



Epilogue

Tamasailau Suaalii-Sauni and Tuivalu Lauganiu

The University of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

We stand on shifting sands

Moving horizons and sinking lands

Wondering what tomorrow may bring

For our children and things

For us/two, you and I

Knowledge creeps, moves, falls and stands

We, in the Blue Continent, with our things

We speak and speak, but it's still bleak

We drink and plan - so many plans

Our ulu sinasina¹ smiles, dancing in our dreams

pointing to our measina², taonga³, and gifts,

And we smile back and try to dream.⁴

Our Tulagavae⁵, Where we Stand, our Standpoints

Tuivalu

I am an Aotearoa New Zealand⁶ born and raised child to a Tokelauan mother and a Tuvaluan father. As a child of the diaspora, growing up in Tāmaki Mākaaurau Auckland, I was never too far from my connection with the Pacific Island community, particularly the Tuvaluan community in West Auckland – which is sometimes referred to as the ‘*unofficial capital of Tuvalu*’. This upbringing in West Auckland has significantly shaped my identity and serves as a lens for when I examine social, economic, and cultural issues.

As the first in my family to pursue higher education and attain a bachelor's degree, I had the privilege of accessing and engaging with critical knowledge, including the settler colonial history of Aotearoa New Zealand and its enduring impacts. This knowledge was especially relevant in my undertaking of criminology as a major at The University of Auckland, where I explored and applied criminological theories to understand the overrepresentation of Indigenous (Māori) and ethnic minorities (especially Pacific peoples) in the New Zealand criminal justice system.

I was introduced to the historical events of the *Dawn Raids* (Anae 2020) as a first-year university student in sociology in 2017. I was shocked when I began researching these raids, as not only was it the first time I had come across them, but it was more profoundly the first time my view of New Zealand as a ‘post-race’ society (Taiaiake and Comtassel 2005) was deeply challenged. How did I go 18-years living in Auckland without any knowledge of the *Dawn Raids*!? In learning of the *Dawn Raids*, I asked my parents about it, and they shared that my maternal grandparents were personally traumatised by what happened to them. As citizens of Tokelau, they were by law not overstayers and so should not have been affected. This was because Tokelau was then, and is still now, a territory of the New Zealand Pacific empire. But clearly many in the New Zealand police force were ignorant of this fact and they seemed to target anyone who looked like a Samoan or Tongan overstayer – including Māori. In a so-called ‘post-race’ society, the *Dawn Raids* showed me quite starkly that the belief that race and racism were unimportant or irrelevant to determining criminality was untrue. It taught me that the exercise of determining socio-economic and justice outcomes for all in a ‘post-race’ society using universal indicators (such as ‘need’ or ‘risk’) actually does involve human biases around questions of race and ethnicity. I am excited by how a Pacific criminology might address such questions.

Coming to the question of a Pacific criminology, I see it to be a space therefore that can be productive and radical in its addressing of racial violence and injustices, especially injustices rendered by the contemporary settler colonial state. In the Pacific, for example, investigating the actions of the Indonesian state in West Papua, the British in Australia and New Zealand and its other former Pacific Island colonies, the French in French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, the Chilean state in Easter Island (Rapa Nui), and the United States in its current and former territories.

I also see potential for a Pacific criminology that can reveal systemic biases in initiatives such as the use of Māori wardens or the establishment of Rangatahi and Pasifika youth courts in Aotearoa New Zealand, where such biases might undermine their good intentions and risk claims of state tokenism. Such critiques may include debates amongst Pacific scholars about abolishing prisons (Rakete 2023) or defunding the police (Cunneen 2023) movements or reinvesting the justice envelope (Swartz 2010). I am concerned that such initiatives will always fall short of their goals as they remain tied to the governing apparatuses of the settler colonial state and will not fundamentally address the systemic nature of racialised violence. As a Pacific Indigenous young person, I call for a Pacific criminology that is open to a radical rethinking of policing and state systems that can genuinely address and rectify racial violence and injustices. As an emerging Pacific Indigenous criminologist, my experiences and intellectual training have to date included engagements with critical race theories, which inspire my aspirations for a Pacific criminology.

Tamasailau

I am a child of Samoa. I was born in the village of Saoluaifata, on the Samoan island of Upolu. I also have ancestral connections to Tonga (namely the island of Niuatoputapu). I migrated with my parents and siblings to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1973 at three years of age, and grew up in Auckland, mostly in West Auckland. So, I guess I’m a ‘Westie’ too. Around that time there were very few Pacific Islanders living in West Auckland and the schools I attended there were state schools, filled mainly with Māori and *Pakeha*⁷ (including Yugoslavian and Croatian) students at the time. The Central and South Auckland schools I went to were church schools - Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) schools to be exact – my parents were (and still are) members of the SDA church. These schools had significant numbers of Pacific Island students. I felt more at home there.

My experiences of the New Zealand state and SDA church education systems, values and cultures shaped my formative perceptions of being Pacific in Aotearoa New Zealand. It also, alongside my family home life, shaped my sense of being Samoan. Although I lived in a very Samoan household, because my parents were teachers in Samoa and spoke English fluently, they privileged English in our home. The Samoan SDA churches we attended did the same – or they didn’t force us to speak Samoan and gave us ‘New Zealand-born kids’ room to hold English-speaking sessions. This meant that while I grew up understanding Samoan, I was not able to speak it well. But I have always felt a strong connection to all things Samoan, especially the Samoan language and culture, our *aganuu*⁸, *agaifamua* and *faasamoa*. Frequent trips home to Samoa helps with this connection. Deliberate and ongoing involvement in or *tautua* (service) to Samoan family and community helps too.

Over the years, this love for and engagement with things Samoan evolved and has become a strong influence and source of inspiration for my work in the criminology space and with Pacific Indigenous communities at large. I came to criminology via the disciplines of sociology and law. My masters’ thesis (Suaalii-Sauni 1997) looked at ‘the cultural’ in law, examining how it played out in cultural defence cases in New Zealand. My doctoral thesis (Suaalii-Sauni 2006) employed a governmentality lens to look into what I called the ‘spirits of governing’ that governed the management of Samoan youth offender cases in New Zealand. Thus began my journey into Samoan culture and law, and more recently into Pacific (though mainly Samoan) young people’s, families’ and community experiences of youth justice in New Zealand and internationally. These personal journeys

inform my 'translation' and 'border crossing' exercises and offer reflexive content. Reflexivity is essential to our developments of an honest and authentic, genuinely inclusive as well as critically informative and transformational Pacific criminology.

The Christian Church, Indigenous culture, and the institution of family, in all their varied and sometimes contradictory manifestations in the Pacific, are imbued with a Pacific spirituality and sensibility. This is the case for Pacific communities, whether living in the diaspora or their homelands. All three have loomed large in and throughout my life. My childhood revolved around church and home. School was in the background until college and university. But formal education always seemed secondary to what I was learning or was happening at home or church. When I was around 5 or 6 years of age, we were living in Otago. I remember that our house at the time had a large front and backyard, with fruit trees, mainly peaches and apples, that would blossom pink and white during spring. The grass was always green and filled with white daisies and yellow buttercup flowers. I remember waiting eagerly most evenings for my Uncle John (Ioane) to return home from work. I would search for his image on the bridge that we could see from behind our house that he would usually cross as he walked home from work. It connected Otago and the neighbouring town of Otago where he worked in the 'freezing works' factory.

Uncle John was one of my favourite uncles. We had three uncles living with us in Otago at the time. All had come from Samoa in search of work. Uncle John was quiet and unassuming, hard-working, humble and always generous. He would bring us lollies and so we children would always try to be the first to meet him. I was the eldest of my parents' four children at the time. As the eldest I would sometimes be given the first sweets. I think this is when my sweet tooth first developed. When Jacinda Ardern did the *Dawn Raids* apology in 2021, I remembered our home in Otago. It was during a conversation with my father about the apology that I learned that the police had raided our Otago home during the *Dawn Raids*, and that I had inadvertently told them that my uncles were staying there with us. I remember feeling somewhat dismayed that I could not remember this and had never heard this story before. And I was also on reflection surprised at myself, that I was, at the time, a bit ambivalent about it all. Had I become so comfortable in my academic life that I had lost any sense of outrage? Surely as a critical Pacific criminologist I should be more outraged. Or had I unconsciously assimilated my parents' and wider family's attitude, that such raids were par for the course? Such injustices were just what happened to Pacific migrants, to people of colour, to people different from those in power – they were, as Samoans might say, just *pau ā* (were 'just because'). Making a fuss would not change anything for us immediately, so it was not worth the energy. I've reflected a lot on this since and on the vulnerability of admitting to ambivalence publicly. Upon further reflection, I wonder whether my ambivalent attitude to the *Dawn Raids* was also a result of an unconscious depersonalising of the violence that happened? Was I ambivalent because it had happened to others, not to me? Had I compartmentalised it such that forgetting about it became easy? I remain convinced that if we are to generate a culture of safety and openness in this new Pacific criminology space, then it must be a space where we can be constructive and honest enough with ourselves and each other about these kinds of ambivalences and their implications.

When I consider how charged I get when I think about domestic violence and child abuse, I have to admit that there may be some truth to the claim that our subjective truths directly impact our objective realities. Upon thinking about this my mind reverts to memories of my father beating up my mother when he got angry, sending her to hospital one time and asking us children to not say anything to the hospital staff. In the short film *O Tamaiti* by Sima Urale (1996), her hospital scene spoke volumes to me because of this memory. Even now, when my father, in his eighties, raises his voice in 'that way', my siblings and I, now in our fifties, still shudder and become children again. Our historical trauma resurfacing. My activism is personally triggered when I am confronted with domestic violence and child abuse issues, but I am somehow more circumspect when thinking about the *Dawn Raids*. I ponder on this. It makes me somewhat perplexed. Making change requires naming it and confronting it and finding ways to navigate it, these vulnerable and intersectional moments, tensions, passions, ambivalences and perplexities, and doing so in productive and mana-enhancing ways. This is without doubt hard work. And it is work that concerns all of criminology. Understanding how they – our ambivalences, anxieties, passions, tensions and so forth – impact and play out in Pacific crime and justice spaces is an important part of the work of a Pacific criminology.

While we are excited for the emergence of a Pacific criminology, we are also apprehensive. The greatest challenge facing a call for a 'Pacific criminology' will be determining its 'Pacificness'. That is, determining how it will uphold the scholastic work and Indigenous values of scholars and practitioners from the Indigenous Pacific, make them visible and empowered so they can speak their truth without fear of stigma or loss of mana. On top of this, determining how it is that this 'Pacific criminology' will uphold its desire to co-create inclusive encounters and dialogues on criminological issues that are *in and of* the Pacific, and do so in *tika*⁹ or *pono*¹⁰ ways, ways that are ethno-culturally informed and inclusive, equity-focused, activist-sensitive, and scholastically rigorous and innovative. This will be no easy feat given our colonial histories, cultural pluralities and hierarchical structures. Nevertheless, it is a mission worth pursuing, and the time is right.

Criminology has been long described as a ‘rendezvous field’, a point or space for ‘encountering’, for the coming together and sharing of pertinent knowledge, experiences and (where possible) appropriate solutions and visions for a just future (Melgaço 2018). For a Pacific criminology, we imagine it to be a space where we of the Pacific (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) can have rich encounters with criminology scholars and practitioners, and with those with lived experiences of criminal justice systems across our region and from other regions. We imagine that at times there will be differing approaches and opinions of things criminological but that this is fine for it offers a healthy, productive tension indicative of the rich diversity and complexities of our humanity. All in all, a Pacific criminology would aspire to be a space that is *mana*-enhancing of all, respectful of *tapu*, and active in making visible and comprehensible Pacific diversity, similarity and specificity in ‘things criminological’. It is here that a Pacific criminology will encounter other academic or activist disciplines concerned with ‘Pacificness’ - Pacific studies, Pacific history, political studies and international relations in the Pacific, Pacific Indigenous jurisprudence, Pacific activism, Pacific abolitionism, and so on. We are excited and energised by the possibilities.

Indeed, we are hopeful for a Pacific criminology that actively engages in the cultivation of intergenerational, interdisciplinary, intercultural, inter-legal, and intersectional conversations. Conversations which are thoughtful and have the potential to be transformative. Each article in this special issue, both individually and as a collection, provides us with a rich suite of encounters that reflect and advance on some of these conversations. As an inaugural collection they begin to shape, more formally, an address of the challenges or *wero*¹¹ posed by the provocative question ‘what the hell is a Pacific criminology?’ raised by former gang member, now senior Pasifika engagement advisor for the New Zealand Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, Faafete Taito, at the inaugural Pacific criminology symposium in Wellington. It was an apt *wero* for this inaugural symposium and remains so for the Pacific Criminology Collective that emerged from it. This *wero* demands the specific naming and addressing of violence in the Pacific, in all its forms, as well as the co-creation of opportunities to talk and share meaningful story, right story (Yunkaporta, 2023), about insights and solutions.

In closing, we hope for a Pacific criminology that embraces the *tuakana/teina* (older sibling/younger sibling) paradigm (Suaalii-Sauni 2017). Our younger generation can learn a lot from our older generation and vice versa, and both can learn a lot from our ancestors. Within these learnings are encounters that teach us about ourselves and about how we might ‘freedom dream’ (Asafo 2022) and reimagine a just future for the Pacific and for all. We commend the editors, leaders and contributors to this special issue for their scholarship, vision and generosity. And we acknowledge the wisdom in the Samoan proverb, that the quest is never greater than the support - *E le sili le ta'i nai lo le tapua'i*.¹²

Fakafetai lahi lele.¹³

Correspondence: Tamasailau Suaalii-Sauni, Associate Professor, Criminology Programme, The University of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. s.suaalii-sauni@auckland.ac.nz

¹ Samoan term for elders, in this case also alluding to the wisdom of elders. The term literally means a ‘head of white hair’ (ulu meaning head; sinasina meaning white, symbolic of age).

² *Measina* is a Samoan word for ‘gift’.

³ Taonga is the Māori term for ‘gift’ or ‘something precious’.

⁴ The poem was written for this epilogue by Tamasailau Suaalii-Sauni.

⁵ *Tulagavae* is a word used in both Tokelauan and Samoan languages to literally mean ‘where one stands or places their feet’. As such, it is used here to refer to the idea of a ‘standpoint’ as expressed and developed by feminist standpoint theory and Indigenous scholars such as Tyson Yunkaporta and Doris Shillingsworth (Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth 2020).

⁶ We use the term ‘Aotearoa New Zealand’ to denote a recognition that New Zealand was founded on the coming together of two nations – that of the Indigenous Māori people and of the British settler people. Where we have used the term ‘New Zealand’ only, this denotes a belief that in that case there is no recognition of the place of Māori as a founding nation and that the state operates largely on settler colonial values and practices.

⁷ *Pakeha* is a Māori term usually used to describe the descendants of the early European settlers who settled in Aotearoa New Zealand from the beginnings of European colonialism. Most are British but may also include other European nations.

⁸ The Samoan terms *aganuu*, *agaifanua* and *faasamoa* refer to Samoan culture and custom.

⁹ A Māori term meaning ‘right’.

¹⁰ Māori and Hawaiian term meaning ‘to be true, valid, honest, sincere’.

¹¹ A Māori term for challenge. This challenge is usually issued by a warrior and used in rituals of encounter (see: <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?keywords=wero>).

¹² The translation of the Samoan words of this proverb is ‘the quest is never greater than the support’.

¹³ ‘Thank you very much’ in Tokelauan.

References

- Anae M (2020) *The Platform: The radical legacy of the Polynesian Panthers*. Wellington: BWB Texts.
- Asafo D (2022) Freedom dreaming of abolition in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Pacific perspective on Tiriti-based abolition constitutionalism. *Legalities* 2(1): 82-118.
- Cunneen C (2023) *Defund the police: An international insurrection*. Policy Press.
- Melgaço L, Nuytiens A and Bauwens T (2018) Editorial: Introducing criminological encounters. *Criminological Encounters*. 1(1): 3. <https://criminologicalencounters.org/index.php/crimenc/index>.
- Rakete E (2023) Army of the rich. In Cunneen C, Deckert A, Porter A, Tauri J and Webb R (eds) *The Routledge international handbook on decolonising justice*: 136-145. London: Routledge.
- Suaalii-Sauni T (1997) Puaa: Cultural difference, cultural defence and subjugated knowledges. Masters Thesis. The University of Auckland, New Zealand
- Suaalii-Sauni T (2006) Le Matuamoepo: The competing 'spirits of governing' that govern the management of New Zealand-based Samoan youth offender cases. PhD Thesis. The University of Auckland, New Zealand.
- Suaalii-Sauni T (2017) The Va and Kaupapa Māori. In Hoskins T and Jones A (eds) *Critical conversations in Kaupapa Māori*: 161-178. Wellington: Huia Publishers.
- Swartz M (2010) Building communities, not prisons: Justice re-investment and indigenous over-imprisonment. *Australian Indigenous Law Review* 14(1): 1-17.
- Taiaiake A and Corntassel J (2005) Being Indigenous: Resurgences against contemporary colonialism. *Government and Opposition* 40(4): 597-614. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2005.00166.x>.
- Yunkaporta T (2023) *Right story, wrong story: Adventures in Indigenous thinking*. Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company
- Yunkaporta T and Shillingsworth D (2020) Relationally responsive standpoint. *Journal of Indigenous Research*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.26077/ky71-qt27>.
- Urale S (1996) O Tamaiti [Film]. Paewai Productions.