

TRANSNATIONAL JOURNEYS: SAMOAN MIGRATION AND REMITTANCES RECONSIDERED

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In her work on Samoan population movement, Sa'iliemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor criticizes earlier approaches to migration and remittances as “wrongheaded” because they were based on an “economistic” Euro-American model that did not sufficiently include indigenous perspectives. She then offers an approach that focuses on Samoan conceptions of movement, obligation, and connection. This article addresses her critique and examines the role of indigenous concepts in understanding and explaining trends in Samoan migration and remittances over the past several decades. As important as indigenous perspectives are, a number of the trends that Lilomaiava-Doktor derives from her approach are problematic. Furthermore, a review of the literature from the 1970s to the present suggests that Samoan concepts, especially *fa'a-Sāmoa*, or Samoan custom, have been a significant component of research on Samoan migration and remittances, and have often been integrated with external economic and political factors.

Introduction

CONTINUING RESEARCH HAS MADE SĀMOA ONE OF THE BEST CASE STUDIES OF the long-term effects of migration and remittances. With over half of its population permanently overseas and more abroad temporarily, Sāmoa (formerly Western Sāmoa) has become one of the most remittance-dependent countries in the world. Remittances sent or brought back are partially responsible for a marked increase in family and individual incomes since the 1960s, and they have been a pillar of the Samoan national economy (Shankman 1976; Connell

1990; Brown 1998). By the mid-1980s remittances had become the major source of foreign exchange for the islands, exceeding revenue from agriculture and foreign aid combined. Commodification of the economy had reached most rural villages, transforming them in the process and making the country as a whole more affluent. As a result, in 2014 the United Nations upgraded Sāmoa's development status from "least developed country" to "developing country."

While the economic dimensions of Samoan migration and remittances have received a good deal of attention, geographer Sa'iliemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor has criticized a body of this research, including my work (Shankman 1976, 1993) and the work of John Connell (1980, 1983a, 1983b, 1990), challenging what she views as external "economistic" approaches based on a "Euro-American model" and a "dominant development discourse" (2009a). As a corrective to these allegedly "wrongheaded" approaches, Lilomaiava-Doktor offers a cultural approach that she believes will provide a "better" understanding of migration based on indigenous conceptions of movement that give Samoans agency and voice, that reinforce circular mobility, that strengthen social networks, that encourage the sending of remittances, and that maintain the integrity of Samoan culture. She directs attention to the Samoan moral economy of giving, reciprocity, and generosity because in the long term developing "symbolic capital is often more important than economic capital" (2009a, 16).

Lilomaiava-Doktor's critique and her indigenous approach raise questions about the adequacy of previous research. Through her explication of Samoan concepts about movement (*malaga*) and connectedness (*vā*), Lilomaiava-Doktor provides a more thorough understanding of Samoan ways of thinking about mobility.¹ But how well do these traditional concepts actually account for contemporary patterns of Samoan migration and remittances? This article explores the accuracy of her critique, the adequacy of her approach, and the extent to which it is complementary with earlier research. I will argue that there exists a lengthy and detailed literature on Samoan migration and remittances dating from the 1970s, including work by Samoan scholars, that has focused on both indigenous cultural factors *and* broader economic and political factors.²

Although Lilomaiava-Doktor's focus on indigenous concepts enhances understanding of Samoan thinking about movement, a number of the trends that Lilomaiava-Doktor derives from her approach are problematic. While her focus on connectedness within Samoan social networks is important, the kinds of connections that Samoans have with the wider world are less well explored. Thus, her emphasis on circular migration minimizes the overall direction and magnitude of international migration. Her assertion that mobility strengthens family ties during migration neglects weakening links, public concerns

over participation in traditional gift exchanges (*fa'alavelave*), and an intergenerational decline in the sending of remittances to the islands. The contours of Samoan migration and remittances are more complex than Lilomaiava-Doktor's approach allows, requiring the study of international, national, local, and cultural factors.³

Critique and Counterpoint

Lilomaiava-Doktor initially states that in the study of migration, indigenous knowledge and understanding are compatible with and a necessary complement to an analysis of broader political and economic conditions (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009a, 1). However, she then criticizes such approaches, stating that scholarly treatment of migration in the Pacific has been based on a "Euro-American model" concerned with modernization, globalization, and development. Migration itself is said to be an "academic construction" derived from a hegemonic development discourse (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009a, 2). She finds that:

The positivist and structuralist nature of much of these works, and their assumptions that 'migration' is the result of rationalizing forces and thus can be statistically modeled, means they contribute little to our understanding of movement as a social or cultural act (2009a, 3)

Lilomaiava-Doktor believes the Euro-American model is too "simplistic" because it is based on bourgeois assumptions (2009a, 20) that neglect local contexts, local epistemology, and local ideology. She favors an ontological approach that is more qualitative, employing indigenous methodologies, and analyzing indigenous concepts because they provide a "deeper" understanding of people's movements (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009a, 2).

According to Lilomaiava-Doktor, the very word "migration" might imply a "severance of ties, uprootedness, and rupture, but in the eyes of those involved, Samoan population movement is quite different" (2009a, 1). It connects families through transnational networks and maintains the integrity of Samoan culture (*fa'a-Sāmoa*). She prefers the terms "population movement," "mobility," and "circulation" that go "beyond migration" and the intellectual baggage that the term suggests. Noting continuities with past Samoan journeying, Lilomaiava-Doktor focuses on the importance of local interpretations of heterogeneous and diverse processes (2009b, 58), favoring the analysis of circular movements. She also believes that it is necessary to understand "the meaning of movement rather than merely describing or explaining it." (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2015, 92).

Given the enduring population movement going on in many countries in the region, people's interactions with place have confounded conventional wisdom on migration, remittance[s], and development. They collapse the wrongheaded categories and paradigms that have been emphasized in academic studies on Oceania since the 1960s (2009a, 22)

Lilomaiava-Doktor notes that in her research on Samoan population movement, "a primary motivation" is "the need and the desire to enhance the status of the collective *āiga* [extended kin group or family]. Fundamental to that enhancement is the journeying and traveling, *malaga*[,] to attend the *fa'ala-velave* [obligatory gift exchanges involving events such as births, weddings, funerals, chiefly title bestowals, and church openings]" (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2015: 81–82). Furthermore, "mobility strengthens rather than weakens the links between family [outside the village] and home." (2009b, 60). "Distance does not separate *āiga* but only provides further interconnecting social pathways" (2009a, 22).

This is an appealing argument, with Lilomaiava-Doktor offering a counternarrative to the alleged inadequacies of earlier work on Samoan migration. Yet it is flawed. Lilomaiava-Doktor begins by suggesting that earlier studies of Pacific migration *might* have interpreted movement as a "severance of ties, uprootedness, and rupture." She then asserts that, in fact, they have done so, and this misrepresentation therefore requires a different approach that focuses on Samoan conceptions of movement. She thus favors mobility over migration, circulation over permanent exodus, continuity over discontinuity, and understanding over explanation.

However, most studies of Samoan migration and remittances have *not* interpreted migration as primarily or exclusively about severance, uprootedness, and rupture (i.e., Pitt and Macpherson 1974; Shankman 1976; Kallen 1982; O'Meara 1990; Janes 1990; Va'a 2001; Macpherson and Macpherson 2009a). Remittances, as to well as other kinds of ties that migrants continue to maintain with their relatives in the islands, have been included in these studies because they are vital to understanding the migration process. Such studies also include discussions about attenuating ties and disconnections. In these studies, migration has been viewed as a complex response to broader economic and political factors, as well as to local conditions, negotiated by local kin groups and often interpreted using indigenous cultural beliefs and concepts. Although Lilomaiava-Doktor believes that there has been a blind spot about culture that other observers have missed, most earlier studies of Samoan migration, remittances, and the Samoan economy have incorporated indigenous concepts, particularly *fa'a-Sāmoa*, precisely because these scholars recognized the importance of Samoan understandings.

Lilomaiava-Doktor's critique of earlier studies is thus misleading. That said, how influential are indigenous concepts in the movement process?

Vā and the Role of Indigenous Concepts

Lilomaiava-Doktor emphasizes the Samoan concept of *vā* as the underlying basis for understanding migration and remittances. *Vā* is part of "a group of cultural metaphors that constitute *fa'a-Sāmoa*, or the Samoan way of life" (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009a, 7) and refers to the interconnected communal spaces between families, individuals, villages, and other places. "In short, *vā* is the central idea and crucial context for how movement informs Samoan identity and social legitimacy" (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2015, 69). *Vā* guides and governs conduct, providing a model for appropriate behavior in terms of reciprocity, responsibility, service, and the maintenance of family status through participation in *fa'alavelave*. "Their acts of giving and receiving, as manifested in exchanges of letters, care packages, phone calls and remittances, all symbolize *vā*" (2009a, 15). From her fieldwork in the islands and abroad, Lilomaiava-Doktor provides a set of understandings about mobility, ceremonial reasons for mobility, routine or daily reasons for mobility, types of improper movement, and consequences of improper movement (2009a, 2009b, 2015).

Indigenous concepts such as *fa'a-Sāmoa*, *vā*, *malaga*, and *fa'alavelave* are important in understanding how Samoans think about migration and remittances. They are a Samoan way of organizing experience; the traditional metaphors that Samoans use help them manage their everyday lives. Lilomaiava-Doktor argues that culture matters, that these Samoan concepts are influential in determining behavior, and that beliefs and values require attention (2009a, 22). When she states that such beliefs and values should be included in studies of movement, who could disagree?

While earlier studies of Samoan migration and remittances reflected recognition of and an interest in indigenous understandings, there was also recognition that indigenous concepts, by themselves, may not explain much actual behavior because such concepts are symbolic; they do not necessarily translate into behavior. This difference between understanding publicly articulated belief and accounting for actual conduct has been a recurring theme in the general study of indigenous systems of meaning. During the 1960s and 1970s, cultural anthropologists addressed this issue in the study of ethnoscience, an approach that focused on indigenous concepts, categories, and knowledge. As important as they were, cultural anthropologists found that such concepts and categories were often ambiguous and subject to differing as well as changing interpretations; rules were not always followed; authorities were sometimes challenged; and ideas were imperfectly translated into action (Berreman 1966; Harris 1974).

There was also the possibility of the overinterpretation of indigenous systems of meaning by scholars studying them (Keesing 1985).

Lilomaiava-Doktor correctly observes *vā* and *fa'a-Sāmoa* are not stable or static concepts. They are often invoked as a way of interpreting a set of contemporary adaptations that are given meaning by referring to them under traditional rubrics. That is, "Samoans draw on cultural principles to justify changes they are making to their own cultural practices" (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009b, 61). Nonetheless, as important as they are in understanding how Samoans may think about migration, *fa'a-Sāmoa* and *vā* are of less explanatory value because they involve a set of expectations and moral imperatives about how Samoans should behave rather than reflecting actual conduct that may be influenced by other expectations, motivations, and external circumstances.

Lilomaiava-Doktor agrees that *vā* may be articulated in different ways depending on gender, cultural status, age, and marital status (2009a, 14). Thus, *vā* may have different meanings and salience for those who invoke it when discussing their reasons for migration. The same is true for *fa'a-Sāmoa*. Lilomaiava-Doktor herself has noted that the "malleability of *fa'a-Sāmoa* ensures its survival" (2004, 179). In his study of Samoan migrants to Australia, Samoan anthropologist Unasa Leulu Felise Va'a offers a similar argument, commenting that:

. . . migrants identify with the *fa'a-Sāmoa* differentially. That is, they all have different commitments to the attitudes, values and practice of *fa'a-Sāmoa* depending on their needs. The *fa'a-Sāmoa*, I maintain, is seen as a means to an end and not an end in itself, hence the different notions of what constitutes Samoan culture (Va'a n.d.: 1–2)

Va'a also found that although it is customary for Samoans to speak of their culture as homogenous and unchanging, especially among orators, there is much debate about what comprises proper interpretation and practice.

The meanings of *vā* and *fa'a-Sāmoa* have been and are being modified even as they continue to be important central metaphors for interpreting the experience of migration. Thus, *fa'a-Sāmoa* may have both positive and negative connotations for migrants and their families, depending on context. Appeals to *fa'a-Sāmoa* can mobilize social and economic resources vital for migration and for the distribution of remittances that are sent or brought back by migrants. At the same time, resentment of *fa'a-Sāmoa* stemming from the restrictive role of *matai* (titleholders) may encourage young men and women to leave their villages for the relative freedom of Apia and overseas (Shore 1982, 161). It may also lead others to be wary of the claims of distant relatives, based on *fa'a-Sāmoa*, concerning the proper distribution of remittances on their return. As one

middle-aged woman remarked, on visiting the islands from New Zealand and feeling pressure from persistent requests for money by distant relations, “We like Sāmoa, but not *fa’ā-Sāmoa*” (Shankman 1993, 168).

International Migration and Circular Mobility

Although *vā* and *malaga* are culturally appropriate ways of talking and thinking about migration and the necessity of continuing participation in family matters, there are limits to the applicability of these concepts in the broader context of Samoan migration and remittances. *Vā* and *malaga* do not require migration abroad; these concepts were part of local movement within the islands prior to the era of international migration. As Lilomaiava-Doktor states, “The basis for *malaga* [journeying or traveling back and forth] was originally to fulfill life cycle *fa’alavelave* (obligations) . . . However, contemporary movements for the purposes of education, health, and economic opportunities have broadened its scope” (2015, 83). *Malaga* now include international migration because, in Lilomaiava-Doktor’s words, “the uncertainty of economic times and conditions” in the islands promotes movement abroad (2015, 83).

Vā and *malaga* by themselves do not explain the destinations that Samoans choose when migrating. Nor do they explain rates of migration to New Zealand, American Sāmoa, the United States, Australia, and elsewhere. Nor do they fully account for rates of return, patterns of remittance sending, the currencies involved, and the transmission channels used. They also may not incorporate changes in Samoan beliefs and institutions that have taken place over the course of decades of international migration.

External political and economic conditions set major parameters, although not the only parameters, on the direction, destinations, duration, and other related trends in migration. International borders and agreements, laws, citizenship requirements, political considerations in the host country, labor markets, and visas of different types constrain the ability of Samoans to migrate. Although Samoans are quite adept at working within and outside these broad parameters, they nevertheless strongly influence movement possibilities. Thus, while New Zealand has been a major destination for Samoan migrants, in 1982 New Zealand began to sharply restrict permanent immigration from Sāmoa (Shankman 1993, 166). Today there are 1,100 permanent visas annually allotted to Samoans; in 2015, there were 9,000 applicants for these visas, clearly constraining Samoan choices.

Lilomaiava-Doktor objects, stating that, “Focusing simply on the international labor market and other economic macro-processes renders migrants and their communities mute, and the beliefs, values, and attitudes they hold irrelevant” (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009a, 3). This view presumes that approaches

that include external factors somehow exclude local agency. However, a focus on international restrictions is relevant precisely because so many Samoans, for a variety of reasons, actively seek to permanently migrate but are unable to do so. The sheer number of Samoans applying for permanent residence in New Zealand is evidence of their desire to leave the islands. However, without including New Zealand's political and economic decisions with regard to Sāmoa and Samoans, it would be difficult to explain rates of migration to New Zealand over time. The different patterns of international migration from Sāmoa to American Sāmoa, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States underscore this point. Movement is social and not simply spatial, as Lilomaiava-Doktor notes, but it is also strongly influenced by external constraints over which Samoans have little control.

This point may seem obvious, but Lilomaiava-Doktor dissents. She views circular mobility as a “better” way to understand Samoan migration, basing her argument on the Melanesian studies of circulation by Chapman and others (Chapman and Prothero 1985, 4). She states that there is a “dialectic between the centrifugal attractions of wage employment, commercial and administrative forces and the centripetal power of village obligations, social relations and kin ties” (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009b, 65) that modulates these opposing forces and promotes continuing circular flows. Thus, movement is not merely unidirectional but “back and forth” (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009a, 9). However, the Melanesian model she refers to may no longer be relevant because, while circulation may have been the predominant pattern for Melanesian population movements in earlier decades, the current trend in Melanesia is toward permanent migration to urban areas (Petrou and Connell 2017). In Sāmoa, the centripetal and centrifugal forces that Lilomaiava-Doktor cites have been in an asymmetrical relationship since the 1960s; the overall direction of movement has been overseas since that time. Had the movement of Samoans been primarily or mostly circular, the population of Sāmoa today would be closer to 400,000 rather than the current figure of roughly 200,000. Permanent overseas migration has had a major demographic effect on the islands.

Nevertheless, Lilomaiava-Doktor states that, “Shankman failed to comprehend circular mobility . . .” (2009a, 17). This is inaccurate. Circular mobility has been included in my work as one type of movement, but permanent international migration is significant because, among other things, permanent migrants often enable their relatives to engage in temporary circular movement as well as providing vital connections—travel fares, housing, jobs, and language assistance—for new generations of circular and permanent migrants. They are an anchor and a magnet for both kinds of migrants. Indeed, the relative shortage of permanent visas may encourage circular mobility (Macpherson 1985). While Lilomaiava-Doktor is correct in noting that there is a good deal

of circular movement involving fa'alavelave, the overall direction of movement is not circular.

Motivations for Migration

Lilomaiva-Doktor recognizes vā as the central idea and context for understanding movement; she also mentions other publicly shared motivations for movement, including health, education, and economic opportunities. Since vā embodies culturally appropriate motivations, it may act as an umbrella for other, less publicly acceptable motivations for migration. In her work on Samoan migration, Kallen (1982) distinguished between “overt” and “covert” motivations. As a legitimizing and publicly shared motivation, vā would be considered an “overt” motivation. Yet “covert” motivations may coexist alongside vā. For example, young migrants may publicly concur that they move abroad to serve their families; privately, as individuals, they may also desire to escape the hard work and low prestige of village agriculture and/or wish to enhance their own individual prospects beyond the constraints of the local economic and political order. There may be multiple motives, both privately held by individuals who are migrating and publicly shared by family members who sponsor migration in both sending and receiving countries.

Indeed, there may be a variety of less public, privately held motivations that have little relationship to vā. Examples from my field experience include: the union official accused of embezzling money who makes a quick exit abroad; the young man leaving Sāmoa to pursue an overseas affair; the young woman converting to another faith in order to facilitate departure from the islands; the young rape victim encouraged by her family to leave Sāmoa to reduce familial shame; the young man involved in the accidental death of a child seeking to distance himself from local repercussions; the young women visiting an aunt in Hawai'i while quietly seeking to terminate a pregnancy; the young family member sent abroad to reduce family dysfunction at home; and the aspiring titleholder leaving after years of family infighting over succession to a high title.

What about the “economic” motivations found in the “Euro-American model”? Lilomaiva-Doktor states that many previous studies have placed too much emphasis on “inequality and economic opportunity” (2009a, 21) and not enough appreciation of the moral economy of vā. She believes that “symbolic capital is often more important than economic capital” (2009a, 16), commenting that Samoans think about migration in terms of communal vā rather than in terms of “individual profit maximization.” She also criticizes the alleged Western ahistorical, individualistic, and “economistic” view of migration while emphasizing that Samoan mobility is constantly negotiated around family, village politics, and social exigencies (Lilomaiva-Doktor 2015, 91).

The contrast that Lilomaiava-Doktor draws between Western and Samoan motivations is a familiar one, yet she seems to essentialize both, suggesting that there is a singular way of viewing Samoan motivations. Addressing this issue in his ethnographic study of Vaega, a village in rural Savai'i, O'Meara (1990) acknowledged that, compared with most Westerners, Samoans emphasize the importance of sharing. Conversely, most Westerners emphasize the importance of individual property. Yet O'Meara cautions that, "the desire for personal wealth is common among Samoans in spite of their emphasis on sharing and gift giving," just as "sharing and gift giving are common among Westerners despite our emphasis on accumulating private wealth" (1990, 201).

O'Meara's ethnographic study is one of a number of studies, including those by Samoan scholars, reporting that Samoans themselves often cite "economic" reasons as primary motivations for migration. Are such motivations superficial manifestations of an underlying *vā* as some of Lilomaiava-Doktor's interviews suggest? Are they artificial byproducts of incorporation into a capitalist world system that has imposed a Western vocabulary on indigenous movement? Or should these reasons offered by Samoans be accepted at face value? In today's world, the boundary between what is authentically Samoan and what is truly Western may not be clear cut. Lilomaiava-Doktor argues that the cultural realm is "distinct from the economic or political domains of movement" (2009, 21), but the Samoan moral economy and the broader political economy may be more tightly intertwined than she allows. Thus, O'Meara found that although *fa'alavelave* were conceived of as "social" gift exchanges rather than "economic" transactions, Samoans were "very aware of and concerned with the economic results of their gift exchanges" (1993, 148).

Lilomaiava-Doktor stresses the cultural significance of Samoan custom in the movement process, noting that in her interviews,

Time and time again, the essential dynamics of *fa'ā-Sāmoa* were revealed and the role of the *āiga* and *fa'alavelave* shown to be paramount. For these Samoans, there was clearly a primary motivation for population movement: the need and the desire to enhance the status of the collective *āiga* (2015: 81–82)

Yet she also reports on economic motivations in her analysis of the decision to migrate, including "the strategic search for better economic opportunities . . ." (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2015, 83). She explains that these opportunities were only realized by moving to Apia or overseas because planning for "financial success and security in old age" is "nearly impossible" in the islands. Although parents would prefer to have all of their children living in the village, "reality dictates one or two must have a regular job in Apia or overseas" (2015, 83). "This is a

risk-minimising strategy given the uncertainty of economic times and conditions” (2015, 83). While more data about this risk-minimizing strategy and the uncertainty of economic times and conditions would be helpful, it is clear from Lilomaiava-Doktor’s argument that Samoans strategically evaluate economic conditions in the islands in relation to potential opportunities in Apia and overseas, and they base their decisions about migration accordingly.

Samoan sons and daughters, as well as their parents, have prioritized moving to Apia and abroad for decades (Shankman 1976, 56). In the early 1980s, Pamela Thomas (1984) interviewed 100 fifth-form students in three Samoan district high schools about their interest in working family land after they left school. Not a single student wished to do so. All of the students wanted a job in town or in New Zealand (Thomas 1984, 147), and most of the best students left their villages permanently. In a similar study by Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop (1984), Samoan students in the sixth form at the country’s two top colleges were asked to select an occupation that they themselves, rather than their parents, would like to pursue. Both girls and boys overwhelmingly selected “white collar” occupations rather than village agriculture.

These changing aspirations are mirrored by changes in the Samoan economy itself. At independence in 1962, agriculture, including village agriculture, produced 99 percent of Sāmoa’s export income (Department of Economic Development 1969, 10); today that figure is about 10 percent (IndexMundi 2018), with only 20 percent of households earning the majority of their income from agriculture (Sāmoa Bureau of Statistics 2015, 35). Almost two-thirds of employed Samoans work for wages (Samoan Labour Force Survey 2017). A much greater percentage of all Samoans receive remittances. Over the past six decades, the economic landscape of Sāmoa has changed how people think about their livelihoods and village life. Even the most remote villages are now connected to commercial centers by paved roads, electricity, and the Internet. Cell phones are ubiquitous, directly linking Samoans in the islands with their relatives abroad and thereby facilitating the sending and receiving of remittances (Connell 2015; Macpherson 2016). The distinction between rural and urban is blurring. According to the most recent census, the majority of Samoans now live in Apia or the periurban area in northwest Upolu, rather than in the mostly rural villages that were Samoans’ primary residence just decades ago.

Such changes are reflected in the site of much of Lilomaiava-Doktor’s fieldwork. Between 1998 and 2002, Lilomaiava-Doktor spent many months conducting fieldwork on the island of Savai’i in Salelologa, which she refers to as a “Samoan village.” In keeping with her interest, she focused her attention on the importance of the village in conceptual terms, referring to the key metaphors of “home” and “land” that link families in the diaspora. Decades ago, Salelologa was a cluster of more traditional subvillages. Yet today Salelologa offers an example

of how much economic transformation there has been in the islands. For some time, the government of Sāmoa has sought to develop Salelologa as an “urban” alternative to Apia. In the Samoan census, Salelologa is identified as a “village district” composed of several subvillages or *pitonu’u*, including the subvillage of Foua in which Lilomaiava-Doktor resided. The larger Salelologa area has a current population of over 12,000 and is the commercial center of and gateway to the island of Savai’i. It is the hub for the large, modern interisland ferry between Upolu and Savai’i as well as aid-funded wharf facilities. Salelologa has four hotels (reviewed on TripAdvisor) as well as restaurants, bakeries, rental car agencies, taxis, buses, tours, gas stations, and a hospital nearby. There is a large, permanent two-story market open six days a week, as well as small convenience stores. Salelologa also has a large Catholic secondary school and the only public library outside Apia. Employment typically involves wage labor. Lilomaiava-Doktor’s analysis of metaphors such as “land” and “home” may assist in understanding ways of thinking about Samoan life that have remained relatively stable, but they may not reflect the extent of changes that have occurred in the economic life of Salelologa and Sāmoa more generally.

Economic Motivations in Earlier Studies

While “economic” motivations may seem “simplistic,” materialistic, and Eurocentric to Lilomaiava-Doktor, she herself refers to them as major factors in migration—a new Samoan “reality” (2015, 83). Indeed, such factors have been apparent in many studies of Samoan migrants to New Zealand, Australia, American Sāmoa, and the United States. And this has been true from early studies to the present. These studies, often quantitative, explore multiple motivations, even within the broader “economic” category. Thus, Kallen’s study of Samoan migrants to New Zealand (1982), which emphasized the importance of families and *fa’a-Sāmoa* in stimulating, organizing, and facilitating migration, surveyed a random sample of 257 applicants for permanent residence in New Zealand about their reasons for migration. She found that a substantial majority (77 percent) cited “jobs and money” as primary motivations, with 44 percent citing “jobs and money” as their sole motivation; 25 percent listed “a better future life” (1982, 72). Kallen also found that 22 percent cited family-related reasons for migration, while 19 percent hoped to find a lucrative job in order to help their families (Kallen 1982, 72).

In their multidecade study of globalization in Sāmoa, Macpherson and Macpherson (2009a) reported that villagers used *vā* in terms of thinking about traditional obligations, but they were no longer wholly committed to custom and tradition. In the villages that they studied, people were “constantly thinking and talking about change” (Macpherson and Macpherson 2009a, 188). Everyday

conversations often revolved around migration, with villagers calculating the advantages and disadvantages of migration in terms of opportunity and income, risks and rewards, as well as consideration of family and traditional commitments. They were acutely aware of migration quotas in New Zealand and the kinds of unskilled and semiskilled positions that the New Zealand economy could provide at any given moment. People in rural villages and Apia witnessed the new clothing, appliances, and cars sent or brought back or paid for from abroad, and they understood what was needed to acquire them by talking with relatives who had been abroad or through their own experiences overseas. For young people especially, the contrast between their lives in Sāmoa and their dreams of bettering themselves and their families catalyzed their desire to go abroad.

Lona Lanesolota Siauane also reported that economic motivations, compatible with *vā*, were very much on the minds of Samoan migrants in Christchurch, New Zealand. As she noted:

For the Samoan immigrant, New Zealand was the place of ‘milk and honey’ and a better life, access to material goods, and an opportunity to provide their own children with better educational opportunities. These desires became universal motives that lay behind the decision for many of the Samoan immigrants to come to New Zealand. Samoans viewed education as a vehicle for socio-economic well-being and social mobility. For many young Samoans, migration to New Zealand provided this. . . . Furthermore, wage employment became the best way for many young Samoans to contribute to the *fa’alavelave* of their *‘āiga* and church through the regular remittances sent back to their families in Sāmoa (2004, 42)

In his work on Samoan migrants in Australia, Va’a (2001) found that, for most Samoans interviewed in his study, the main reasons for migration to Australia were economic in nature encompassing a combination of “push” and “pull” factors. In terms of “pull” factors for those initially migrating to New Zealand from Sāmoa (prior to leaving for Australia), 74 percent of the ninety-three Samoans interviewed cited employment or education and training as their main reason for movement (Va’a 2001, 84). Of the push factors leading to movement from New Zealand to Australia, 83 percent of the forty-three males interviewed cited specific economic reasons for moving to Australia (Va’a 2001: 84–85). In rank order, these reasons included: scarcity of jobs, worsening economy, high cost of living, unemployment, too much *fa’a-Sāmoa*, low wages, restrictions on housing loans, and a cut in children’s benefits. Va’a also cites other, less often mentioned factors as well, including joining a spouse, family reunion, religion, etc.

He concludes that decisions to migrate were often based on multiple factors, quoting migrants themselves.

Using a New Zealand-based sample of sixty Samoan migrants, Samoan scholar Tolu Muliaina, who has written about the meaning of movement and the importance of family and social obligations in the movement process, also confirmed the significance of economic factors in the migration process, commenting that:

Over 95 per cent of respondents reported that the primary reason for migration was economic, a product of Sāmoa's inability to provide paid employment that matched the aspirations of its fast-growing population, together with the interaction of customary obligations and modern material wants. (2009, 28)

Writing about migration from American Sāmoa to the United States, Fepulea'i Micah Van der Ryn, while fully supporting the incorporation of indigenous concepts into the study of migration and specifically acknowledging Lilomaiva-Doktor's work, reports that changing external economic and political circumstances opened the doors to movement abroad, commenting that:

Major migration from American Sāmoa to the United States began in the early 1950s when the U.S. Naval Administration removed its naval operations from Pago Pago. Samoan naval employees and their families were offered free passage, jobs, and resettlement in naval communities in Hawai'i and on the West coast of the United States, notably in Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego (2012, 254; see also Lewthwaite, Mainzer, and Holland 1973)

Also writing about migration from American Sāmoa, Craig Janes highlighted the relevant cultural background of the migrants, but found that a constellation of motivations, "primarily" but not exclusively economic, led to the large-scale exodus from American Sāmoa in the 1950s:

By 1960 [American] Sāmoa was seized by migration fever. It was not just military experience, education, or employment that the migrants sought, but something far less tangible. Many people left with nothing else in mind save for the idea that migration was necessary to secure a future for themselves and their families. Gifted young people were encouraged to migrate for further education in Hawai'i or on the mainland, and others were propelled by the belief that all things in

[American] Sāmoa were inferior to what was to be had on the mainland (2002, 121)

In different ways, each of these studies integrated Samoan conceptions about the purposes of movement with economic motivations. All of them cited economic motivations as a primary motivation in migration. And all of them viewed fa'a-Sāmoa and/or vā as compatible with economic and political explanations of international migration. So, "Without questioning the importance of *fa'a-Sāmoa* rewards and constraints, it is possible to view other forces as having an equally important bearing on Samoan economic behavior" (Shankman 1976, 100).

Obligations in Conflict⁴

Over the past few decades, Samoans have altered their economy, family structure, land tenure practices, and the matai or chiefly system of leadership itself (O'Meara 1993; Meleisea and Schoeffel 2015). Is this also true of their commitment to the Samoan moral economy? In keeping with her emphasis on the integrity of Samoan culture and continuity within the movement process, Lilomaiava-Doktor affirms that, "mobility strengthens rather than weakens the links between family [outside the village] and home" (2009b, 60). While it is true that Samoan families have often remained remarkably close in the diaspora, with levels of remittances that are a testament to their involvement with and respect for their families, research since the 1970s has shown that in the process of migration there have also been weakened links, reduced commitments, and increased tension (Graves et al. 1982).

Again, this is not a black-and-white issue. Lilomaiava-Doktor herself recognizes that there have been major changes in fa'a-Sāmoa and fundamental changes in the islands as a result of migration and remittances, acknowledging that individualism, jealousy, ambivalence, and dissatisfaction are part of the process of change (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009b, 66). Thus, as migration continued, Samoans have not simply attempted to replicate a given cultural script; they have modified and challenged it. This can be seen in how current participation in fa'alavelave has led to conflicting obligations and increasing public criticism of these exchanges (Macpherson and Macpherson 2009a; Shankman 2018).

While fa'alavelave today are symbolically modeled on a pre-European system of exchange, today's fa'alavelave no longer involve the kinds of the reciprocity and gift exchange characteristic of pre-European or even pre-1960s Sāmoa (O'Meara 1990, 212). As more Samoans moved abroad over the decades, the kinds of ties they had to each other and to their kin in the islands have become

more complex. At least half of the funding for *fa'alavelave* in the islands comes from overseas relatives (Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009a, 16). New kinds of remittances and larger contributions to *fa'alavelave* have increased costs. In the early decades of migration, migrants sent or brought back money or commodities, including tinned beef and fish, biscuits, radios, and clothing, as well as cash for school fees, housing materials such as tin roofs and cement, fares for travel, church contributions, and title installations. In more recent decades, these expenses have escalated with the addition of more expensive items, including televisions, refrigerators, microwave ovens and other appliances, cell phones, laptops, motorcycles, cars and pickups, European housing materials, water storage tanks, larger numbers of fine mats, and capital for investing in local businesses.

As a result of the widening network of potential remitters abroad, continuing demand in the islands and abroad, the increased cost of living in the islands, and the increasing cost of remittances and *fa'alavelave*, often paid for in currency rather than in kind, there is now widespread concern among migrants that they may not be able to meet their obligations to give generously and without complaint. In the 1980s, one Samoan church in Auckland was already using a social worker to help families struggling to balance their limited household resources and increasingly costly *fa'alavelave*. Debt and financial hardship were becoming problems for Samoan families abroad as well as in the islands.

Janes (1990) found considerable ambivalence about *fa'alavelave* in his study of Samoan migrants in the San Francisco Bay area. Only a small minority of the Samoans interviewed approved of *fa'alavelave* without question, and most had "serious reservations" when continual demands impinged on limited household resources (Janes 1990, 101). Yet very few Samoans refused to contribute something when requested, and many were proud of their support. Lower-income Samoans felt more "trapped" between ceremonial obligations and household necessities than others. As one vulnerable Samoan put it, "When they bring all this *fa'a-Sāmoa* the families suffer. Many people learn to hate their culture because it makes them poor" (Janes 1990, 106).

Ilana Gershon (2012) also described the gap between the ideal of generosity inherent in *fa'alavelave* and the reality of limited household incomes among the Samoans she spoke with in New Zealand and the United States in 1996–1997. She noted that they were "frequently telling me how frustrated and trapped they felt, how *fa'alavelave* had gotten out of control since migration . . . Because *fa'alavelave* are financially draining, my interlocutors have mixed feelings about participating in them" (Gershon 2012, 39). While they felt strongly that *fa'alavelave* obligations must be met, they "experience these demands as one set among many—none of which can ever be satisfactorily met without serious consequences in other neglected areas" (Gershon 2012, 41). That is, they are "torn

between using limited resources for their own household and supporting their extended family” (Gershon 2012, 41).

As a result, Samoans have tried to find ways of avoiding the financial burdens of fa‘alavelave. For example,

Those receiving requests will often practice strategic ignorance, such as ignoring early morning phone calls so that they don’t have to send money home to build the village church. They use small moments of private communicative failures to mitigate family financial pressures . . . They must be quite judicious about using various techniques to funnel resources haltingly and gradually into the maw of Samoan exchanges. After all, every failure risks family or community disapproval of not being truly Samoan (Gershon 2012, 45)

Nevertheless, Gershon found that in private conversation, “Everyone spoke to me about the burdens of the Samoan exchange system—from chiefs and ministers to elders and teenagers” (2012, 46). It was not just the amount of money involved, but the possible misappropriation of funds by family members and church officials, a not uncommon occurrence. Personal temptation sometimes undermined the strong sense of family obligation (O’Meara 1990: 168–169).

The cost of lavish fa‘alavelave could run into the many tens of thousands of dollars and more, with events costing thousands of dollars being quite common. Conversations about the escalating costs of fa‘alavelave, once private, were becoming public. The situation in Sāmoa was so problematic that it became a topic of concern in official Samoan circles, newspapers, and social media. The Prime Minister of Sāmoa spoke out about how fa‘alavelave had become prohibitively expensive and suggested ways that costs could be reduced. Some villages banned imported tinned beef and fish from ceremonial events (Macpherson and Macpherson 2009a, 95). Some chiefs and churches tried to implement broad reforms to reduce the amounts exchanged. The problem, however, was that families reducing contributions or withdrawing from fa‘alavelave could lose status and reputation within the village political system. Participation remains vital for access to titles, land, and other resources. Migrant sons and daughters withholding support from their parents in the islands would not only be betraying them in a most personal way, there could be potential political, social, and economic consequences as well. For these reasons, they could not afford to not participate (O’Meara 1990, 215).

A very public discussion about the costs of fa‘alavelave occurred in 2009 when a delegation of more than thirty Samoan chiefs and orators from the islands visited Auckland to participate in two unprecedented public meetings about the financial burdens of fa‘alavelave that were causing severe hardship at

home and abroad. In public, people talked about taking out high interest loans from marginal financial institutions to cover their extensive obligations to kin in New Zealand and the islands; there were also suggestions that these obligations were leading some Samoans to engage in fraud and crime. About 1,500 people attended the two meetings, and the discussion continued on talk radio, on-line, in Samoan newspapers, and on the street. One T-shirt read; I LOVE MY ĀIGA, BUT I HATE FA'ALAVELAVE (Gough 2009, 139).

Samoans abroad and in the islands increasingly view fa'alavelave in a selective and contingent manner; they are often conflicted about participation based on monetary considerations. Support for and participation in fa'alavelave are not uniform and depend on a number of factors: the permanent or temporary status of the migrants, whether they plan to return home, the number of fa'alavelave they are expected to participate in and at what levels, and their available resources, among other considerations. Thus, the moral economy of giving is being compromised by new economic and political arrangements at home and abroad, and in the process important aspects of Samoan culture are being reworked.

Are Fa'alavelave Wasteful?

In recent decades Samoans themselves have become vocal in their public questioning and criticism of fa'alavelave. Yet Lilomaiava-Doktor faults "[s]cholars and development experts such as Connell (1990) or Shankman (1976) [who] have often described *fa'alavelave* as a customary practice that squanders economic gains and resources. Blaming *fa'alavelave* for the lack of economic development reflects a failure to understand different values and multiple purposes set within this particular cultural milieu" (2009a, 19). This statement is inaccurate. Based on fieldwork in 1969–1970 in the islands, I offered a discussion of the view that Samoan wealth redistribution is counterproductive followed by a description of the actual economic and social context in which this kind of redistribution then occurred (Shankman 1976: 44–48). Contrary to Lilomaiava-Doktor, I concluded that such redistribution is "not necessarily wasteful given the context in which it occurs" (Shankman 1976, 48; see also O'Meara 1990: 210–211). Migration has provided a new context for fa'alavelave, and this may be why Samoans themselves are increasingly concerned about what fa'alavelave have become.

Lilomaiava-Doktor stresses the ideological significance of *vā*, noting that generosity fulfills social and political objectives and that the expectation of participation is paramount (2009b, 80). However, she minimizes the dilemmas posed by the competing responsibilities that Samoans face. Expectations about generosity and participation do not necessarily reflect how and when participation in fa'alavelave will actually occur. In the 1970s, Karla Rolff conducted research among a small community of Samoans in southern California, asking,

“What causes some [Samoans] to drop out of these mutual aid and prestige networks that are set up through participation in *fa’alavelave*?” (Rolff 1978, 25). She reported that,

Out of fifty-seven Samoan and part-Samoan households, I obtained income data on twenty-eight and found a strong correlation between income and participation in *fa’alavelave*. Those with the lowest income were invariably involved in *fa’alavelave* activities, and the higher the income, the greater was the likelihood that people had moved away from *fa’a-Sāmoa* activities . . . Those who are economically secure don’t have to depend on the services informally provided by kinsmen (car repairing, plumbing, etc.); they can pay for these services . . . Summing up, I would say that some Samoans participate in the *fa’a-Sāmoa* for the traditional prestige it offers, but, aside from that, many participate in the *fa’a-Sāmoa* because their economic situation leaves them no alternative [(1978: 25–27); see also O’Meara (1990, 215)]

Does Permanent Migration Abroad Reduce Remittances to Sāmoa?

Samoan migrants weigh their commitments to tradition with the resources they have at hand. They also weigh commitments in their new homelands with their commitments to relatives in the islands. Given these multiple commitments, can migrants sustain high levels of remittances sent to the islands over time? Lilomaiva-Doktor believes they can and do, criticizing my research and alleging that,

. . . in the 1970s economic anthropologist Paul Shankman predicted that sending remittances back to Sāmoa would taper off the longer migrants stayed away (1976). In the 1990s, he observed that they had not done so . . . (2009a, 17)

This criticism is misleading because Lilomaiva-Doktor does not distinguish, as I did, between permanent migrants who may send fewer remittances on a regular basis the longer they have been abroad and temporary migrants who are more reliable over the short term (Shankman 1976: 59–60). The relevant passage noted that:

Apart from major events such as funerals, weddings, and church openings, migrants permanently overseas were under less pressure to remit or otherwise participate in village activities than temporary migrants and

migrants residing in other parts of Sāmoa. The fact of secure employment in New Zealand, or at worst adequate welfare, has led permanent migrants to become less oriented to village life and less committed to returning to it. They are prepared to fulfill their *āiga* obligations, but distance and relative wealth in New Zealand have made village commitments less intense. This may help explain why the longer a permanent migrant is in New Zealand, the less likely he or she is to send remittances on a regular basis, although most permanent migrants do send small money orders on an infrequent basis (Shankman 1976, 60)

Temporary migrants, whose stays overseas were short term, were more reliable remitters precisely because they were certain to return to the islands. Permanent migrants, on the other hand, may remit less and less regularly over a period of years, although they would contribute to a major family or church event or the rebuilding of homes in the case of a tsunami or hurricane. (Brown et al. 2014; Le De et al. 2015). While permanent migrants often rhapsodized about the ease of village life and spoke of the desirability of return to Sāmoa (Pitt and Macpherson 1974, 19), they rarely planned to move back to the islands on a permanent basis (Macpherson 1985; Shankman 1993). In a study of New Zealand-based migrants, Muliaina (2009) noted that of sixty Samoans interviewed, only one was planning a permanent return. In their study of 390 Samoan migrants in Australia, Ahlburg and Brown (1998) found that only 10 percent of their sample planned to return to Sāmoa on a permanent basis; far fewer would actually return. However, those who did plan to return remitted significantly more than those who did not.

Over time, permanent migrants abroad, mostly single young men and women, eventually married (often to non-Samoans), formed their own families, and participated in their own overseas communities and churches that required their own systems of support. As regular remittances to the islands from permanent migrants diminished, families in the islands sent more sons and daughters to supplement and/or replace declining remittances (O'Meara 1990, 113). Second and third generation sons and daughters of earlier migrants also tended to send fewer remittances to Sāmoa while spending resources on *fa'alavelave* in their new homelands (Macpherson and Macpherson 2009b, 87). Both trends, in addition to the increasing cost of living in the islands, reinforced the need in the islands for more migration and remittances.

Recent studies have provided a more sophisticated understanding of remittance-sending patterns. Macpherson (1992) discussed the structural and demographic factors that could lead to declining remittances, and his careful study of several Samoan families in New Zealand (Macpherson 1994) demonstrated a decline in the proportion of household income sent as remittances over time;

Macpherson also reviewed a number of possible factors that led to this decline. Brown's large-scale, quantitative study of Samoan remitters in Australia found that in a twelve-month sampling period, the proportion of the Samoan migrant population remitting was 75.3 percent among Samoan-born households in contrast to 55.6 percent of New Zealand-born Samoan households, with Samoan-born remitters remitting at much higher levels (Brown 1998, 125). Brown also found that over time, the percentage of Samoan households that did remit declined over five-year intervals for the first twenty-five years of absence; however, after twenty-five years, remittance participation markedly increased as did remittances (Brown 1998, 126). Furthermore, controlling for a number of variables among remitters, Brown found no evidence of overall remittance decay (Brown 1998, 135).

The Macphersons have done additional work on intergenerational remittance sending as part of a longitudinal study of over 2,000 Pacific women who gave birth in Auckland hospitals during a twelve-month period in the late 1990s. They found a decline in remittances to the islands as new generations of Samoans abroad recalibrated their obligations (Macpherson and Macpherson 2009b; see also Muliaina 2009). New Zealand-born Samoan women and their partners continued to support their families in the islands, but at much reduced levels because their immediate families and most significant relatives were in New Zealand in many cases.

These young Samoan couples were in the early phases of family formation and had very limited discretionary incomes. Support for their families was often in kind and took the form of providing childcare, nursing sick parents, housing relatives, and arranging travel for kin. Many young married women stated that connections with their parents' villages were attenuated and a low priority when it came to allocating resources. Furthermore, while children of migrants might contribute to their parents' gifts to their natal villages while their parents were alive, after their parents' deaths they often had neither the motivation nor the knowledge of the mechanics of giving to remain involved in remitting to Sāmoa (see also Muliaina 2009).

A further possible reason for declining intergenerational participation in island-based *fa'alavelave* is that fluency in the Samoan language is declining. In 2013 only 56 percent of Samoans in New Zealand spoke Samoan fluently (Fuimaono 2017, 96), making the second and third generation Samoans abroad less likely to fully understand the linguistic protocols involved in some kinds of *fa'alavelave* and therefore less likely to be able to fully participate in these events.

Were Remittances “Pointless”?

In recent decades, larger remittances and the changing Samoan economy have altered the way remittances are spent, allowing more funds for capital

investment as well as for traditional obligations such as fa'alavelave. Lilomaiava-Doktor may not have appreciated this change, arguing that:

. . . with his [Shankman's] emphasis on capital investment, the remittances seemed pointless: The sums remitted were usually not large enough for investment in large-scale capital development or capital equipment, nor was there much incentive to invest (Shankman 1993, 163) (2009a, 17)

Here Lilomaiava-Doktor neglects the historical context of remittance-sending patterns and economic conditions in Sāmoa.⁵ In the 1960s and 1970s, relatively small sums of remittances made a major difference in household cash incomes where incomes were very low (Pirie 1976; Shankman 1976). These small sums were not sufficient for large-scale capital development or capital equipment even if such opportunities were available. Because remittances were sent in mostly small sums in the 1960s and 1970s and because Europeans and part-Samoans dominated the commercial sectors of the Samoan economy, it would have been difficult for most Samoans to use them for capital investment even if they had wished to do so (Pitt 1970; Shankman 1976: 44–48; Kallen 1982).

Nevertheless, remittances were quickly becoming the largest source of personal cash income for Samoans and a major share of national income. By 1992, remittances were two-thirds of Sāmoa's gross domestic product (Brown 1998, 124), not including nonmonetary remittances. So remittances were hardly "pointless" either then or now. As Lilomaiava-Doktor herself observed, remittances had a "profound effect on the nation" (2004, 245). Indeed, they were a major reason that parents sent and continue to send their sons and daughters abroad. And they were the reason that Samoan officials of the period used the phrase, "People are our most valuable export." In more recent decades, a new political and economic environment and larger remittances have allowed larger scale capital investments by Samoans as well as traditional expenditures on fa'alavelave, and these new investments have significant implications for local development (Brown and Ahlburg 1999, 341; Connell 2015).

Migration, Remittances, and the "Dominant Development Discourse"

In her writing about Samoan migration and remittances, Lilomaiava-Doktor found that a fundamental problem with earlier studies was that they reflected a "dominant development discourse" involving a Euro-American economic model that minimized Samoans' own ideas about development. Yet a brief history of development discourses used in the islands demonstrates that the study

of Samoan migration and remittances emerged in *response* to and as an *alternative* to conventional development approaches (Shankman 1976: 23–29).

In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the most significant development discourse was associated with agricultural development in the context of the movement for political independence that spread throughout the South Pacific. On the eve of Samoan independence in 1962, there was a great deal of practical concern about the economic future of this newly independent state, the first of its kind in the South Pacific. While Sāmoa was politically advanced, observers were concerned that the Samoan economy, then based largely on village agriculture, would not be able to support its rapidly growing population. Agricultural exports were the islands' top income earner at the time, and they became its most important development priority. A development discourse emerged with policies and programs to promote village agricultural development that, theoretically, would stimulate autonomous growth in the national economy.

Yet it soon became apparent that village agricultural development was far less successful in improving local incomes than migration and remittances. Samoans themselves, migrating overseas in large numbers, became the source of a changing narrative about development. Studies of migration and remittances challenged standard theories that had focused on agricultural development by examining how Samoans were actually increasing their household incomes and, in turn, the national income of Sāmoa. This approach provided a *critique* of the dominant development discourse, mainstream development theory, and programs that were out of touch with the realities of the small, newly independent island states. In Sāmoa, the kinds of ties that the islands and its people were developing with the wider world, especially migration and remittances, worked against formal agricultural development programs while unintentionally reinforcing international migration.

At the family and individual level, migration and remittances were a solution to the lack of opportunities in the islands; Samoan families and individuals recognized new opportunities and took advantage of them. Migration and remittances were also part of the islands' increasingly dependent relationship with the wider world. Newer forms of dependency such as tourism, off-shore banking, foreign aid, and external loans have complicated the islands' economic profile (Shankman 1990, 2018). Today these forms of dependency, especially large loans from China that cannot easily be repaid, have placed Sāmoa and several other Pacific nations in a vulnerable position.

Conclusion

In the study of migration and remittances, both indigenous and external perspectives are important. This point is hardly new or original (Abu-Lughod

1975; Jones and Richter 1981) and may seem unworthy of extended discussion except for Lilomaiava-Doktor's critique of earlier research. In 1976, I made this point in a discussion of research methods for a study of Samoan migration and remittances. In economic anthropology during the 1960s and early 1970s, microanalytic approaches similar to Lilomaiava-Doktor's approach were common, focusing on local social and cultural factors. As I commented,

While this approach has helped to correct some misconceptions, it can lead to a selective avoidance of the *sources* of change at the national and international levels. The anthropological emphasis on 'tradition' and village studies has sometimes obscured the importance of colonial practice, government policy, and world finance in the shaping of economic trends. . . . Neither micro-analytic or macro-analytic approaches are sufficient in themselves; both should be employed (1976, 3)

To encourage more synthetic scholarship, I suggested an approach to the study of migration (1) that recognized the different kinds of ties between local, national, and international levels; (2) that gave economic factors that same explicit treatment as social, cultural, and noneconomic factors; and (3) that employed historical and comparative perspectives (Shankman 1976, 3). It is not clear why Lilomaiava-Doktor finds such an approach "wrongheaded" and "simplistic" or why, in this context, her approach seems "better." Many of the studies cited in this article have found both indigenous and external approaches useful, contributing to a set of findings about migration and remittances that continues to be explored in more contemporary research.

Current researchers should be able to account for trends in Samoan migration and remittances as well as understanding their meanings. A number of the trends that Lilomaiava-Doktor has identified concerning the nature and direction of Samoan movement require qualification. She states that Samoan conceptions about mobility promote a pattern of circular movement that, in turn, strengthens connectedness between families at home and abroad through participation in fa'alavelave. Yet her focus on vā minimizes the economic motivations that Samoans themselves offer as reasons for migration. Her emphasis on circular movement neglects the direction and magnitude of permanent overseas migration that is strongly influenced by economic and political factors as well as cultural and social motivations. The attention that she gives to strengthening ties among Samoan families in the diaspora neglects ties between family members that may be attenuated and weakened as well. There have also been conflicting perceptions about and commitments to participation in fa'alavelave as the Samoan moral economy is being reworked; participation itself is now being openly questioned. And there has been an intergenerational decline in remittances to the islands.

To her credit, in a brief comment Lilomaiava-Doktor has recently proposed that, “A concerted effort at longitudinal studies of island communities at home and abroad, along with a deliberate mix of inside and outside perspectives, would produce more nuanced conceptual approaches” (2015, 92). This statement aligns her thinking more closely with work that she previously criticized. And such longitudinal studies already exist in the literature on Pacific migration. Wessen et al.’s long-term study of Tokelauan migration to New Zealand (Wessen et al. 1992) and Small’s long-term study of Tongan migration to the United States (Small 2011) are two such studies that support trends documented in this article.

Among the best of these long-term studies is the Macphersons’ examination of Samoan migration to New Zealand (2009a), addressing the relationship between local and global processes, as well as the nature and direction of change in the islands. Their findings are also relevant to Lilomaiava-Doktor’s interest in cultural continuity and change. The Macphersons readily acknowledge the dynamism of Samoan tradition that has enabled Samoan culture to absorb a considerable degree of change. Nevertheless, they caution that,

[t]he danger of focusing on these comparatively resilient elements of tradition . . . is that it distracts attention from others that are nowhere near as secure: tradition itself may look unassailable when certain contemporary expressions of it are discussed, but it is clear that much has changed and much has gone forever (2009a, 182, see also 2009a: 185–189)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Cluny and La’ava Macpherson for sharing their research with me. I also have benefitted from comments on an earlier draft of this article by Cluny Macpherson, John Connell, and anonymous reviewers for this journal. Of course, they are not responsible for its content. I would also like to collectively thank the numerous scholars and Samoans who have contributed to my understanding of migration and remittances.

ENDNOTES

1. I have used Lilomaiava-Doktor’s orthography for Samoan vocabulary throughout this article.

2. This article is specifically concerned with Lilomaiava-Doktor’s approach to Samoan migration and remittances rather than indigenous scholarship more broadly.

3. Studies using transnational perspectives make this point in different ways (Cohen 2001; Spoonley, Bedford, and Macpherson 2003; Lee 2009; Barcham, Scheyvens, and Overton 2009).

4. A version of this section previously appeared in Shankman (2018).

5. Lilomaiva-Doktor states that Shankman “missed the importance Samoans give to meeting the everyday needs of families and to maintaining *vā*” (2009a, 17). A chapter on ‘A Village and Its Remittances’ (Shankman 1976: 51–84) may serve as a reply to this allegation.

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