

this position was filled by Mr. H. S. Griffin, a New-Zealander, who had previous to his joining the Administration served in Samoa for nineteen years with the London Missionary Society. He thoroughly understood the Natives, their customs, and their language; and, while he no doubt displeased some Natives whom he as Commissioner of the High Court had to punish for offences, I am confident that no officer ever carried out his duties more conscientiously and with more regard for the interests and welfare of the Native race than Mr. Griffin.

Since the death of Mr. Griffin, in May last, this position has been filled by the former Assistant Secretary of Native Affairs—viz., Rev. Mr. Lewis—who served as a chaplain with the Australian Forces during the war, and from 1920 to 1926 was a missionary in Samoa in charge of Piula College. He also understands the Natives and their language and customs, and is a just, firm, and sympathetic administrator.

It has been my good fortune to have the services and advice of these two experienced officials, whose former service as missionaries ensured that sympathetic attitude in dealing with Native questions.

In so far as I am personally concerned, I challenge any person to quote any act on the part of the Administration to disregard time-honoured customs and privileges in opposition to the wishes of the Natives. On the other hand, in all matters of Native administration, the policy I endeavour to carry out is to preserve good Samoan customs and to develop the Natives along lines best suited to their environment and social life.

*Paragraph 10.*—"These laws and punishments have been attributed to the Fono of Faipule," &c. It is true that the regulations I have quoted have all been made by the Fono of Faipule, and it is a compliment to the Faipule that they have, in many cases, originated them as well as having intelligently discussed and agreed to all of them in their Fono; furthermore, have discussed and explained them to the Ali'i and Faipule in their own districts, from whom no objections have hitherto been raised so far as I know.

This paragraph is incompatible with the oft-expressed wish of the Samoan people to have power to control their own affairs, and to grant to their Faipules, who are all chiefs of high rank, increased recognition and powers, which was alleged to be one of the objects of the unrest and agitation during the regime of my predecessor.

The statement that "the Faipule were our own elected representatives in past Governments" is untrue. Faipules have never been elected, nor even selected by their people, under former Governments, but at my suggestion have during the past three years actually been nominated by the Ali'i and Faipule (chiefs and orators) of the districts they represent, a fact which the petition has ignored.

In the present stage of development of the Samoan people, selection of representatives is impossible. It is opposed to Samoan custom, which necessitates that full agreement should be arrived at in *fonos* in all matters before a decision is given.

The Natives have been accustomed to accept without demur the decision of the highest authority, and the placing of a modern democratic machine in the hands of a people so recently living in the Stone Age is fraught with danger to themselves. In my opinion it will be another generation before these people can be trusted to utilize the modern method of election without risk of dividing the people into opposing factions and thereby creating continuous unrest.

In support of my statement that Faipules have never been elected, or even selected, by the people under former Governments, I attach a translation of the original instructions issued by Dr. Solf when the Fono of Faipules was first instituted in 1905.

*Paragraph 11.*—It is not clear from this paragraph what time-honoured customs and privileges are referred to.

The only old custom that has been prohibited during recent years is the one concerning the use of fine mats, which have played such an important part in causing dissensions and troubles amongst the Natives in former days.

Four years ago the Faipules represented to the Administrator that the custom of fine-mat *malagas*—i.e., the travelling of large numbers of Natives from one village or district to another for the purpose of presenting fine mats at ceremonies, such as weddings, funerals, and accession to titles—were the cause of much trouble and shortage of food. Even wars had been caused by these ceremonies involving exchange of these heirlooms (fine mats) in former days, and much discontent was still caused by this custom. Large parties leaving their villages for comparatively long periods caused neglect of their own plantations, and impoverished the plantations of those villages the parties visited. The provision of European food for feasts led to heavy debts at the traders' stores, and, so far as the Faipules could see, there was not one good point in favour of the continuation of the custom.

As these Faipules represented every district, their views in this, as in all other Native matters, were carefully considered by the Administrator, who, however, made no regulation on the subject, but asked the Natives to agree to discontinue the custom for three years as a trial in order to see its effect.

The Administrator visited every district on three occasions since that agreement was made, and with the exception of about two districts received only approving comments from the chiefs themselves, who verified the opinions previously expressed by their Faipules.

At the last Faipule Fono it was unanimously agreed that the three-years experiment had been a great success, and that the comparative absence of Native troubles in Samoa was the result of that experiment; and the Faipules recommended a law to be made which, while placing no restriction on individuals using, selling, or presenting their fine mats as they wish, these useless and harmful fine-mat *malagas* should be absolutely prohibited. This decision was given with a full knowledge of the agitation by Mr. Nelson's committee to make the fine-mat question one of the complaints to put before the Government, a complaint which certainly did not originate from districts outside Apia.