Zealand rule?**

At the end of the First World War, in 1918, a world organisation called the League of Nations was set up by nations that took part in the War. One of the duties of the League of Nations was to look after colonies owned by Germany before the War. Western Samoa was one of these territories.

New Zealand was given the “**Mandate**” by the League of Nations to look after Western Samoa. The civil administration of New Zealand in Western Samoa began on 1 April 1922. For thousands of years before the first Europeans arrived in Samoa in the late 1700s, Samoans had looked after themselves and controlled their own lives. The *matai* were the leaders of the island, and maintained its customs and traditions.

However, under New Zealand rule, there were many changes in Samoan customs and traditions. For example, a Legislative Council was set up with only New Zealander leaders. There were no Samoan leaders in this Council. The chairperson of the Legislative Council was called the Administrator. He was declared the leader of Samoa by New Zealanders and his Legislative Council made important decisions which affected the lives of all Samoans.

The traditional council of law-makers in Samoa was the *fono-a-faipule*, formed by thirty-one *matai*. But the *fono-a-faipule* had no voice in the New Zealand Legislative Council; its only duty was to give advice to the Administration on Samoan customs and traditions.

**Questions and Activities**

1. What was one major task of the League of Nations?
2. Why was the League of Nations formed?
3. Who took control of Western Samoa after World War 1?
4. How did Samoan customs and traditions change New Zealand Civil Administration?

**The Samoan Offenders Ordinance**

During the New Zealand administration, the Legislative Council passed official laws called **ordinances**. An important ordinance was the *Samoa Offenders Ordinance* (1922). This gave the

Administrator the power to punish any Samoan thought to be disrupting the peace, public order or good government. The offender would be either sent to another village or place, or prevented from using the title of *matai*.

By 1926, fifty-three Samoans had been punished through the *Samoa Offenders Ordinance*. Among them was the *tama-a-aiga*, Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III. He lost his title, and was banished from the village of Vaimoso on Upolu. But what was the crime committed by Lealofi III? He was punished because he refused to move a hibiscus hedge on his land, as ordered by Administrator Richardson. The *Samoa Offender Ordinance* made sure that Samoans did not disobey even the most minor orders of their New Zealand 'masters'.

#### Questions and Activities

5. Write a single sentence which contains each of the following words: *offender, civil administration, ordinance*.
6. Write a single sentence which contains each of the following words: *Administrator, Legislative Council, matai*
7. What powers did the Administrators have under the 1922 *Samoa Offenders Ordinance*?
8. Why was Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III punished under the *Ordinance*?

#### **Samoa mo Samoa: The Mau emerges**

By 1926, Samoans and local European and part-Europeans residents were unhappy with the way New Zealanders were handling things in Western Samoa. Officials of the New Zealand Administration believed that they knew what was best for Samoans, but Samoans felt the New Zealanders had interfered with Samoan customs and traditions. They listed several occasions when they felt the Administration had no right to interfere..

The New Zealand Administration treated Samoans as if they were a backward people, who needed to be cared for; and who needed good leaders. The New Zealanders did not understand that Samoans were proud to be Samoans, and highly valued their own customs and traditions and leaders. Even though Samoans valued and used European knowledge and technology, they wanted to control their own affairs.

This widespread dissatisfaction with the New Zealand Administration led to the formation of a movement. Traders and villagers were asked to help the organisers of the Movement by working

together to describe its aims and activities, and raising funds to develop Samoan businesses and activities.

In March 1927, the Movement was named 'The Samoan League' – or *Mau*, as it became known among Samoans. In Samoan, the word *Mau* means opinion. The *Mau Movement* represented the opinion of the Samoan people.

The motto of the *Mau* was *Samoa mo Samoa*, which meant 'Samoa for Samoans'. The phrase had been used before by Administrator Richardson in a different sense. He used the word *Mau* when he was telling part-Europeans Samoans that they could voice their own opinions through their Samoan representatives in the *fono-a-faipule*. But the expression now had a stronger meaning for *Mau* members: it meant that Samoans no longer wanted New Zealand Administrators in charge of Samoan affairs.

By 1928, the *Mau* was well organised and had set up its own form of government, responsible for the *Mau's* own system of copra making, caring for plantations and education for children.

In the same year, the ***fono-a-faipule*** was dissolved, following criticism from *Mau* supporters. They said that the ***fono-a-faipule*** was used by Administrator Richardson to ensure that Samoans followed his policies. The *Mau* accused the members of the ***fono a-faipule*** of telling the Administration which people had disobeyed its orders and of suggesting the kind of punishment they should receive.

In 1928, a letter signed by 8000 adult Samoans and delivered to the League of Nations. The letter listed the main problems faced by Samoans under the New Zealand Administration.

Initially, the two main objectives of the *Mau* were:

- the improvement of the Samoan people,
- to present to the Administrator and the Government of New Zealand matters which the League of Nations believed to be of concern to Samoans; for example, matters of peace, good government and the welfare of the people of Western Samoa.

At the height of the *Mau* in the 1930s, the objective of the Movement changed to that of *self-government*.

By this time, the *Mau* had support from seventy to ninety per cent of Samoa's population. One important supporter of the *Mau* was Folasa Tupu, the son of a Methodist pastor in Vaimoso, a place that became the headquarters of the *Mau* movement. Born in September 1920, Folasa Tupu was a

high-ranking *tulafale* (talking chief) of Falelima. Tupu wrote the following song in honour of the *Mau* movement:

Komiti e ole <i>Mau</i>	Committee of the <i>Mau</i>
Tali le valaau	Accept the call
Tusa lava pe faafolau	Even if exiled
Tusa pe faafolau	Even if exiled
Tusa pe faafolau	Even if exiled
Pe faasala e faavavau	Or punished forever

*Figure 28.2 Song by Folasa Tupu (translated by Asofou So'o)*

The *Mau* declared itself to be a peaceful organisation that would try to achieve its objectives through a peaceful program of **non-cooperation** with the New Zealand Administration. Some of the main decisions of the *Mau* were:

- the committees and councils set up by New Zealand would stop meeting;
- villages would take no notice of visiting New Zealand Officials;
- existing laws passed by New Zealand were to be ignored;
- children would be withdrawn from Government schools;
- ripe coconuts would not be picked, and banana plantations would be let to be overgrown with weeds;
- village regulations handed down by the Administration would not be obeyed;
- instead of paying taxes to the government, money would be raised to fund the activities of the *Mau*.

#### Questions and Activities

9. Explain why Samoans were unhappy with New Zealand Administration.
10. Why was the ***fono-o-faipule*** dissolved?

11. What were the two main objectives of the *Mau*, initially? And later?

12. What was the message in the song written by Folasa Tupu?

**Why did the New Zealand Government feel threatened by the *Mau*?**

### **Black Saturday**

After three years of peaceful resistance by the *Mau* movement, violence broke out on 28 December 1929. It was Saturday morning, and a large crowd of *Mau* supporters marched through Vaimoso to welcome back Smyth. Smyth was one of the Movement's supporters who had just come back from exile in New Zealand.

As the crowd marched in front of the Government building, the police tried to arrest Mata'tuia Kalauna, the *Mau* secretary. A scuffle between the police and members of the *Mau* broke out, and the police opened fire on them. Killed in the scuffle were *Tupua* Tamasese Lealofi and ten other Samoans. Many people were injured.

After the Black Saturday tragedy in 1929, the *Mau* was declared unlawful by the New Zealand Government. The police was sent to the villages to arrest people who were supporting the *Mau*. As it was only men who took part in the movement, they were the ones the police were after, to arrest and put in gaol. However, women also had an important role to play in the *Mau*.

### **Women and the *Mau***

During the police raids in the villages, the men hid in the bush. But while they were hiding in the bush, their wives carried on the activities of the Movement. Rosabel Nelson, Alaisala (*Tupua* Tamasese Lealofi III's widow) and Faamusani were some of the wives of *Mau* leaders who took up the leadership of the movement while their husbands were away. These brave women went on trips to villages encouraging *Mau* supporters to keep their faith in the movement.

**What was the role played by Lealofi III in the *Mau* Movement?**

### Lealofi III: A True Leader

*Tupua* Tamasese Lealofi III was born in May 1901. Before he became the leader of the *Mau* Movement, he had succeeded his father to the *Tupua* and *Tamasese* titles.

Lealofi III was one of the ***matai*** who had his title taken away from him and banished from his village because he disobeyed Administrator Richardson's instructions to remove a hibiscus hedge on his land.

As holder of a ***tama-a-aiga*** title, Lealofi III was expected by Samoans to be one of the leaders of the *Mau* movement. He accepted the leadership in February 1928. In December of the same year, Lealofi III and his family were exiled to New Zealand because of his involvement in the *Mau* Movement.

Lealofi III's exile increased the publicity of the *Mau* cause in New Zealand, and also encouraged Samoans at home to join the Movement. Lealofi III is still remembered by Samoans as one of the heroes of the *Mau* Movement; as a true leader in the history of Samoan struggle for self-determination.

#### Questions and Activities

13. What was the role played by women in the *Mau*?

14. Role play: Get into groups of ten and re-enact the events of Black Saturday in a short play.

Characters should include: Mata'tuia Kalauna (*Mau* Secretary),

Lealofi III, *Mau* supporters, New Zealand police.

## How did Samoa become independent?

### Countdown to independence

In 1935, the New Zealand Labour Party, which supported the *Mau* movement, won the general elections. Soon after taking up the office of Prime Minister, the Leader of the Labour Party, Michael Joseph Savage, said that New Zealand would like to work in cooperation with the Samoan people.

In June 1936, a New Zealand good-will mission was sent to Samoa to discuss the best way to promote cooperation between Samoa and New Zealand. In the discussions that followed, the members of the mission agreed to introduce changes such as getting rid of the 1922 Samoan Offenders Ordinance; increase the number of Samoans in the Legislative Council, and appoint a Samoan associate judge to sit in the High Court during the hearing of cases involving Samoans. The countdown to independence had begun.

After the visit of the good-will mission, *Mau* supporters decided to take part in the next general election. They did very well: of the thirty-nine seats in the *Fono-a-faipule*, thirty-six were won by *Mau* supporters. This showed the strength of support for the Movement among the Samoans.

Now the *Mau's* main objective was clearly to prepare Samoa for self-government. However, the start of the Second World War in 1939 postponed all efforts towards that aim because New Zealand, Great Britain and countries that formed the League of Nations were involved in the War.

When the War ended in 1945, Samoans renewed their call for self-government. Many scholars believe that the *Mau* Movement played a major role in putting pressure on New Zealand to grant Western Samoa independence in 1962.

### Questions and Activities

15. Give evidence that the majority of Samoans supported the *Mau*.
16. Use the knowledge that you have gained about the *Mau* to either:
  - (a) compose a song about the Movement
  - (b) write a poem about the Movement.