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Beyond the Bun: An Ethnographic Examination of Meanings and Significance of Hair in Samoa

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**BEYOND THE BUN: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC EXAMINATION OF MEANINGS
AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HAIR IN SAMOA**

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This paper examines the meanings and significance of hair in Samoa, with focuses on hair length, color and texture, and style in Samoa, from both historical and contemporary perspectives. Data has been gathered from interviews, observations and surveys, and seeks to present the information in an ethnographic format. Examined in depth is the topic of the tuiga, the Samoan ceremonial headdress, with an emphasis on its changing construction and usage. Hair and tourism in Samoa is another focus, specifically how Samoans are portrayed in the literature produced to lure travelers to Samoa. Also discussed are the teine sa, or spirit women of Samoa, and how and why the threat of repercussions for going against social norms relating to hair affect Samoans today. In conclusion, the effects of increasing Westernization are discussed in terms of its effects on hair, its visible markers in Samoa in relation to hair, and its implications for the future in Samoa.