Searching for the Good Life: Samoan International Migration

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Introduction

Samoans are noted for their political conservatism and the resilience of their culture in the face of modern changes during the last 200 years. But this has not caused them to shun the world around them. In fact, the opposite is true: Samoans have always wondered about what the rest of the world looked like and, therefore, during the early period of European contact (1820s onwards) there was no shortage of volunteers who sought employment as crew members on whalers and trading vessels owned, operated and captained by *papalagi*. They went overseas and observed: some settled in overseas countries, like America and Australia, while others returned home, like Siovili, the millenarian cult leader, and told their fellow Samoans what they saw overseas.

The Samoans had a very developed social system, often called the *faa-matai*, as well as a religious system centred in the worship of dead ancestors who were incarnated in fish, animals, birds, insects, sun, moon, stars, lightning, trees and rocks, a form of worship referred to by Edward Tylor, the father of modern English anthropology, as animism. But what they did not have was the possession of European goods, such as steel knives and axes, blue beads for ornaments, food such as corned beef and weapons such as swords and guns. And they were determined to find ways of obtaining these. One notable way was, of course, learning the Evangelical missionaries’ alphabet. The ability to read and write was regarded as giving one magical powers, such as the power to attract the scarce goods of the Europeans. Hence, the national obsession with education and the desire to convert to Christianity.

The other main means to acquiring European possessions was, of course, migration but since this was difficult to do, given the constraints imposed by the colonial powers concerning the movements of the colonised, as well as the widespread scarcity of financial resources needed to pay fares and settling in expenses in a foreign country, the migration option was never a major consideration amongst Samoans until the 1950s. This was the period when Samoan international migration on a massive scale took place as a result of new social and political developments.

In this paper, I provide the background to this international movement, the reasons for it and certain effects which followed. I deal with the three main host countries for Samoan migration, namely, United States, New Zealand and Australia but I will emphasise the Australian data because Australia is where I carried out my in-depth study of Samoan migrants in the nineties. While that may be so, I also believe that the Samoan migrant experience in Australia is not much different from other Samoan migrant experiences in the United States and New Zealand, at least in the initial stages of settlement in those countries. Australia is also of great interest to us because it is the most recent major destination area for Samoan migrants and, therefore, a most valuable resource for
scholars in terms of acquiring knowledge about the construction of new migrant communities, personalities and identities.

I note that the theme for this particular session is "International Migration of Labour and Human Trafficking: Marginalized Migrants?" I will talk about international migration but since there is not much evidence about human trafficking or marginalisation of Samoan migrants in general, there is little to say about these matters except to say that Samoan migration, is much more often the result of family decisions rather than of any surreptitious attempt at "human trafficking" and that "marginalisation" in the host country is more often the result of individual failure to adapt rather than that of discriminatory practices in the system. In fact, more often than not, Samoans have integrated well into the culture of their host countries but at the same time maintaining their ethnic identity as Samoans, expressed in the form of Samoan forms of worship (tapua'iga), reciprocal gift-giving and above all in the widespread use of the Samoan language.

International Migration

Before the mass movements of the early 1950s emanating firstly from American Samoa, overseas travel and migration was sporadic and largely an individual affair. I suppose the first kind of overseas traveller/temporary migrant was the adventurer, such as the Samoan shaman/taulautu Siovili or Joe Gimlet. Siovili was employed as a deck-hand on a trading vessel owned by Captain Samuel Henry, scion of a pioneer missionary to Tahiti. Through his employment on this vessel, Siovili, "in the company of a prominent Samoan chief named Teoneula... made his way south to Tonga, and from there eastward to the Society Islands" in the mid-1820s (Freeman, 1959:5). There is also evidence that he may have travelled to New South Wales on Captain Henry's ship, and possibly to Britain in a sperm whaler.

One thing is for certain, however, that while in Tahiti, he came into contact with the Mamaia Movement, the first known millenarian cult in the Pacific, and the knowledge he gained from this experience enabled him to set up a similar movement in Samoa in 1828. This movement combined elements of the traditional Samoan culture and Christianity and was such a success in Samoa in the 1830s to the 1860s that it greatly worried the English Evangelical missionaries based here. For all we know, it may have been the first Christian movement in Samoa, preceding the entry of the London Missionary Society by at least one year, may be two years.

Siovili's overseas voyages are praised in this hymn which, according to the first London Missionary Society evangelist to Samoa, John Williams, "was rendered in the manner of the dancing songs of old Samoa". The hymn was translated into English "by two runaway Englishmen, who had learnt it from the Siovilians of Atua, in eastern Upolu" (Ibid, p.7). I have taken the liberty of changing one word in the translation. Instead of "necklace" I have used the word "beautiful" to denote that "necklace" or "ula" in Samoan is being used in a metaphorical sense.
The Hymn

Dash did the ship of the two sailors through the waves.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
They two arrived at the country of Britain.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
A great Lord is the King of the Sky.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
Cry to be sent, cry to be sent.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
Siovili sailed with the ship dashing through the waves.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
And the living water is come to Eva.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
Dash did the ship of the two sailors through the waves.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
And they two arrived at Botany Bay.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
The Governor is a great king.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
Dash did the ship of the two sailors through the waves.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
The two reached the Land of Compassion.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
A great Lord is King Jehova.
Beautiful, oh so beautiful.
(Freeman, 1959: 7).

We can assume that since Siovili’s return to his village at Eva, there were probably scores of other Samoan adventurers who followed his example be enlisting as members of the crews of European trading vessels and whalers.

The Theological Student

The second class of overseas traveller/temporary migrant was the theological scholar. From the 1860s onwards, Catholic and Wesleyan theological students were being sent to Australia for advanced training in the ministry. Thus in 1863, according to Deacon (1988), 14 Samoans were studying for the priesthood at a Catholic seminary near Richmond, New South Wales. The Catholics also sent some students to a seminary in the French territory of Wallis and Futuna.

As for the London Missionary Society, Australia was an important base for missionary work in the Torres Straits islands and Papua New Guinea. Samoan pastors were first sent to allied mission centres in Sydney to prepare them for the mission fields.
Other Samoans entered Australia about this time through being adopted by European missionaries. For instance, Rev James Mills, the first LMS missionary to be based in Apia, adopted a number of Samoan children, one of whom, James Mills, became a prominent businessman in the Torres Straits in the early 1900s. He in turn brought in his other Samoan relatives to join him and lived there for the rest of their lives (Va'a, 2001).

**The Entertainer**

A third class of Samoan migrant was the professional entertainer. At the turn of the century, a group of Samoan entertainers from American Samoa was sent to perform at the World Trade Exhibition in the United States. After their performances there, many of them decided to stay behind.

During the German Administration, 1900 – 1914, Samoan entertainers were also sent to perform in Berlin but I have not been able to find if any stayed behind at the conclusion of their shows. Many of these travelling entertainment groups from Samoa were apparently organised by prominent American businessman, Harry Moors.

**Mormons/Prisoners/Affines**

The biggest classes of Samoan migrants, however, were members of the Mormon church, who had established a community in Laie, and ex-prisoners who had served their time in Hawaii.

The first substantial migration of Samoan Mormons occurred in 1919, when a group from Samoa attended the dedication of the Hawaiian temple and some of them stayed (Pierce, 1956; Stanton, 1993:26).

By 1925, there were 33 Samoans, representing six families, who were living there. By 1955, this number had increased to 300 (Pierce, 1956:20).

The Samoan ex-prisoner population who decided to stay in Hawaii after serving their jail time was between 50 and 60 in the 1920s (Alailima, 1982:105; Born, 1968: 456, in Levin, 1990:3).

A fifth class of Samoan migrant was the Samoan wives of colonial officers, American, German, or New Zealander, and their half-caste children and perhaps a few relatives. While colonial policy in both American and Western Samoa discouraged marriage between Samoans and colonial officers, marriages did take place.

Perhaps there are other classes of Samoan migrants but these were perhaps the main ones. Judged by today’s standards, they represent but a drop in the bucket compared to today’s figures but still they do represent historical landmarks in American and Independent Samoa’s so-called migration industry.
Background to Mass Migration

As I have stated before, the coming of the Europeans in the early decades of the nineteenth century was not an event that was resisted because Samoans saw the obvious advantages in possessing the Europeans' goods.

Charles Barff, who arrived in Samoa with John Williams in 1830, said the way they were treated by Samoans was much different from that given La Perouse two generations earlier. (when 13 of La Perouse's men were killed in a fight with Samoans). The pride was still there, "a kind of careless contentment was depicted in all their countenances", wrote Barff (1830), but now the interest was in things that were useful rather than gaudy, in axes, chisels, knives, and most of all in muskets. The white man had become a prodigy to be courted, and his possessions longed-for marvels (in Freeman, 1959:3).

In order to facilitate their possession of the Europeans' goods and wealth, Samoans converted to the Christian religion in their thousands in the first few decades of Christian evangelisation and almost overnight, nearly everybody had learnt to read and write.

The transition to the cash economy took much longer because there was no substantial economic infrastructure, apart from the traditional subsistence economy and limited production surpluses for gift exchanges between families. Samoan involvement in the cash economy was largely concerned with finding money, or goods such as coconut oil, for church contributions.

During colonial times, from 1900 onwards, Samoans were encouraged to participate in cash cropping activities, involving mainly the production of copra, bananas and cocoa for export and individual families did participate in these schemes. But for the most part, Samoan interest was limited to obtaining cash for their basic needs.

The Second World War, however, was to change all that. Thousands of U.S. marines, GIs, airmen and Seabees converged on the Samoan islands firstly to defend the group and secondly to train soldiers destined for the front line, such as Guadalcanal.

The display of wealth resulting from the American presence and the generation of job opportunities for hundreds of American and Western Samoans of both sexes boosted the local economy to levels never reached before. According to Pierce, at this time, it "became possible for almost any Samoan to make large sums of money" (1956:24f).

When the Americans left at the end of the war, however, the employment market in both Samoas collapsed leading, as I will show later, to disastrous consequences, especially in American Samoa with its limited land resources.

However, the American presence led once and for all to the dominant position of the cash economy, at least in the hearts of the Samoan people, and to rising expectations that have continued to this day.
Migration to the United States

By the early 1950s, a deep economic recession hit both Samoas, in part due to the depression in the employment market caused directly by the withdrawal of American troops. But other factors were also at play. For instance in late 1951 and early 1952, a drought accompanied by high winds ruined many crops on which people depended for food, and a crippling shipping strike in the USA cut off trade. The situation was further exacerbated by a 46.7 per cent increase in the American Samoan population, caused by an influx of Western Samoans seeking employment (Pierce, 1956:26; Forster, 1954:23-25).

It is widely agreed, however, that the most significant factor contributing to the recession in American Samoa was the US decision to transfer the administration of the territory from the US Navy to the Interior Department, which became effective 1 July, 1951. This was due to the fact that many American Samoans owned their jobs to the US Navy and the departure of the US Navy meant unemployment (Va’a, 2001:58). Thus, when the Navy offered to transport intending migrants to the US in 1952, the response resulted in a stampede for places on Navy vessels.

This offer occurred later. For the process of moving large numbers of people to the US had actually started in 1947 when the Navy allowed a contingent of Samoans to migrate to Hawaii, but only 150 of them stayed there, the other 102 going off to San Francisco, mostly to seek a better education (Emery, 1976:10).

Between November, 1947, and March, 1950, some 474 Samoans purchased letters of identity, which served in lieu of passports, and either settled abroad or joined the armed forces (Lewthwaite et al, 1973: 134).

The third stage began on 25 June, 1951, when the last scheduled Navy transport, the General R.L. Howze, left Pago Pago for Hawaii with the remnant of the Fitafita Guard and 100 other former Navy personnel of Samoan ancestry, plus a few dependants (Eyde, 1954; Forster, 1954; Lewthwaite et al, 1973: Pierce, 1956; Yost, 1965).

By 1952, then, most of the Navy’s military dependants were already in Hawaii but not their families. So the Navy, under pressure from Navy personnel already working in Pearl Harbour, dispatched the USS President Jackson to transport to bring their wives, children and close relatives to Hawaii.

But there was still room on the ship, so the Navy made the offer to take more people who would join the armed forces or who could find a sponsor in Hawaii. Moreover these had to undergo a physical examination, produce evidence of birth in American Samoa and lack of a criminal record (Forster, 1954:23-25). Moreover, they had to pay a fare of $30 each (Pierce, 1956:20-21).

The response was overwhelming. Almost 1,000 Samoans applied for passage. Some researchers put the number at 958, of whom 458 were naval dependants, 218 were
recruits for the military and 282 were civilians (Va’a, 2001:59). The Navy looked after its own dependants, while others relied on the hospitality of the Samoan community in downtown Honolulu and especially at the Mormon village at Laie (Yost, 1965; Pierce, 1956).

But this was not all. In 1953, farm labour contractors hired hundreds of Samoans to work in California. Their families also joined them. Still others were taken aboard by yachts, accepted the limited space afforded by the coast-guard vessel on its annual visit, or sailed on the Matson Lines (Lewthwaite et al, 1973: 135-136).

Thus the period from 1947 to 1953 saw hundreds of Samoans leave the territory for the United States, mostly for Hawaii where relatives or acquaintances were already living. From there, they spread eastwards, principally to the coastal cities of San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle.

The pattern was set for waves of future migration. Between 2 November, 1947, and 30 June, 1956, 2,461 Samoans had migrated to the United States. Between the censuses of 25 September, 1956, and 1 April, 1960, a further 4,000 had migrated to the United States. If the 2,000 who migrated from 1950 to 1956 are added, then over 6,000 Samoans migrated to the USA during the decade from 1950 to 1960 (Va’a, 2001:59).

The effects of such mass migration on the territory were positive. Population growth steadied, even dropped from 20,154 in 1956 to 20,051 in 1960, at a time of high Polynesian birth rates, elsewhere (Lewthwaite et al, 1973:138).

Since the 1950s, there has been a gradual shift of the Samoan population from Hawaii to the state of California. In the 1980 census, for instance, there were 18,087 Samoans in California, compared with 14,349 in Hawaii. Ten years later (1990), the corresponding total was 31,917 for California compared with 15,034 for Hawaii (Va’a, 2001).

According to the 1990 census, 62,964 Samoans lived in the USA, forming the second largest ethnic group from the Pacific islands. Hawaiians had the largest with 211,014. Other large ethnic groups were Guamanians, 49,345; Tongans, 17,606; and Fijians, 7,036 (Ibid, p.60). Unfortunately, I have been unable to obtain the latest statistics from the 2,000 census. But this will be remedied in due course.

Migration to New Zealand

Unlike American Samoa, migration from Western Samoa was more a post-colonial development than a colonial attempt to come to terms with a change in internal colonial policy. Where the mass migration from American Samoa in the early 1950s was seen as an attempt by the U.S. Navy to take care of its own dependants, migration from Western Samoa in the period just before independence in 1962, ten years later, and subsequently, must be seen as a colonial attempt at reconciliation with its former colony.
In my opinion, however, it was not the result of an attempt to make amends for the past, though that would have certainly been in order, but of a forward looking policy characteristic of colonial powers at the conclusion of a period of colonial rule. This was namely the attempt to maintain close ties with the possibility of influencing post-colonial developments. That is, the former colonial rulers still had a vested interest in influencing the policies of their former colonies, a phenomenon often described as “neo-colonialism”.

Samoan migration to New Zealand probably dates back to World War One, when New Zealand militiamen seized control of Western Samoa from Germany. Intermarriage between Samoan women and New Zealand soldiers and public servants thereafter led to a progressive movement of children, wives and their relatives to New Zealand.

Samoans who served in the British colonial forces during World War I and World War II may also have settled in New Zealand and later wealthy European and part-European businessmen and planters from Western Samoa sent their children to be educated in New Zealand schools but numbers were few.

In 1916, the Samoan population in New Zealand comprised 12 persons; in 1921, 164; in 1936, 362; in 1945, 716; in 1951, 1,336; in 1956, 3,740; in 1962, 6,481.

The small numbers of migrants reflect government policy and the economic realities of the time. Most of the migrants before 1955 were Samoan relatives of New Zealand citizens. As long as they behaved themselves, they were left alone, even if they arrived on temporary permits.

After 1955, with independence looming, more Samoans entered New Zealand. For instance, from 1939 to 1954, an average of 24 Samoans per year were granted permanent visas. In 1955 alone, 171 Samoans were granted similar privileges and numbers continued to increase substantially, 287 in 1956, 341 in 1957, 431 in 1958, 475 in 1959 and 360 in 1960.

The increase in the number of migrants to New Zealand was probably due to the uncertainty created in the minds of Samoans about the best place to realise their economic opportunities. For many, New Zealand was the preferred option.

Thus, since 1955, the next major increase in the number of Samoan migrants to New Zealand occurred from April, 1961, to March, 1962, when 819 Samoans travelled to New Zealand under the Continuing Residence Scheme, compared with 360 in 1960. Thereafter, migrant numbers remained relatively steady, with some periods of sudden rises and falls.

Most dramatically, from 747 permanent migrants in 1980/81, the numbers increased to 4,082 in 1988/89, reflecting attempts by New Zealand to compensate for shortfalls or oversupplies of Samoan migrants according to quota levels agreed between the New Zealand and Samoan governments in 1967 and 1970 (Va’a, 2001). In 1970, the migrant quota from Samoa to New Zealand was set at 1,100, and this remains true today.
The quota system does not commit New Zealand to admit the full quota of migrants; it merely sets the ceiling on how many can migrate under the system in any given year. However, any shortfalls are usually accommodated under other categories, such as family reunion and humanitarian reasons (Ibid, p. 65). From 1967 to 1991, for instance, the actual number of Samoan permanent migrants to New Zealand totalled 33,729, compared with 28,500 required under the quota system. Unfortunately at this stage, I have been unable to obtain the figures from 1991 onwards.

The above figures do not include those for overstayers. According to figures from the New Zealand Immigration Office, there 5,714 Samoan overstayers in New Zealand as of 25 January, 1989, as compared with 8,288 as of 2 November, 1990 (Va’a 2001:65).

At the moment, Samoan pressure groups are trying to influence New Zealand government policy in giving Samoans a preferred status with regard to migration to New Zealand but the author believes the present system will continue indefinitely as long as current arrangements are satisfactory to both parties.

Migration to Australia:

The earliest Samoans to have visited Australia were probably those hired as deck-hands by the captains of sailing vessels that visited Samoa in the 1820s and even earlier. These vessels were involved mainly in the trading and whaling industries of the period. The Samoan sailors generally did not intend to settle overseas, being more curious about the economies and cultures of countries visited, such as Australia and England, and bring back with them new information about those countries to their kin at home. A typical example of this type of sailor is the historical character called Siovili, as mentioned earlier.

With the establishment of the Christian denominations in Samoa, the London Missionary Society in 1830, the Wesleyan Church in 1835, and the Catholic Church in 1845, a new kind of Samoan migration to Australia took place, this time of missionaries and theological students. Australia was the regular stopping place for Samoan missionaries of the London Missionary Society on their way to mission fields in the Torres Straits and Papua New Guinea.

With the resumption of the Wesleyan mission in Samoa in 1857, Samoan missionaries went to Australia for training and work (Deacon, 1988). And the Catholics also sent some of their theological students to Australia for training. Thus in 1863, 14 Samoans were studying for the priesthood at a Catholic seminary near Richmond, New South Wales.

About this time also, Samoan children of mixed marriages were being sent to Australia for their education. One of these, the famous Emma Coe, daughter of a Samoan princess and American settler, is a typical example. These movements were not substantial because restricted only to certain classes of people, namely the rich people of the time. Thus by 1901, there were 85 Samoans in Australia, 124 in 1911 and 109 in 1921.
few enter under the other categories, such as "independent", "concessional" or "preferential".

In terms of the overall Western Samoan-born population of Australia, there were 259 in 1976 (compared with 109 in 1921), 781 in 1981 (an increase of 201.5%), 2,994 in 1986 (an increase of 283.4%) and 5,742 in 1991 approximately a year before the start of my field work (an increase of 91.8%). These figures do not include New Zealand and Australian-born, second generation Samoans.

Well over 50 per cent of the Western Samoan-born population live in the state of New South Wales. Thus in the 1986 census, 1,695 or 56.6 per cent of the Western Samoan-born out of a total population lived in New South Wales. The corresponding figure for 1991 was 3,192 or 55.6 per cent out of a total population of 5,742. The rest of the Western Samoan-born were distributed among the other states and territories.

The great majority of Western Samoan-born persons in New South Wales live in the Sydney metropolitan area in a Y-shaped corridor which stretches from inner Sydney to Canterbury/Bankstown, Liverpool and Campbelltown in a south-westerly direction, and from inner Sydney to Blacktown in a north-westerly direction. The main reasons for these settlement patterns involve, firstly, availability of jobs, secondly, availability of subsidised state housing and thirdly ease of transportation between margin and centre (Inner City) through the availability of freeways.

The area chosen for my field research in 1992-1993 was the statistical region making up the two municipalities of Canterbury and Bankstown and which have the largest concentration of Western Samoan-born persons in Sydney since the early 1980s. In 1986, for instance, this region had a Western Samoan-born population of 326, compared with 227 for Inner Sydney, 156 for Hunter, 123 for Fairfield/Liverpool, and so on. In the 1991 census, the Canterbury municipality or local government area had a Western Samoan-born population of 513 (254 males and 259 females). Bankstown was fifth place with 193 persons (93 males and 100 females). The breakdown of the 1996 census is still to be taken into consideration but I do not expect to see any major alteration in pattern, as yet. But the combined Western Samoan-born population of Canterbury/Bankstown in 1991 was 706, more than any other statistical region.

The Sample Survey:

A lot of my information about Samoan migrants in Sydney came from a survey involving 137 Samoan families in Canterbury/Bankstown. The sample population consisted of 735 persons, of whom 396, 200 males and 196 females, or 54%, were born in Western Samoa; 223 persons, or 30 per cent, were born in New Zealand; 102 persons, or 14 per cent, were born in Australia and 14 persons, or 2 per cent, were born elsewhere. By comparison, the Western Samoan-born population for Canterbury/Bankstown in the 1991 census was 706 persons, made up of 347 males, or 49.2 per cent, and 359 females, or 50.8 per cent. In the sample, 50.5 per cent of the male population and 49.5 per cent of the female population are Western Samoan-born. In the 1991 census, 49.2 per cent of the
Western Samoan-born population of Canterbury/Bankstown are male and 50.8 per cent female. The difference in the sex ratios between the sample and census figures is therefore very minimal.

Research findings indicate that Samoan migration to Australia is essentially a secondary phenomenon. That is to say, most of the Samoan migrants moved to Australia only after living for a time and acquiring their citizenship in New Zealand. Thus of the sample population of 735, a total of 255 males and 245 females or 68 per cent went to Australia from New Zealand; only 60 males and 75 females or 17 per cent entered directly from Western Samoa. The rest, 7 persons or 1 per cent, were from other countries while 102 or 14 per cent were born in Australia. Samoan migration to Australia, therefore, is of a different sort from the normal pattern, due to its secondary nature. These migrants have already spent considerable time in New Zealand, have upgraded their language and employment skills for the most part, are familiar with the social welfare bureaucracy and its ways, and palagi culture in general. In a way, they are more sophisticated than first-time migrants.

**Reasons for Migration:**

The main reason for Samoan migration to Australia is economic in nature encompassing both push and pull factors.

Push factors represent those negative aspects of life in the sending society, in this case, New Zealand. Thus, of the 59 households in the sample which reported push factors, 49 or 83 per cent said these push factors were essentially of an economic nature. The words emphasised were: scarcity of jobs (13); worsening economy (12); high cost of living (10); unemployment (6); too much faa-Samoan (3); low wages (2); restrictions on housing loans (1); difficulty in saving money (1); cut in children’s benefits (1).

Pull factors represent those positive aspects of living perceived to be available in the receiving society, such as plentiful jobs with higher pay, and more generous social welfare benefits. The majority of Western Samoan-born migrants generally saw Australia as their El Dorado, a place where they could satisfy their economic aspirations, not only for themselves and children, but also for their extended families.

Among the 120 male respondents in the sample, 47 or 39 per cent went to Australia for employment purposes, 20 or 17 per cent went to seek a better future and 7 or 6 per cent went for a holiday. The remainder went for other reasons as follows: accompany or join wife (6); family reunion (6); education/training (5); better life (5); visit (4); see new places (3); heard good reports about Australia (3); religion (3); health (2); occupation (2); likes Australia (2); and marriage, better weather than New Zealand, family migration and self-improvement (one each).

These respondents show that, as in the example of females, the number of males who went to Australia for employment purposes dropped by 14 percentage points from the 53 per cent who originally migrated to New Zealand for employment purposes to 39 per
cent. However, if seeking a better future can also be construed to mean employment, then there would actually be an increase in the number of those who migrated to Australia for employment purposes, 67 males or 56 per cent. In other words, the economic rationale which prompted the initial migration movement to New Zealand, for the vast majority of Samoan migrants, increased slightly with respect to their migration to Australia, from 1975 to the present.

In the survey many comments were recorded about Samoan migrants' reasons for wanting to migrate to Australia. Some examples, under different headings, will now be provided:

**Economic Prospects**

- A young couple stated: "We were attracted to Australia because of work and money. At that time in New Zealand, work was very scarce, we could not save, but we can do so in Australia."

- A young matai said: "Our family came here because economic prospects were better in Australia. Things were too dear in New Zealand."

- A married woman said: "We came to Australia for employment and the future welfare of the children. At that time, the New Zealand economy was bad, no jobs, children’s benefits were stopped."

**Good Reports of Australia**

- A married woman said: "My brother was already in Australia. He wrote saying Australia was better than New Zealand because things were cheaper and that jobs were plentiful and readily available. I came in 1980 and decided to stay."

- A married couple said: "We went to Wellington. We thought milk and honey flowed there. We heard they flowed in abundance in Australia. That’s why we came here in 1988."

**Like Australia**

- A young couple said: "We came to Australia in 1989 to attend a wedding. We liked it here because employment was available and things were cheaper than in Auckland. We decided to stay."

- A pensioner said his decision to move to Australia was due to a visit he made to Australia in early 1986. He liked the place, especially the warm weather and the availability of Samoan food such as taro and green bananas, and decided to stay. "It was not so much a question of money as I was already earning enough money as a bus driver in New Zealand," he said.
Curiosity

* A couple said: "We came to Australia to find out what it was like. It's just like New Zealand. However, we found that in Australia, not only could we save but we could eat better, travel to Samoa more and there were fewer faalavelave. No doubt, life in Australia is better than in New Zealand."

* A male musician said: "I came to Australia to find out possibilities because my friends said there was plenty of money here. I liked the place and then brought over the rest of my family."

Holiday

* Malo said: "In 1985 I came to Australia to tufa'o (have a holiday) and to look at the life here. I was impressed and then returned to New Zealand to sell the house I was living in with my sisters. I returned in 1986 to live permanently in Australia returning only once a month to visit my wife and children until they joined me in 1988."

* Two women who went to Australia for a holiday decided to stay, one because of the warm weather and lower cost of living, the other because of the depressed economy and unemployment in New Zealand.

Family Reunion

* A father said: "We came here because of our children. Our fourth daughter was the first to come to Australia. She wanted to move to a flat in 1985 and Upu (the mother) came to stay with her. She brought a second daughter with her. A third daughter followed soon after. By the time I arrived in November, 1985, my wife and three daughters were already here. We then decided to make Australia our home."

* Another couple decided to stay in Australia for the same reason. All their children were in Australia and it was inconvenient for their children to be constantly travelling to New Zealand to visit them. The parents, therefore, decided to settle in Australia even though they had good jobs in New Zealand.

* Finally, Tupu decided to join his elder brother in Australia because there were already too many other relatives in New Zealand, and Faavae and his wife went to Australia because Faavae's wife's brother, who was married to an Australian, wanted more of his Samoan relatives to join him in Australia.

Personal

* The personal reasons for migration offer an interesting contrast to the usual ones. Thus a former Catholic seminarian went to Australia to give himself time and quietness to reconsider his decision to enter the priesthood. By that time, he had
and in the end we all came. And it was all due to the fact our children could not get jobs in New Zealand after they left school."

Migration, a Complex Phenomenon

As stated before, a biographical study of one or several Samoan migrants would have provided depth to this type of study. But I hope that these quotes, translated from Samoan, provide an adequate background to migrants’ reasons for migration. While the economic factor in migration is paramount, other reasons must also be taken into account. In the end, what emerges is that the decision to migrate is based not on one factor alone, but a combination of these, of which one or two may predominate.

Certainly my study of Samoan migrants demonstrates this to be the case. More detailed information is available in my thesis, or book just published by the Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific. Titled, SAILI MATAGI: A Study of Samoan Migrants in Australia, the book deals with both diachronic and synchronic aspects of Samoan migration to Australia. New data from a 1999 field study has updated parts of the 1992/93 research. This new data tends to support viewpoints, especially with respect to social trends, already expressed in the earlier study.

Migrants’ accounts of the reasons for their migration to Australia are all too human and many of us can readily identify with them. Their experiences are embodied in the trope, saili matagi, used by the ancient Polynesian mariners to refer to the search for appropriate winds to take them to their desired destinations. The lapita settlers chose the right ocean winds to arrive at the heart of Polynesia, formed by the ancestral lands of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, about 4,300 B.C. This process was repeated by the Polynesians who travelled to the Marquesas from Hawaiiki, which many believe to be Samoa, about the time of Christ; by the Tahitians in their mystic journey to Hawaii in 600 A.D. and by the Maoris in their epic voyage to discover Aotearoa about 1,200 A.D.

It is this search for the right winds, or saili matagi, that characterises the soul of some of the greatest seafarers in the history of humankind, whom we now call the Polynesians. Extended to their social, economic, political and religious lives, the process of searching for the right winds, or saili matagi, continues among Samoans, as among other Polynesians, wherever they may be today.

Conclusion

Samoan international migration must be seen as firstly, a historical development which is a product of the culture itself, the desire to improve the quality of life among Samoans. It may be seen as a process which began at the time of first European contact in the late 18th century and is continuing even at the present resulting in some 2,000 Samoan soldiers fighting with US armed forces in Iraq.
Globalisation in Samoa is as old as the initial contact with Europeans when Samoans accepted Christianity, the Western educational system and bureaucratic institutions. That is why globalisation, unlike other parts of the Pacific, has been so successful in Samoa.

The problem with Samoans though is not acceptance of globalisation as such, meaning the process of interacting with other nations of the world, rich or poor, but about what aspects to accept and what to reject. This is the challenge for the future.

On the surface, it looks simple but in reality it is highly complex, given the uneveness of the playing field. Is it fair to treat equally the democratic processes and institutions of the developed and underdeveloped countries, for instance?

The answer must forever remain how can a small underdeveloped country like Samoa, with a population of only slightly over 170,000, thrive in a world dominated by the big countries of the First World? And what happens in Samoa may well have relevance in other similar countries of the world.

Bibliography


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