

VAIMOSO HISTORICAL RESERVE

A Project for the Reservation of a Historical Reserve in
Western Samoa



Government of Western Samoa : Department of Lands and Survey :
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Western Samoa possesses a considerable wealth of natural and cultural resources from which many generations of Samoans have been able to derive benefit. However, appreciable areas of natural vegetation are being lost annually to agricultural, housing and communication development, or modified by logging and life styles and cultural values of the Samoan people are changing in response to mounting pressures imposed by a rapidly increasing human population and aspirations for higher living standards. In the foreseeable future, exponential increase in these pressures and consequent speed of change seem inevitable. In recognition of these circumstances the Government of Western Samoa sees the creation of a system of National Parks and Reserves as a means of conserving representative samples of Western Samoa's natural and cultural heritage in perpetuity.

1.2 In October 1974, Dr C.W. Holloway, an ecologist employed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), and Mr C.H. Floyd, a physical planner with the United Nations Development Advisory Team (UNDAT) for the South Pacific, visited Western Samoa at the request of the Government and produced a report including recommendations for establishing and administering a system of national parks and reserves ^{1/}. Soon afterward, the National Parks and Reserves Bill was tabled in the Legislative Assembly and subsequently passed.

^{1/} C.W. Holloway and C.H. Floyd. A National Parks System for Western Samoa, United Nations Development Advisory Team for the South Pacific (Suva, Fiji : January 1975).

This legislation provides for establishing National Parks, Nature Reserves, Recreation Reserves, Historical Reserves and other Reserves.

- 1.3 The National Parks and Reserves Act 1974 is only applicable to the designation of Public Lands as National Parks and Reserves. The UNDAT/IUCN Report recommendations in most cases involve considerable areas of Customary and Freehold lands. While the Government recognises the desirability of reserving these areas from harmful exploitation, it is constrained in its own actions by the limitations imposed by comparatively small financial resources and an obligation to give priority to economic development. The considerable sums of money required for the acquisition or leasing and development of these lands for National Parks or Reserves must be sought from Foreign Aid sources.
- 1.4 At a conference on National Parks and Reserves held in Wellington, New Zealand, in February 1975 it was recommended that recipient governments include projects for conservation and financial assistance in their requests for financial assistance, and that donor governments regard such requests as matters of high priority. The availability of funds for conservation purposes has been handicapped by the generally world-wide economic recession that is now being experienced. Western Samoa, has been advised however, that while funds may not be available from normal bilateral aid sources, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is interested in assisting conservation orientated development projects in the South Pacific.

1.5 This report has been prepared for submission to interested visiting delegations representing organisations that are foreign aid donors following Western Samoa's hosting of a plenipotentiary meeting in June 1976 to conclude a Convention on Conservation on the South Pacific Region.

2. THE "MAU" MOVEMENT

- 2.1 Approximately two kilometres (one and one-quarter miles) west of the Apia Post Office in the village of Vaimoso is a distinctive octagonal shaped one roomed building. This building, which although having the appearance of being unused, nevertheless has considerable historical significance for the people of Western Samoa. Vaimoso was one the two centres of 'O le Mau' (The Samoan League), an indigenous protest opposition to the policies then being implemented by the Government of New Zealand who were administering Western Samoa under a League of Nations Mandate. As a result of the opposition voiced by the Mau and an incident on 28 December 1929 where eleven Samoans, nearly all holding important matai titles, died tragically from wounds sustained when an Administration Police party, armed with revolvers and shotguns panicked and opened fire on a procession the New Zealand authorities were forced to make changes in their administration policies that were to eventually culminate in Western Samoa becoming an independent nation state in January 1962.
- 2.2 The building at Vaimoso was used as a meeting place for the leaders of the Mau. It therefore symbolises or is a reminder to the Samoan people of an important stage in their development towards becoming an independent self-government country.
- 2.3 Holloway and Floyd suggest that since most historic sites have ready appeal to the Samoan or overseas visitor they are ideally suitable for early attention in the establishment of a National Parks and Reserves system. (There is no mention of this building in the UNDAT/IUCN report but this is an

oversight by Government rather than Holloway and Floyd who relied on the Western Samoa authorities for the identification of features having historical significance.) From the time there have been various proposals made for the building of a Museum in Western Samoa. While the building at Vaimoso is not large enough for these purposes it is suitable for the public display of some historical artifacts especially facsimiles of official letters, newspaper cuttings and other correspondence relating to the Mau movement.

3. PROPOSAL

3.1 A historical reserve, to be given a distinctive name, will be established by the Government of Western Samoa over approximately 500 square metres (one-eighth of an acre) of land at Vaimoso. The distinctive octagonal sided building that is sited on this land and which is commonly known as the building used by the Mau movement as a headquarters during their resistance to the Administration in the late 1920's will be renovated and used for the display of historical artifacts, etc.

4. DEVELOPMENT COSTS

4.1 The following work will be required for the establishment of the Vaimoso Historical Monument:

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| • Acquisition or Lease of the building and 500 square metres (one-eighth of an acre) of land. | Estimated Cost | \$3,000 |
| • Renovation of Building | Estimated Cost | \$2,000 |
| • Construction of Cabinets displaying historical artifacts, etc. | Estimated Cost | \$500 |
| • Landscaping of Grounds | Estimated Cost | \$500 |
| • Construction of Sign Posts and pre- paration of interpretative material including printing of information leaflets. | Estimated Cost | \$500 |
| <u>Total Cost</u> | | <u>\$6,500</u> |

5. RESERVE ADMINISTRATION

5.1 Administration of the Vaimoso Historical Reserve will be in accordance with the recommendations of the UNDAT/IUCN report "A National Parks System for Western Samoa".

5.2 A Government Department will be given executive responsibility for the administration development and maintenance of all National Parks and Reserves in Western Samoa. This will include the Vaimoso Historical Reserve.

5.3 A National Parks Authority consisting of representatives from the Departments of Lands and Survey; Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries; Economic Affairs; and Public Works and of the private sector of the community will be formed to advise the Minister of the Government Department entrusted with administering all National Parks and Reserves in Western Samoa. The Authority will include amongst its responsibilities the responsibility of sustaining public credibility in the national importance of the Vaimoso Historical Reserve and will ensure that a full account is taken of public reaction to management proposals drawn up for it.