In 1877, the Samoan government sent MK Le Mamea to Washington, DC as an envoy to negotiate a Treaty of Friendship with the United States. Celebrated in American newspapers as “the Tattooed Prince,” Le Mamea’s journey was initially met with fascination and curiosity. Upon his return home, Le Mamea gave a speech which was met with threats of violence by the resident foreign community in Apia. The speech, angry and accusatory, grieved the decay of Samoa in the thrall of the Americans, British and Germans. In this talk, I will revisit the diplomatic mission, which in Pacific historiography has largely been deemed a costly political failure. Engaging the work of Pacific historians of the late nineteenth century, I build upon a body of scholarship that centers Native perspectives of the world and their position amidst shifting global politics.

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