US Army Corps
of Engineers ®
Honolulu District

Appendix E

American Samoa Final Watershed Plan

Cultural Resource Analysis

July 2022

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1 Cultural Resources Existing Conditions

Cultural resources are a term used to describe the places, objects, sites, oral histories, and traditional practices that contain historic or cultural significance to the local individuals, communities, or even a nation. They can be viewed within watershed planning as a key component of resilience for a community by bringing together a sense of place or reflecting the cultural identity of people. An assessment of American Samoa's watersheds and resources would be largely incomplete without addressing the myriad of cultural resources residing throughout the landscape and its surrounding waters.

Typical inventories for cultural resources focus on preserving tangible cultural resources such as a site, building, structure, object, or a district under state and federal historic preservation law. It is necessary for this watershed assessment to also consider the intangible cultural resources that play an important role for cultural identity across the territory today. The following sections below summarizes the human history of American Samoa to better understand the context of cultural resources and how they are significant to the territory.

1.1 Summary of Prehistoric Cultural Resources

The early settlement of the Samoan Islands occurred before the existence of written records. Interpreting the prehistoric culture of American Samoa relies largely on the discipline of archaeology which reconstructs the human past using evidence from artifacts and material culture left at a site. The earliest settlements of the Samoan Islands are understood from archaeological sites studied at Mulifanua offshore west of Upolu in Samoa (Leach and Green, 1989), the American Samoa's 'Aoa Valley in eastern Tutuila (Clark, 1993), and To'aga in Ofu in the Manu'a Islands (Kirch, 1993).

Past archaeological investigations involve the method of radiocarbon dating any ecofacts found from prehistoric sites (such as charcoal from pottery) to establish objective age estimates (Clark, 1993; Green and Davison, 1974; Kirch, 1993), studying the variation of artifacts on a site focusing primarily on ceramics (Clark, 1996) and site geomorphology (Kirch et al., 1993). Ethnohistoric assessments to reconstruct past lifeways also helps one to understand Samoan prehistory, which includes interviews with Samoan villages and documentation of oral histories shared with researchers (Linnekin et al., 2006). These various investigations have identified an early presence in the Samoan archipelago by Polynesians for the past 3,000 years and possibly longer.

The earliest people to arrive in Samoa were Pacific seafarers known as the "Lapita" culture who sailed from the Bismarck Archipelago in Papua, New Guinea. Strong archaeological evidence of the Lapita people settling in Samoa comes from a site in the Mulifanua Village in Upolu Island, Samoa excavated during the 1960's. Many pieces of Lapita broken clay pots with a geometric design and dentate stamping were recorded and dated to around 3,000 years.

Figure 1-1. Ceramic fragments from Lapita Pottery.

Around 2,000 years ago, the ancient Samoans of Tutuila and Manu'a manufactured undecorated clay pottery known as "Polynesian Plain Ware". This pottery type resembled open bowls with rounded bottoms that are similar in size to contemporary kitchen bowls used for eating today. Sites dating to the early settlement of Samoa are usually found along the coast (Kirch, 1993; Clark, 1996) or most likely to be discovered on the shores of American Samoa's prehistoric embayments which are now covered in sand.

Artifacts and material culture associated with Samoa's early prehistory includes pottery, stone tools such as basalt adzes, volcanic glass, fishhooks, shell ornaments, and faunal remains. Other archaeological features to be encountered and listed respectfully in the Samoan language are fale (house foundations), lau mafola (terraces), pa (walls), foaga (grinding stones), and tia (platforms). The Lapita ancestors brought domesticated pigs, dogs, and chicken to Polynesia in addition to cultivation crops such as taro, yams, root crops, and breadfruit.

A cultural shift towards the end of this early period of prehistoric settlement occurred based on the disappearance of pottery at sites for unclear reasons to archaeologists. Researchers believe that pottery manufacture in Samoa ceased to exist around 1,500 years ago, beginning at around 300 A.D. (Clark and Michlovic, 1996) or even as late as 800 A.D. (Kirch, 1993). This period without pottery is known as the Samoan "Dark Ages" due to its poor representation in Samoan history and archaeology.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding this period of time, it served an important role in the development of Samoan culture. The *matai* system which establishes the head of a descendant

group and administers the family estates in a village or districts best interests (Stover, 1999) is believed to have developed during this time (Clark, 2009).

A majority of American Samoa's prehistoric sites are dated to the late prehistoric and early historic period. The material culture is dominated by large mounds, village settlements, quarry sites, raised pathways, agricultural terraces, and defensive fortifications. Structures such as defensive walls, terraces, and mounds were built inland on high ridges of mountains while permanent village settlements were established along coastal areas. *Pa* (walls in Samoan) are a common feature built inland due to political warfare amongst the island's chiefs of Western Samoa and Tutuila. The *tia seu lupe* (star mounds in Samoan) are another significant structural site made from stone. Star mound platforms were built in the last 500 years and used to hunt pigeons as part of a traditional practice by chiefs.

American Samoa's prehistoric village complexes are identified by their central open space known as a *malae*.

Figure 1-2. Photograph of Faga'itua Village's malae taken in 1930 by the Bingham Political Status Commission.

The malae is surrounded by other village houses used for meetings, chief's houses, or simply dwelling places for village members. Certain village sites are still occupied and maintained by descendant Samoan communities and their *matai*s. Villages not occupied today were abandoned in the late prehistoric or early historic period and are either still visible on the surface or buried below the ground. The remnants of these abandoned village sites are viewed as cultural landscapes that play an important role in maintaining cultural identity (ASHPO, 2002).

1.2 Summary of Historic Period Resources

The first recorded contact with Europeans was in 1722 by Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen who took sight of the Samoan Islands during an expedition sponsored by the Dutch West India Company establishing a western trade route for the Maluku Islands. Soon after this first sighting, French explorer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville sailed to Samoa in 1768 followed by French naval officer Jean François de Lapérouse in 1787 which was soon followed by the establishment of Christian missionaries by Englishman John Williams of the London Missionary Society in 1830. Historic buildings such as the Atauloma Girl's School and the Fagalele Boy's School in western Tutuila educated Samoan children and converted them to Christianity. Along with European traders and military personnel, Pacific Islanders from the Cook Islands who

were associated with the London Missionary Society and Tongan missionaries working with the Methodists started settling on the Samoan Islands.

Figure 1-3. Photograph taken in 1971 of the Fagalele Boys School.

Historic properties associated with the Samoan Island's European encounters include historic buildings that served as parochial schools and military facilities.

A massacre monument at Aasu, Massacre Bay, is dedicated to the killing of Lapérouse's 12 crewmembers who encountered 1,500 Samoans near the coast before a violent confrontation ensued. Despite the influence of Christianity and European colonization, there are Samoan properties from the last two centuries that still resemble their prehistoric remains including defensive fortifications, quarries, and star mound platforms. Village complexes today still retain their traditional, cultural, and physical structures.

By the late 19th century, the Samoan Islands faced a partition from the provisions set forth by the 1899 Treaty of Berlin. The treaty was established after rising tensions between the three nations of the United States, Germany, and Great Britain, who all saw strategic value in claiming Samoan lands to establish trading stops and naval stations (Tapu, 2020). The Tripartite Treaty of 1899 granted all rights of the eastern Samoan islands to the United States, forming the unincorporated territory of American Samoa. Germany was granted rights to the western islands of Upolu and Savai'i, which today form the Independent State of Samoa.

Figure 1-4. Pago Pago, American Samoa around 1918. Photograph from the Library of Congress.

Historic properties associated with the U.S. Navy's control of American Samoa from 1900 to 1951 are numerous. The territory served as a coaling station during World War II and functioned as a strong Pacific defense location during the war. American Samoa's historic resources associated with World War II take the form of military fortifications and districts, government buildings, medical or training facilities, air bases (such as the Tafuna Airfield), gun emplacements, and pillboxes along the coastline (ASHPO, 2002). Other historic resources include maritime shipwrecks lost in or near American Samoa waters. These vessels were linked to British colonization, the whaling industry, and World War II naval activities. Naval aircrafts were also reported as having crashed into the Pacific Ocean near American Samoa between 1942 and 1944 (Van Tilburg, 2007).

1.3 Summary of Intangible Cultural Resources

The Samoan way of living known as *fa'asamoa* in Samoan is still deeply embedded in American Samoa's culture, government, and physical landscape. Samoan legends and traditions pertaining to the territory's natural features have become a part of *fa'asamoa*. Identifying and preserving these traditions can be a unique yet challenging opportunity and should be considered as a domain for recommendations proposed by this watershed assessment. Federal historic preservation law under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) has addressed this issue by defining a category of protected cultural resources known as Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP)

within the National Register Bulletin 38. The guidance defines a TCP as a property eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places due to association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community which are important for maintaining their cultural identity (Parker and King, 1990).

One example of an intangible cultural resource associated with a natural feature is the Samoan *tupua*, which refers to special rocks or formations that represent ancient humans. This idea can also apply to water resources such as freshwater springs or passages in a reef which have cultural associations with ancient Samoan folklore.

Past conservation strategies have included outreach to villages to improve the documentation of intangible cultural resources. Village outreach can also help agencies understand how intangible heritage plays an important role for Samoan culture. Responses from villages and local residents indicated that intangible cultural resources have "…extraordinary significance to Samoan culture. Compared to all of the archaeological and historic sites that the Historic Preservation Office tries to protect, these sites are seen as the most significant to local residents." (Volk et al., 1992)

Figure 1-5. Laumei ma Malie (Turtle and Shark) is a listed historic property near Vaitogi Beach that has cultural significance to Samoan oral history.

Several ethnographic assessments have been completed which identify these types of cultural resources. One example used for this watershed assessment is the Ethnographic Assessment and Overview of the National Park of American Samoa (Linnekin et al., 2006). However, perceptions and interpretations are expected to change over time by the local residents and Samoan communities. An effort should be made to advance the documentation of intangible cultural resources as well as continuing meaningful outreach to villages and Samoan communities in the future. This request was highlighted through NOAA's American Samoa Maritime Heritage Inventory and their Fagatele Bay Management Plan. Conversations with the American Samoa Historic Officer signified a need for this type of inventory to be funded (NOAA ONMS, 2007).

2 Cultural Resources Investigations Overview

To establish a baseline inventory for cultural resources within the study area, literature research was completed by reviewing site records, cultural resource inventories, academic archaeological reports, and resource management plans. USACE consulted with several agencies that have experience in managing cultural resources in American Samoa, such as the American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA) to provide guidance on data available to create a comprehensive cultural resources inventory for the entire territory.

USACE also consulted with the staff of the American Samoa Historic Preservation Officer (ASHPO) who serves as the territory's leading experts on documenting cultural resources and administering a territorial historic preservation program. The ASHPO is responsible for establishing strong working partnerships with Federal and Territorial agencies, as well as villages, district councils, and private organizations. This ensures that projects and development being carried out in the territory comply with federal historic preservation law while fulfilling the community's desire to maintain their cultural identity.

The American Samoa Historic Preservation Plan, published in 2002, provides a quantitative total for the territory's cultural resources. Although the report was published several years ago, the preservation plan laid out specific historic preservation objectives and goals ranging from public participation, education, outreach, cultural resource surveys and inventories, economic development, and heritage tourism that are still relevant topics for the territory today.

Table 2-1. Data from the American Samoa Historic Site Inventory by County (ASHPO, 2002)

American Samoa Counties	Recorded Prehistoric Sites	Recorded Historic Sites	Totals
Rose	1	2	3
Ta'u	79	3	82
'Olosega	49	0	49
'Ofu	29	1	30
Vaifanua	106	10	116
Sa'ole	44	1	45
Sua	44	0	44
West Vaifanua	12	0	12
Ma'oputasi	28	28	56
Ituau	12	0	12
Tualauta	170	5	175
Leasina	4	2	6
Tualatai	7	1	8
Lealataua	47	6	53
Total:	**623**	**59**	**691**

The ASHPO's database listed 691 cultural resources recorded across the entire American Samoa territory with 623 prehistoric sites and 59 historic sites accounted for in 2002 (Table 2-1). Since the results are around 20 years old, USACE expects the grand total to be different today. This assumption was affirmed after correspondence with agencies such as ASPA, who noted that many undocumented archaeological sites exist within the watershed, primarily associated with development of the territory since. In addition to the inventory laid out by the 2002 American Samoa Historic Preservation Plan, the database for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) was reviewed. The NRHP serves as the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. It is authorized by the NHPA and maintained by the National Park Service and the respective State Historic Preservation Officer for a state or territory. This national program allows coordination and support for public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic, archaeological, and cultural resources.

The properties listed for American Samoa include prehistoric and historic buildings, sites, districts, objects, and traditional cultural properties. As of 16 December 2021, there were 31 listed historic properties in the NRHP database, spread across the five districts of American Samoa (Table 2-2).

Table 2-2. Table of Listed Historic Properties from the NRHP Database

American Samoa Districts	Listed Historic Properties
Eastern Tutuila	15
Manu'a	2
Rose Atoll	1
Swains Island	0
Western Tutuila	13
Total:	**31**

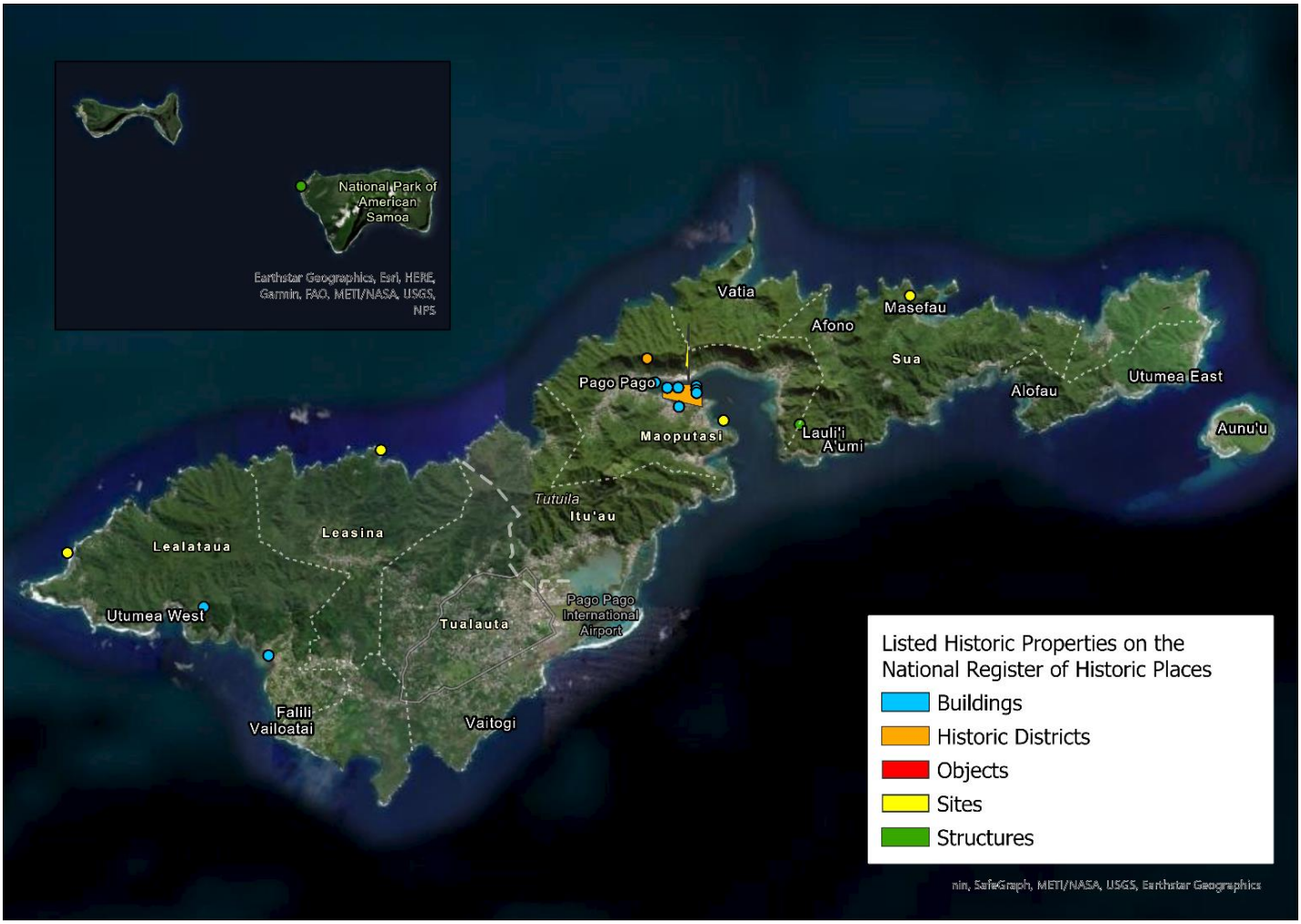

Figure 2-1. Public location of Historic Properties that have undergone evaluation before being listed on the National Register of Historic Places

3 Customary Land Ownership

The indigenous people of American Samoa have preserved their traditional lifeways, known as fa'asamoa, for thousands of years. The Samoan people take pride in incorporating their unique traditional practices into their system of governance from management of the land and its resources to land ownership (Tapu, 2020). The status of American Samoa as an unincorporated and unorganized territory means that not all provisions of the United States Constitution apply and thus provides latitude for innovation. This unique arrangement is intentional and was set forth by Samoan leadership in the past. By remaining an unorganized territory, American Samoa can adopt its own Samoan Constitution despite being under the administrative authority of the Secretary of the Interior (ASHPO, 2002).

The adopted Samoan Constitution has merged Western and Samoan concepts together allowing the territory to 1) create three branches of government similar to the United States, 2) require American Samoa Senators to be registered *matai* holders, and 3) affirm a commitment to the protection of "lands, customs, culture, and the traditional Samoan family organization of persons of Samoan ancestry" (Tapu, 2020).

The result of these strategic decisions ensure that their traditional land tenure system remains in place. The two foundations of *fa'asamoa* within customary land ownership follows a system include communal land tenure passed on by families and the *matai* system.

The *matai* is interpreted in Samoa to take on the role of a leader with *mata* meaning "eye" and *iai* meaning "towards" form the expression "to look toward another" (Lutali & Stewart, 1975). The *matai* title relates to the hierarchical position reflected in Samoan life from the *'aiga* (meaning "family" or a title holder's descendant group), to a village, district, or even an entire island. A specific plot of land is connected to a matai who is tasked with decisions for its land use by immediate family members and village members and arguably those outside of the village without Samoan ancestry (Tapu, 2020).

The role of matai as leaders of their ancestral lands, who traditionally are men but can sometimes include women, is assigned through a consensus vote by the 'aiga. This bestows the title upon an individual for a lifetime unless removed by the Samoan judicial system. The tradition has helped empower the traditional belief of fa'asamoa by keeping ownership of the land and how it is being used in the hands of Samoan families (Tapu, 2020).

Meaningful outreach to a matai as well as consultation with all culturally affiliated villages will help in identifying leadership as early as possible during the stages of planning for a project. One example of the matai influencing the implementation of a project is the village of Sili on the Savai'i Island of Samoa. The matai rejected a project proposed by the Samoan government to build a hydroelectric plant on village land. The village members of Sili rely heavily on its land through use of traditional ecological knowledge and conservation practices, such as banning pesticides and chemicals for agriculture. The matai's decision to reject the renewable energy project was based on their group responsibility for the village, who had concerns about the projects impacts to the village's environment and culture.

4 Problems Identified for Cultural Resources

Background research on Samoan cultural resources identified several reports that studied the impacts of disaster events on archaeological sites. A post disaster cultural resource assessment was published in 2010 that inventoried the damages of an 8.0 magnitude earthquake in the Tonga Trench, which triggered a large tsunami that devastated Tutuila Island. Substantial damage was noted for infrastructure, including villages and houses located on the eastern and western ends of the islands, as well as loss of life. Beaches and streams were heavily impacted by the tsunami waves which eroded streambanks and exposed archaeological deposits (Addison 2010). These exposed coastal and riparian sites include more than fifty discrete site locations that were recorded during this post-disaster survey. The overwhelming majority of the exposed sites were composed of stone tool remains, known as lithic scatters.

Other sites included isolated artifacts (one Polynesian plainware sherd and an adze blade), cultural layers within exposed cutbanks and roads, *foaga* (grinding stones), and even prehistoric human remains. The human remains were found immediately after the tsunami and were promptly reburied by local community members (Addison, 2010). The 2010 assessment concluded that tsunami damage to archaeological sites is an impactful short-event disaster that can destroy their integrity or expose them to human or natural disturbances. Archaeologists have identified Tutuila's coastal cultural resources as being at risk from erosion, global climate change, sea-level rise, tsunamis, and high wind events (Kirch, 1993; Addison, 2010). The need for detailed inventories as well as preventive mitigation to occur for high-risk sites has been advocated for in several archaeological reports.

USACE's correspondence with the ASHPO during this watershed assessment, including their responses to a cultural resource questionnaire provided in 2020 and participation in various stakeholder meetings, identified flooding, erosion, landslides, and the displacement of Samoan communities from their traditional lands to be problems with high probability and high negative consequence for cultural resources. This includes the irreplaceable damage done to the integrity of archaeological sites, concerning which ASHPO noted that cultural artifacts are often washed away from their primary contexts by riverine flooding. Landslides were also documented by the ASHPO to have destroyed old villages located near mountain ridges. The village open space known as the *malae* was a concern brought up by the ASHPO, as in some villages it has undergone major impacts from flooding and erosion events. Medicinal and traditional plants such as pandus trees, tea leaves, fruit trees, and native wood trees (*ifilele*) were also brought up for consideration. These culturally important plants were reported to be facing similar problems from erosion and habitat degradation.

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