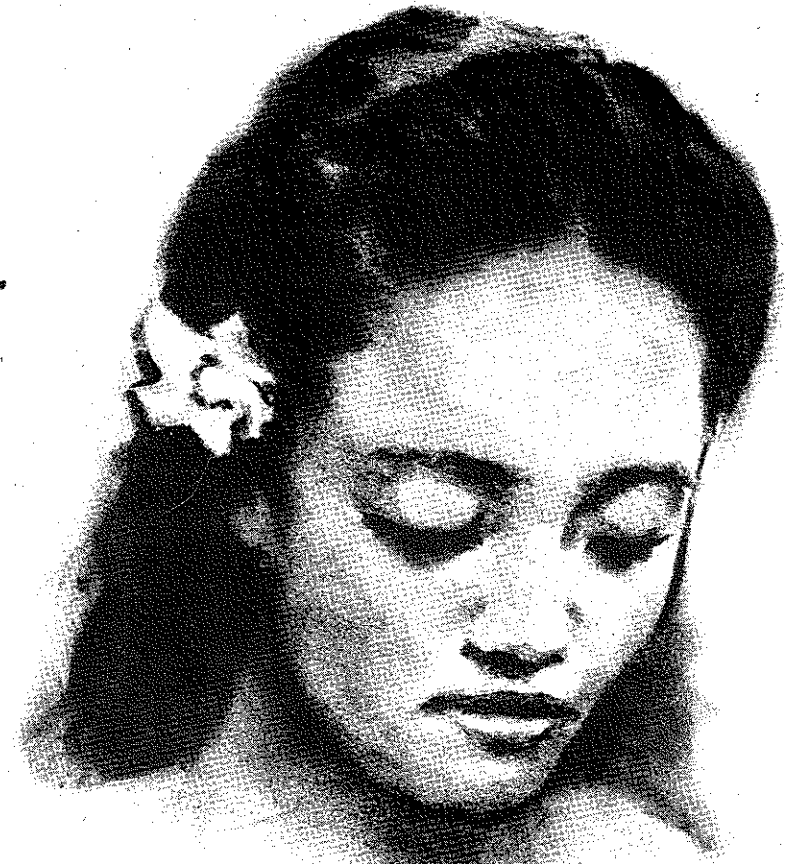


**Coming of Age  
in Samoa  
Margaret Mead**



## VII

### FORMAL SEX RELATIONS

THE first attitude which a little girl learns towards boys is one of avoidance and antagonism. She learns to observe the brother and sister taboo towards the boys of her relationship group and household, and together with the other small girls of her age group she treats all other small boys as enemies elect. After a little girl is eight or nine years of age she has learned never to approach a group of older boys. This feeling of antagonism towards younger boys and shamed avoidance of older ones continues up to the age of thirteen or fourteen, to the group of girls who are just reaching puberty and the group of boys who have just been circumcised. These children are growing away from the age-group life and the age-group antagonisms. They are not yet actively sex-conscious. And it is at this time that relationships between the sexes are least emotionally charged. Not until she is an old married woman with several children will the Samoan girl again regard the opposite sex so quietly. When these adolescent children gather together there is a good-natured banter, a minimum of embarrassment, a great deal of random teasing which usually takes the form of accusing some little girl of a consuming passion for

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a decrepit old man of eighty, or some small boy of being the father of a buxom matron's eighth child. Occasionally the banter takes the form of attributing affection between two age mates and is gaily and indignantly repudiated by both. Children at this age meet at informal *siva* parties, on the outskirts of more formal occasions, at community reef fishings (when many yards of reef have been enclosed to make a great fish trap) and on torch-fishing excursions. Good-natured tussling and banter and co-operation in common activities are the keynotes of these occasions. But unfortunately these contacts are neither frequent nor sufficiently prolonged to teach the girls co-operation or to give either boys or girls any real appreciation of personality in members of the opposite sex.

Two or three years later this will all be changed. The fact that little girls no longer belong to age groups makes the individual's defection less noticeable. The boy who begins to take an active interest in girls is also seen less in a gang and spends more time with one close companion. Girls have lost all of their nonchalance. They giggle, blush, bridle, run away. Boys become shy, embarrassed, taciturn, and avoid the society of girls in the daytime and on the brilliant moonlit nights for which they accuse the girls of having an exhibitionistic preference. Friendships fall more strictly within the relationship group. The boy's need for a trusted confidante is stronger than that of the girl, for only the most adroit and hardened Don Juans do their own

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courting. There are occasions, of course, when two youngsters just past adolescence, fearful of ridicule, even from their nearest friends and relatives, will slip away alone into the bush. More frequently still an older man, a widower or a divorced man, will be a girl's first lover. And here there is no need for an ambassador. The older man is neither shy nor frightened, and furthermore there is no one whom he can trust as an intermediary; a younger man would betray him, an older man would not take his amours seriously. But the first spontaneous experiment of adolescent children and the amorous excursions of the older men among the young girls of the village are variants on the edge of the recognised types of relationships; so also is the first experience of a young boy with an older woman. But both of these are exceedingly frequent occurrences, so that the success of an amatory experience is seldom jeopardised by double ignorance. Nevertheless, all of these occasions are outside the recognised forms into which sex relations fall. The little boy and girl are branded by their companions as guilty of *tautala lai titi* (presuming above their ages) as is the boy who loves or aspires to love an older woman, while the idea of an older man pursuing a young girl appeals strongly to their sense of humour; or if the girl is very young and naïve, to their sense of unfitness. "She is too young, too young yet. He is too old," they will say, and the whole weight of vigorous disapproval fell upon a *matai* who was known to be

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the father of the child of Lotu, the sixteen-year-old feeble-minded girl on Olesega. Discrepancy in age or experience always strikes them as comic or pathetic according to the degree. The theoretical punishment which is meted out to a disobedient and runaway daughter is to marry her to a very old man, and I have heard a nine-year-old giggle contemptuously over her mother's preference for a seventeen-year-old boy. Worst among these unpatterned deviations is that of the man who makes love to some young and dependent woman of his household, his adopted child or his wife's younger sister. The cry of incest is raised against him and sometimes feeling runs so high that he has to leave the group.

Besides formal marriage there are only two types of sex relations which receive any formal recognition from the community—love affairs between unmarried young people (this includes the widowed) who are very nearly of the same age, whether leading to marriage or merely a passing diversion; and adultery.

Between the unmarried there are three forms of relationship: the clandestine encounter, "under the palm trees," the published elopement, *Avaga*, and the ceremonious courtship in which the boy "sits before the girl"; and on the edge of these, the curious form of surreptitious rape, called *moetotolo*, sleep crawling, resorted to by youths who find favour in no maiden's eyes.

In these three relationships, the boy requires a con-

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fidant and ambassador whom he calls a *soa*. Where boys are close companions, this relationship may extend over many love affairs, or it may be a temporary one, terminating with the particular love affair. The *soa* follows the pattern of the talking chief who makes material demands upon his chief in return for the immaterial services which he renders him. If marriage results from his ambassadorship, he receives a specially fine present from the bridegroom. The choice of a *soa* presents many difficulties. If the lover chooses a steady, reliable boy, some slightly younger relative devoted to his interests, a boy unambitious in affairs of the heart, very likely the ambassador will bungle the whole affair through inexperience and lack of tact. But if he chooses a handsome and expert wooer who knows just how "to speak softly and walk gently," then as likely as not the girl will prefer the second to the principal. This difficulty is occasionally anticipated by employing two or three *soas* and setting them to spy on each other. But such a lack of trust is likely to inspire a similar attitude in the agents, and as one overcautious and disappointed lover told me ruefully, "I had five *soas*, one was true and four were false."

Among possible *soas* there are two preferences, a brother or a girl. A brother is by definition loyal, while a girl is far more skilful for "a boy can only approach a girl in the evening, or when no one is by, but a girl can go with her all day long, walk with her and lie on the mat by her, eat off the same platter, and

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whisper between mouthfuls the name of the boy, speaking ever of him, how good he is, how gentle and how true, how worthy of love. Yes, best of all is the *soafafine*, the woman ambassador." But the difficulties of obtaining a *soafafine* are great. A boy may not choose from his own female relatives. The taboo forbids him ever to mention such matters in their presence. It is only by good chance that his brother's sweetheart may be a relative of the girl upon whom he has set his heart; or some other piece of good fortune may throw him into contact with a girl or woman who will act in his interests. The most violent antagonisms in the young people's groups are not between ex-lovers, arise not from the venom of the deserted nor the smarting pride of the jilted, but occur between the boy and the *soa* who has betrayed him, or a lover and the friend of his beloved who has in any way blocked his suit.

In the strictly clandestine love affair the lover never presents himself at the house of his beloved. His *soa* may go there in a group or upon some trumped-up errand, or he also may avoid the house and find opportunities to speak to the girl while she is fishing or going to and from the plantation. It is his task to sing his friend's praise, counteract the girl's fears and objections, and finally appoint a rendezvous. These affairs are usually of short duration and both boy and girl may be carrying on several at once. One of the recognised causes of a quarrel is the resentment of the

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first lover against his successor of the same night, "for the boy who came later will mock him." These clandestine lovers make their rendezvous on the outskirts of the village. "Under the palm trees" is the conventionalised designation of this type of intrigue. Very often three or four couples will have a common rendezvous, when either the boys or the girls are relatives who are friends. Should the girl ever grow faint or dizzy, it is the boy's part to climb the nearest palm and fetch down a fresh cocoanut to pour on her face in lieu of *eau de cologne*. In native theory, barrenness is the punishment of promiscuity; and, *vice versa*, only persistent monogamy is rewarded by conception. When a pair of clandestine experimenters whose rank is so low that their marriages are not of any great economic importance become genuinely attached to each other and maintain the relationship over several months, marriage often follows. And native sophistication distinguishes between the adept lover whose adventures are many and of short duration and the less skilled man who can find no better proof of his virility than a long affair ending in conception.

Often the girl is afraid to venture out into the night, infested with ghosts and devils, ghosts that strangle one, ghosts from far-away villages who come in canoes to kidnap the girls of the village, ghosts who leap upon the back and may not be shaken off. Or she may feel that it is wiser to remain at home, and if necessary, attest her presence vocally. In this case the lover

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braves the house; taking off his *lavalava*, he greases his body thoroughly with cocoanut oil so that he can slip through the fingers of pursuers and leave no trace, and stealthily raises the blinds and slips into the house. The prevalence of this practice gives point to the familiar incident in Polynesian folk tales of the ill fortune that falls the luckless hero who "sleeps until morning, until the rising sun reveals his presence to the other inmates of the house." As perhaps a dozen or more people and several dogs are sleeping in the house, a due regard for silence is sufficient precaution. But it is this habit of domestic rendezvous which lends itself to the peculiar abuse of the *moetotolo*, or sleep crawler.

The *moetotolo* is the only sex activity which presents a definitely abnormal picture. Ever since the first contact with white civilisation, rape, in the form of violent assault, has occurred occasionally in Samoa. It is far less congenial, however, to the Samoan attitude than *moetotolo*, in which a man stealthily appropriates the favours which are meant for another. The need for guarding against discovery makes conversation impossible, and the sleep crawler relies upon the girl's expecting a lover or the chance that she will indiscriminately accept any comer. If the girl suspects and resents him, she raises a great outcry and the whole household gives chase. Catching a *moetotolo* is counted great sport, and the women, who feel their safety endangered, are even more active in pursuit than the



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men. One luckless youth in Luma neglected to remove his *lavalava*. The girl discovered him and her sister succeeded in biting a piece out of his *lavalava* before he escaped. This she proudly exhibited the next day. As the boy had been too dull to destroy his *lavalava*, the evidence against him was circumstantial and he was the laughing stock of the village; the children wrote a dance song about it and sang it after him wherever he went. The *moetotolo* problem is complicated by the possibility that a boy of the household may be the offender and may take refuge in the hue and cry following the discovery. It also provides the girl with an excellent alibi, since she has only to call out "*moetotolo*" in case her lover is discovered. "To the family and the village that may be a *moetotolo*, but it is not so in the hearts of the girl and the boy."

Two motives are given for this unsavoury activity, anger and failure in love. The Samoan girl who plays the coquette does so at her peril. "She will say, 'Yes, I will meet you to-night by that old cocoanut tree just beside the devilfish stone when the moon goes down.' And the boy will wait and wait and wait all night long. It will grow very dark; lizards will drop on his head; the ghost boats will come into the channel. He will be very much afraid. But he will wait there until dawn, until his hair is wet with dew and his heart is very angry and still she does not come. Then in revenge he will attempt a *moetotolo*. Especially will he do so if he hears that she has met another that night."

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The other set explanation is that a particular boy cannot win a sweetheart by any legitimate means, and there is no form of prostitution, except guest prostitution in Samoa. As some of the boys who were notorious *moetotolos* were among the most charming and good-looking youths of the village, this is a little hard to understand. Apparently, these youths, frowned upon in one or two tentative courtships, inflamed by the loudly proclaimed success of their fellows and the taunts against their own inexperience, cast established wooing procedure to the winds and attempt a *moetotolo*. And once caught, once branded, no girl will ever pay any attention to them again. They must wait until as older men, with position and title to offer, they can choose between some weary and bedraggled wanton or the unwilling young daughter of ambitious and selfish parents. But years will intervene before this is possible, and shut out from the amours in which his companions are engaging, a boy makes one attempt after another, sometimes successfully, sometimes only to be caught and beaten, mocked by the village, and always digging the pit deeper under his feet. Often partially satisfactory solutions are relationships with men. There was one such pair in the village, a notorious *moetotolo*, and a serious-minded youth who wished to keep his heart free for political intrigue. The *moetotolo* therefore complicates and adds zest to the surreptitious love-making which is conducted at home, while the danger of being missed, the undesirability of chance

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encounters abroad, rain and the fear of ghosts, complicated "love under the palm trees."

Between these strictly *sub rosa* affairs and a final offer of marriage there is an intermediate form of courtship in which the girl is called upon by the boy. As this is regarded as a tentative move towards matrimony, both relationship groups must be more or less favourably inclined towards the union. With his *soa* at his side and provided with a basket of fish, an octopus or so, or a chicken, the suitor presents himself at the girl's home before the late evening meal. If his gift is accepted, it is a sign that the family of the girl are willing for him to pay his addresses to her. He is formally welcomed by the *matai*, sits with reverently bowed head throughout the evening prayer, and then he and his *soa* stay for supper. But the suitor does not approach his beloved. They say: "If you wish to know who is really the lover, look then not at the boy who sits by her side, looks boldly into her eyes and twists the flowers in her necklace around his fingers or steals the hibiscus flower from her hair that he may wear it behind his ear. Do not think it is he who whispers softly in her ear, or says to her, 'Sweetheart, wait for me to-night. After the moon has set, I will come to you,' or who teases her by saying she has many lovers. Look instead at the boy who sits afar off, who sits with bent head and takes no part in the joking. And you will see that his eyes are always turned softly on the girl. Always he watches her and never does he miss a movement of her lips.

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Perhaps she will wink at him, perhaps she will raise her eyebrows, perhaps she will make a sign with her hand. He must always be wakeful and watching or he will miss it." The *soa* meanwhile pays the girl elaborate and ostentatious court and in undertones pleads the cause of his friend. After dinner, the centre of the house is accorded the young people to play cards, sing or merely sit about, exchanging a series of broad pleasantries. This type of courtship varies from occasional calls to daily attendance. The food gift need not accompany each visit, but is as essential at the initial call as is an introduction in the West. The way of such declared lovers is hard. The girl does not wish to marry, nor to curtail her amours in deference to a definite betrothal. Possibly she may also dislike her suitor, while he in turn may be the victim of family ambition. Now that the whole village knows him for her suitor, the girl gratifies her vanity by avoidance, by perverseness. He comes in the evening, she has gone to another house; he follows her there, she immediately returns home. When such courtship ripens into an accepted proposal of marriage, the boy often goes to sleep in the house of his intended bride and often the union is surreptitiously consummated. Ceremonial marriage is deferred until such time as the boy's family have planted or collected enough food and other property and the girl's family have gotten together a suitable dowry of tapa and mats.

In such manner are conducted the love affairs of the

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average young people of the same village, and of the plebeian young people of neighbouring villages. From this free and easy experimentation, the *taupo* is excepted. Virginity is a legal requirement for her. At her marriage, in front of all the people, in a house brilliantly lit, the talking chief of the bridegroom will take the tokens of her virginity.\* In former days should she prove not to be a virgin, her female relatives fell upon and beat her with stones, disfiguring and sometimes fatally injuring the girl who had shamed their house. The public ordeal sometimes prostrated the girl for as much as a week, although ordinarily a girl recovers from first intercourse in two or three hours, and women seldom lie abed more than a few hours after childbirth. Although this virginity-testing ceremony was theoretically observed at weddings of people of all ranks, it was simply ignored if the boy knew that it was an idle form, and "a wise girl who is not a virgin will tell the talking chief of her husband, so that she be not shamed before all the people."

The attitude towards virginity is a curious one. Christianity has, of course, introduced a moral premium on chastity. The Samoans regard this attitude with reverent but complete scepticism and the concept of celibacy is absolutely meaningless to them. But virginity definitely adds to a girl's attractiveness, the wooing of a virgin is considered far more of a feat than

\* This custom is now forbidden by law, but is only gradually dying out.

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the conquest of a more experienced heart, and a really successful Don Juan turns most of his attention to their seduction. One youth who at twenty-four married a girl who was still a virgin was the laughing stock of the village over his freely related trepidation which revealed the fact that at twenty-four, although he had had many love affairs, he had never before won the favours of a virgin.

The bridegroom, his relatives and the bride and her relatives all receive prestige if she proves to be a virgin, so that the girl of rank who might wish to forestall this painful public ceremony is thwarted not only by the anxious chaperonage of her relatives but by the boy's eagerness for prestige. One young Lothario eloped to his father's house with a girl of high rank from another village and refused to live with her because, said he, "I thought maybe I would marry that girl and there would be a big *malaga* and a big ceremony and I would wait and get the credit for marrying a virgin. But the next day her father came and said that she could not marry me, and she cried very much. So I said to her, 'Well, there is no use now to wait any longer. Now we will run away into the bush.'" It is conceivable that the girl would often trade the temporary prestige for an escape from the public ordeal, but in proportion as his ambitions were honourable, the boy would frustrate her efforts.

Just as the clandestine and casual "love under the palm trees" is the pattern irregularity for those of hum-



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ble birth, so the elopement has its archetype in the love affairs of the *taupo*, and the other chiefs' daughters. These girls of noble birth are carefully guarded; not for them are secret trysts at night or stolen meetings in the day time. Where parents of lower rank complacently ignore their daughters' experiments, the high chief guards his daughter's virginity as he guards the honour of his name, his precedence in the kava ceremony or any other prerogative of his high degree. Some old woman of the household is told off to be the girl's constant companion and duenna. The *taupo* may not visit in other houses in the village, or leave the house alone at night. When she sleeps, an older woman sleeps by her side. Never may she go to another village unchaperoned. In her own village she goes soberly about her tasks, bathing in the sea, working in the plantation, safe under the jealous guardianship of the women of her own village. She runs little risk from the *moetotolo*, for one who outraged the *taupo* of his village would formerly have been beaten to death, and now would have to flee from the village. The prestige of the village is inextricably bound up with the high repute of the *taupo* and few young men in the village would dare to be her lovers. Marriage to them is out of the question, and their companions would revile them as traitors rather than envy them such doubtful distinction. Occasionally a youth of very high rank in the same village will risk an elopement, but even this is a rare occurrence. For

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tradition says that the *taupo* must marry outside her village, marry a high chief or a *manaia* of another village. Such a marriage is an occasion for great festivities and solemn ceremony. The chief and all of his talking chiefs must come to propose for her hand, come in person bringing gifts for her talking chiefs. If the talking chiefs of the girl are satisfied that this is a lucrative and desirable match, and the family are satisfied with the rank and appearance of the suitor, the marriage is agreed upon. Little attention is paid to the opinion of the girl. So fixed is the idea that the marriage of the *taupo* is the affair of the talking chiefs that Europeanised natives on the main island, refuse to make their daughters *taupos* because the missionaries say a girl should make her own choice, and once she is a *taupo*, they regard the matter as inevitably taken out of their hands. After the betrothal is agreed upon the bridegroom returns to his village to collect food and property for the wedding. His village sets aside a piece of land which is called the "Place of the Lady" and is her property and the property of her children forever, and on this land they build a house for the bride. Meanwhile, the bridegroom has left behind him in the house of the bride, a talking chief, the counterpart of the humbler *soa*. This is one of the talking chief's best opportunities to acquire wealth. He stays as the emissary of his chief, to watch over his future bride. He works for the bride's family and each week the *matai* of the bride must reward him with a hand-

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some present. As an affianced wife of a chief, more and more circumspect conduct is enjoined upon the girl. Did she formerly joke with the boys of the village, she must joke no longer, or the talking chief, on the watch for any lapse from high decorum, will go home to his chief and report that his bride is unworthy of such honour. This custom is particularly susceptible to second thought on the part of either side. Does the bridegroom repent of the bargain, he bribes his talking chief (who is usually a young man, not one of the important talking chiefs who will benefit greatly by the marriage itself) to be oversensitive to the behaviour of the bride or the treatment he receives in the bride's family. And this is the time in which the bride will elope, if her affianced husband is too unacceptable. For while no boy of her own village will risk her dangerous favours, a boy from another village will enormously enhance his prestige if he elopes with the *taupo* of a rival community. Once she has eloped, the projected alliance is of course broken off, although her angry parents may refuse to sanction her marriage with her lover and marry her for punishment to some old man.

So great is the prestige won by the village, one of whose young men succeeds in eloping with a *taupo*, that often the whole effort of a *malaga* is concentrated upon abducting the *taupo*, whose virginity will be respected in direct ratio to the chances of her family and village consenting to ratify the marriage. As the abductor is

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often of high rank, the village often ruefully accepts the compromise.

This elopement pattern, given meaning by the restrictions under which the *taupo* lives and this inter-village rivalry, is carried down to the lower ranks where indeed it is practically meaningless. Seldom is the chaperonage exercised over the girl of average family severe enough to make elopement the only way of consummating a love affair. But the elopement is spectacular; the boy wishes to increase his reputation as a successful Don Juan, and the girl wishes to proclaim her conquest and also often hopes that the elopement will end in marriage. The eloping pair run away to the parents of the boy or to some of his relatives and wait for the girl's relatives to pursue her. As one boy related the tale of such an adventure: "We ran away in the rain, nine miles to Leone, in the pouring rain, to my father's house. The next day her family came to get her, and my father said to me, 'How is it, do you wish to marry this girl, shall I ask her father to leave her here?' And I said, 'Oh, no. I just eloped with her for public information.'" Elopements are much less frequent than the clandestine love affairs because the girl takes far more risk. She publicly renounces her often nominal claims to virginity; she embroils herself with her family, who in former times, and occasionally even to-day, would beat her soundly and shave off her hair. Nine times out of ten, her lover's only motive is vanity

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and display, for the boys say, "The girls hate a *moetotolo*, but they all love an *avaga* (eloping) man."

The elopement also occurs as a practical measure when one family is opposed to a marriage upon which a pair of young people have determined. The young people take refuge with the friendly side of the family. But unless the recalcitrant family softens and consents to legalise the marriage by a formal exchange of property, the principals can do nothing to establish their status. A young couple may have had several children and still be classed as "elopers," and if the marriage is finally legalised after long delay, this stigma will always cling to them. It is far more serious a one than a mere accusation of sexual irregularity, for there is a definite feeling that the whole community procedure has been outraged by a pair of young upstarts.

Reciprocal gift-giving relations are maintained between the two families as long as the marriage lasts, and even afterwards if there are children. The birth of each child, the death of a member of either household, a visit of the wife to her family, or if he lives with her people, of the husband to his, is marked by the presentation of gifts.

In premarital relationships, a convention of love making is strictly adhered to. True, this is a convention of speech, rather than of action. A boy declares that he will die if a girl refuses him her favours, but the Samoans laugh at stories of romantic love, scoff at fidelity to a long absent wife or mistress, believe explicitly that

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one love will quickly cure another. The fidelity which is followed by pregnancy is taken as proof positive of a real attachment, although having many mistresses is never out of harmony with a declaration of affection for each. The composition of ardent love songs, the fashioning of long and flowery love letters, the invocation of the moon, the stars and the sea in verbal courtship, all serve to give Samoan love-making a close superficial resemblance to our own, yet the attitude is far closer to that of Schnitzler's hero in *The Affairs of Anatol*. Romantic love as it occurs in our civilisation, inextricably bound up with ideas of monogamy, exclusiveness, jealousy and undeviating fidelity does not occur in Samoa. Our attitude is a compound, the final result of many converging lines of development in Western civilisation, of the institution of monogamy, of the ideas of the age of chivalry, of the ethics of Christianity. Even a passionate attachment to one person which lasts for a long period and persists in the face of discouragement but does not bar out other relationships, is rare among the Samoans. Marriage, on the other hand, is regarded as a social and economic arrangement, in which relative wealth, rank, and skill of husband and wife, all must be taken into consideration. There are many marriages in which both individuals, especially if they are over thirty, are completely faithful. But this must be attributed to the ease of sexual adjustment on the one hand, and to the ascendancy of other interests, social organisation for the men, children

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for the women, over sex interests, rather than to a passionate fixation upon the partner in the marriage. As the Samoans lack the inhibitions and the intricate specialisation of sex feeling which make marriages of convenience unsatisfactory, it is possible to bulwark marital happiness with other props than temporary passionate devotion. Suitability and expediency become the deciding factors.

Adultery does not necessarily mean a broken marriage. A chief's wife who commits adultery is deemed to have dishonoured her high position, and is usually discarded, although the chief will openly resent her remarriage to any one of lower rank. If the lover is considered the more culpable, the village will take public vengeance upon him. In less conspicuous cases the amount of fuss which is made over adultery is dependent upon the relative rank of the offender and offended, or the personal jealousy which is only occasionally aroused. If either the injured husband or the injured wife is sufficiently incensed to threaten physical violence, the trespasser may have to resort to a public *ifoga*, the ceremonial humiliation before some one whose pardon is asked. He goes to the house of the man he has injured, accompanied by all the men of his household, each one wrapped in a fine mat, the currency of the country; the suppliants seat themselves outside the house, fine mats spread over their heads, hands folded on their breasts, heads bent in attitudes of the deepest dejection and humiliation. "And if the man is

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very angry he will say no word. All day he will go about his business; he will braid cinet with a quick hand, he will talk loudly to his wife, and call out greetings to those who pass in the roadway, but he will take no notice of those who sit on his own terrace, who dare not raise their eyes or make any movement to go away. In olden days, if his heart was not softened, he might take a club and together with his relatives go out and kill those who sit without. But now he only keeps them waiting, waiting all day long. The sun will beat down upon them; the rain will come and beat on their heads and still he will say no word. Then towards evening he will say at last: 'Come, it is enough. Enter the house and drink the kava. Eat the food which I will set before you and we will cast our trouble into the sea.' " Then the fine mats are accepted as payment for the injury, the *ifoga* becomes a matter of village history and old gossips will say, "Oh, yes, Lua! no, she's not Iona's child. Her father is that chief over in the next village. He *ifod* to Iona before she was born." If the offender is of much lower rank than the injured husband, his chief, or his father (if he is only a young boy) will have to humiliate himself in his place. Where the offender is a woman, she and her female relatives will make similar amends. But they will run far greater danger of being roundly beaten and berated; the peaceful teachings of Christianity—perhaps because they were directed against actual killing, rather than the slightly less fatal encounters of women—have made far less

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change in the belligerent activities of the women than in those of the men.

If, on the other hand, a wife really tires of her husband, or a husband of his wife, divorce is a simple and informal matter, the non-resident simply going home to his or her family, and the relationship is said to have "passed away." It is a very brittle monogamy, often trespassed and more often broken entirely. But many adulteries occur—between a young marriage-shy bachelor and a married woman, or a temporary widower and some young girl—which hardly threaten the continuity of established relationships. The claim that a woman has on her family's land renders her as independent as her husband, and so there are no marriages of any duration in which either person is actively unhappy. A tiny flare-up and a woman goes home to her own people; if her husband does not care to conciliate her, each seeks another mate.

Within the family, the wife obeys and serves her husband, in theory, though of course, the hen-pecked husband is a frequent phenomenon. In families of high rank, her personal service to her husband is taken over by the *taupo* and the talking chief but the wife always retains the right to render a high chief sacred personal services, such as cutting his hair. A wife's rank can never exceed her husband's because it is always directly dependent upon it. Her family may be richer and more illustrious than his, and she may actually exercise more influence over the village affairs through her

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blood relatives than he, but within the life of the household and the village, she is a *tausī*, wife of a talking chief, or a *faletua*, wife of a chief. This sometimes results in conflict, as in the case of Pusa who was the sister of the last holder of the highest title on the island. This title was temporarily extinct. She was also the wife of the highest chief in the village. Should her brother, the heir, resume the higher title, her husband's rank and her rank as his wife would suffer. Helping her brother meant lowering the prestige of her husband. As she was the type of woman who cared a great deal more for wire pulling than for public recognition, she threw her influence in for her brother. Such conflicts are not uncommon, but they present a clear-cut choice, usually reinforced by considerations of residence. If a woman lives in her husband's household, and if, furthermore, that household is in another village, her interest is mainly enlisted in her husband's cause; but if she lives with her own family, in her own village, her allegiance is likely to cling to the blood relatives from whom she receives reflected glory and informal privilege, although no status.