The Meaning of the Samoan Way of Life in the United States

YAMAMOTO, Matori

(出版者 / Publisher)
Institute of Comparative Economic Studies, Hosei University / 法政大学比較経済研究所

(雑誌名 / Journal or Publication Title)
Journal of International Economic Studies

(巻 / Volume)
15

(開始ページ / Start Page)
53

(終了ページ / End Page)
64

(発行年 / Year)
2001-02

(URL)
https://doi.org/10.15002/00002470

Journal of International Economic Studies (2001), No.15, 53-64

The Meaning of the Samoan Way of Life in the United States [1]

Matori Yamamoto
Faculty of Economics, Hosei University

Introduction

When compared with other immigrant groups in the United States, what are the characteristics of Samoans? They insist that they come to the States to 'seek a better life for themselves and better education for their children.' Many of them first came as sojourners to make money for awhile. Many of them still send remittances back home. Although they are invisible in the eyes of most Americans since they are an ultra-minority in the States, they form their own enclaves in Hawaii and in West Coast cities. Their churches are the centers for their cultural activities. In these ways, they may not be much different from other immigrant groups.

I attribute their specific characteristics as American immigrants to the fact that they come from a society where the communal way of life is still important. Although Samoans in Samoa do not have a complete subsistence economy anymore, it is only recently that a cash economy was introduced to Samoa. Immigrant Samoans still maintain large kin networks and participate in ritual exchange extensively which is supposed to be reciprocal. Generosity, the moral obligation that forces richer Samoans to help poorer Samoans is highly valued, and has formed a strong discourse for Samoan identity among immigrant Samoans. In other words, those who do not participate in reciprocal exchange and do not give much are accused of not being Samoan anymore.

I would like to discuss such generalized reciprocity based on a case study of Samoan attitudes toward participation in *fa'aSamoa* (Samoan way of life). I selected five Samoans in the same family that I have known for more than ten years. I briefly describe their life histories and discuss the meaning of extended family life, the exchange system, and the transaction with homeland Samoans for immigrant Samoans.

Brief History of Samoan Emigration

The Samoan Islands[2] are divided into two countries: Western Samoa[3] which became independent from New Zealand in 1962, and American Samoa, which is a United States Territory. Although emigration from the Western and American Samoas to New Zealand and to the United States, respectively, began before World War II, the major flow of this movement only started after the war. Western Samoa kept her close economic and political ties with New Zealand even after she became independent. Many Samoans went as labor migrants during the 1960s and early

1970s, when the flourishing New Zealand economy needed more labor and Western Samoans needed more cash income because of the growing money economy.

On the other hand, after the U. S. naval unit in Pagopago was removed and integrated into the base in Hawaii in 1951, American Samoa was nearly forgotten until heavily subsidized economic development was introduced after a decade. During that period of lack of employment, emigration to Hawaii and to the continental United States was an important economic alternative for many American Samoans. In fact, American Samoans face no immigration barriers to the United States because they are American nationals.[4] After the development of a fishing base and two canning factories in the late 1950s and 1960s, American Samoa again found herself in economic trouble, this time due to a labor shortage. It then started to attract Western Samoan and Tongan labor with wages several times higher than those in both countries.

Of the population of 46,773 in American Samoa in 1990, 14,714 were Western Samoan born (American Samoa Government, Department of Commerce, Statistics Division, 1996). There are many intermarriages between Western and American Samoans, and most families of such unions live either in American Samoa or in the United States. After the New Zealand government became less open on immigration because of its economic situation, the emigration from Western Samoa has begun to flow toward American Samoa and even toward the United States through Samoan relatives who had already migrated. Australia and Canada have also been new destinations for Western Samoan emigrants.

The New Zealand census in 1991 shows the Samoan population there as 77,000 (New Zealand Government, Department of Statistics, 1997), while the United States census in 1990 shows a Samoan population of 63,000 (Barringer, Gardner and Levin, 1993, p. 274). Most of the Samoan population in New Zealand is originally from Western Samoa. Many Samoan households in the United States also include members from Western Samoa. The populations of both Samoas are: 161,000 in Western Samoa (1991 census) (Western Samoa Government, Department of Statistics, 1991) and 47,000 in American Samoa (1990 census) (American Samoa Government, Department of Commerce, Statistics Division, 1996).[5]

Most Samoan immigrants are concentrated in urban environments in cities, such as Honolulu, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and Seattle. Because of lack of English proficiency, required qualifications, and capital resources, a large number of Samoans have taken up unskilled labor jobs, and many were suffering from unemployment under the recent severe economic situations in developed countries at around 1990 when I made the major research.

Nevertheless, their remittances are important in the Western Samoan economy. In 1990, the total private transfer of WS $ 83.6 million was the biggest source of income to the country, which had total imports of WS $ 174.6 million, while total exports earned only WS $ 19.4 million (Western Samoa Government, National Planning Office, 1992). Although we lack the same kind of data for American Samoa, we assume those remittances have some importance to certain families.

The first immigrants from American Samoa were those with the U. S. Navy, Fitafita Guard and Band[6] and their families (Forster, 1954, p. 2). Some of these immigrants soon moved to the continental United States, especially to the West Coast. At the same time, young, ambitious American Samoans enlisted in the mili-

tary services. Scholarship programs in Pagopago enabled students to study in the United States, while those who had immigrated and settled down invited younger brothers and sisters, and nephews and nieces to stay with them to seek their own future. Quite a few immigrant Samoan wives worked and the couples needed baby sitters. Youths invited from Samoa often baby-sat when needed and went to school and later worked. Many elderly parents were invited to stay with their children. Some of them moved back and forth, while some of them settled down in the States.

Later, retired men from the U. S. military often chose to go back to the islands. Many well-educated Samoans returned and filled important positions in the American Samoa government.

Thus, large family networks took shape and were maintained. Western Samoans who had been working in Tutuila in American Samoa were often interwoven into such family networks through intermarriage. Sometimes, if there were no possible baby-sitters to invite from American Samoa, Western Samoan relatives were given opportunity. Once there were Western Samoan immigrants in the United States, they tried to bring their immediate family members from home.

Life Histories

Before I try to examine immigrants' attitudes toward *fa'aSamoa* participation, I will describe briefly the life histories of Samoans whom I chose from the same family network. They are all from Western Samoa. Here I use pseudonyms. The description is mostly based on interviews made during the summer of 1989 in Hawaii but, because I have known them since 1978, I have included my data obtained during the previous field research in Western Samoa.

Toma was the first one in the family to go to the States. He was born to a single mother, who later married a divorced man with four children. His stepfather brought him up as if he was his real son. He seems not to have been a good student in school. He left a secondary school before finishing. In 1967 when he was about 20 years old, he joined his stepbrother who had gone to stay with his patrilateral grandmother's family in Tutuila, American Samoa. That was the time when the canneries had already been established and many jobs were available. Working in the plantation of the family, Toma took the place of the youths in the family who worked in the factories. Then, he fell in love with a young woman and later married her. She wanted to migrate to Hawaii and left first, saying she would prepare his documents to join her after three months. But she never did. Toma found that she was living with another man when he arrived in Honolulu. He had to earn his own living right away. Not long after, he met a Hawaiian woman, and they started living together and later they were married. He took any job he could to survive. First, he was a tree trimmer and, sometimes, he held a second job, too. After he got his driver's license, he found a job as a delivery driver. Then, he was successful in obtaining a taxi driver's license, which made his life more stable. His marriage gave him a stable life, too, since he could legally obtain permanent resident status, then later American citizenship.

Toma then wanted to bring his relatives from home. He first brought his half-sister, Makelita. She was the only daughter of his mother Soa and his stepfather Talamaitu who had eight children together between them. Having graduated from a

secondary school in Samoa, Makelita had emigrated to New Zealand with her elder brother, Talai. But because he was jailed she soon returned. The aspiration of the family to send their members to New Zealand thus had been unsuccessful.

Makelita first stayed with Toma to see if she could like to live in Hawaii. After nine months, she went back to Western Samoa to complete the legal process to immigrate to the States. The family liked her decision. Toma and his two daughters went to Samoa to spend Christmas in 1978 and accompanied Makelita to Hawaii in early 1979. She started to work in a cannery in Honolulu. Before long, her mother Soa was invited to come. First, Makelita and Soa stayed with Toma's family in a rural area in Kaneohe, but soon Soa started to miss Samoan kinds of activities, Samoan food, Samoan friends and relatives, and Samoan church. She often went to visit her Samoan relatives in the Kalihi area of Honolulu and sometimes stayed with them. Therefore, Makelita and Soa decided to obtain an apartment in public housing in Kalihi, which is located west of the downtown area of Honolulu with a high Samoan concentration. Their apartment was in Kuhio Park Terrace which is composed of two high rise buildings whose living conditions have earned the worst reputation in the whole public housing system in Hawaii. Nevertheless, more than half the household heads in Kuhio Park Terrace were Samoans, so Soa felt at home there. Then Makelita's brother Mata came, and he was followed by their father Talamaitu and youngest brother Sefo together at the end of 1979. Their legal processes were helped by Toma, and their air fare was either paid or helped by him.

Makelita's younger brother Vai and her cousin Sala joined them in Hawaii in early 1981. Both of them were on student visas. Sala was sent by her divorced mother to help her family back home. Although she was a high school student, she worked during her free time and sent money to her mother.

After having worked in a cannery for a few years, Makelita became a waitress at a restaurant in downtown Honolulu where she met a white man (*Pālagi*). He himself had been brought as a child from Eastern Europe by his immigrant parents and had spent his early years in Chicago. When he was discharged from the Marine Corps in Honolulu, he wanted to marry Makelita who was already pregnant. They went to Chicago for their wedding. Makelita took Sala with her as she did not want to be the sole Samoan there. It was a difficult experience for Makelita since it was extremely cold in Chicago, and she felt very lonely though she had her husband and a Samoan cousin. In 1986, she took her kids and flew back to Honolulu without telling her plans to her husband. She anticipated a divorce, but her husband followed her and his parents later came to live in Hawaii. Makelita and her family rented a cozy house to live with his parents and Sala in Aiea. Her husband and his parents spoke their own language while Makelita and Sala spoke Samoan. When they spoke of each other they used English, but the old couple did not speak much. Two daughters of Makelita spoke English but they also understood some of the other languages.

Although Makelita spoke English very well, her literacy in English was limited. She failed in obtaining a driver's license several times because she did not pass the written test. She wanted to take high school night classes someday. Now she left her kids to her mother-in-law when she worked part-time as a maid in a hotel in Waikiki.

The father Talamaitu left Samoa when he was more than sixty. He was an ordinary old Samoan man with a small orator's title in the Samoan chiefly system that was given to him by his wife's father's family. He left his natal family when he

married Soa to her mother's family. Before that, he said he had been a lazy young man like his sons were. Because of the land shortage, his wife's family was poor. After twenty years of struggle to have a better life, he succeeded to the orator's title of his deceased father-in-law. This entitled him to cultivate the plantation that belonged to his father-in-law. He and his family lived in a small Samoan house in his plantation and they spent their weekends with Talamaitu's co-title holder in the same lineage on the seaside housing area.

Talamaitu then was asked to look after a sick, widowed, retired pastor of the lineage who lived in a large house in the same village. They spent a few years there after the pastor passed away before they migrated to the States. In that house, Talamaitu was the real titled family head (*matai*) in the family. He and his wife Soa supervised the whole extended family that was composed of two adults who had jobs in town, one unmarried woman who did housework, more than six high school boys and girls, and some smaller kids besides them. He took care of banana trees around the house and planted some taro inside the housing lot during his leisure time. Soa sometimes dived in the sea to bring home some sea cucumbers and sea shells. He joined the chiefs' council of the village every Monday. The council makes decisions and regulations to smooth village life. It also has a court hearing and makes a judgement for minor offenses in the village. The village council is a traditional autonomous body that is legally recognized by the government. Though his title was not an important one in the village, everybody liked this funny but faithful old orator.

Besides to keep up the extended family's welfare, Talamaitu also had to perform ceremonial exchange transactions that happened once or twice a month (Yamamoto, 1990, 1994). In Samoa, when somebody dies, marries, receives a title, or even has a church dedication ceremony, all the relatives gather and perform an exchange of female valuables (*tōga* : fine mats) and male valuables (*'oloa* : money or special kinds of food such as roasted pigs, kegs of salted beef, cartons of canned fish). The lineage of the person for whom the ceremony is being conducted is obliged to give a lot of valuables to the other family in the case of a wedding, to chiefs and orators in the case of a title inauguration ceremony or funeral, and to carpenter in the case of a church dedication ceremony. So while the lineage itself tries to gather valuables as much as it can, those lineages that are related to it by marriage try to gather valuables and help it. In return, the lineage makes return presents of valuables, generally of the two-thirds of the value that was given. It seems that in the past, the girl's side gives more female valuables and received more male valuables, but the rule is not as strict today as it was. A ceremony involves quite a large number of people in this way.

The ceremonial exchange is important for titled family heads to keep the prestige of the name of the lineage, which includes several extended families. Talamaitu used to bring a lot of valuables for such family gatherings. He also often joined ceremonies in his capacity as an orator and brought home some valuables that were distributed.

After he moved to Hawaii, Talamaitu said he had nothing to do. He did not have a large household to look after, and he did not even know how to organize his own life in his new environment. Soa had only a two-bedroom apartment to clean, and she had young girls to do it for her. The couple were not expected by anybody to work. They do not speak English. Soa spoke English only when she went shopping, but Talamaitu never spoke it. Actually, they did not need to since they spent most of their time with their children, relatives, and Samoan friends. They often play

cards with elderly Samoans in the neighborhood. Sunday is the most important day for them, because they never miss a service at the Samoan church. In Samoan immigrant communities, churches require a lot more money from donations than in Samoa to look after the minister, to build a new church building, and to pay mortgages for the land and the building.

Before long, Talamaitu started to join the Samoan ceremonial exchanges in Hawaii. The valuables exchanged worth several times more than those back home, probably because Samoans in Hawaii earn much more cash. The gifts in the Samoan exchange system tend to increase in value when possible as Samoans compete with each other to give as much as they can.

Now that they had a household head to represent them, Talamaitu, the family become much more involved in the ceremonial exchanges. Toma once complained that before Talamaitu had come to Honolulu, there had not been many ceremonial exchange occasions in which to participate. He sometimes wished that Talamaitu had gone back to Samoa. When there was an exchange ceremony, Talamaitu assigned each one of his children to bring such and such amounts of money. Besides the ceremonial exchanges, there were always visitors from Samoa. If the visitors were from a related household, they had to prepare some money to give when they went home. Those visitors were expected to bring money home and share among their relatives and other villagers. More than that, if there were some exchange occasions at home, immigrants were asked to send money. Because Talamaitu had too many collect calls from home the first few years in Hawaii which he could not pay, his telephone line was disconnected. He said that this was better as he would not receive any call for money from home. During my research of one and a half months in the summer of 1989, the money Talamaitu collected for such occasions above exceeded more than $ 2,000.

Toma's half brother and Makelita's younger brother, Vai, went to Hawaii in 1981 with Sala. He left before finishing his secondary education in Samoa and enrolled in a local high school in Honolulu. He was not doing bad in his academic work in school in Samoa, but he had several problems because of his straightforward character. Vai was good in working and making chores at home compared with his elder brother Mata who was lazy and idle when nobody saw him. However, when Vai finished high school in Honolulu, his life was not smooth, probably because he had not achieved enough English proficiency. Sometimes he took a laborer's job for a while, but he could not work punctually everyday. Probably because his permanent resident status had not yet been established, he could not find a stable job. Sometimes he washed cars, sometimes cut grass, but most of the time he was a lazy young guy. He became a father of twin girls in 1984. By the time of my research in 1989, the situation had not changed much except that his permanent resident status had been established because his mother Soa had passed the interview to become an American citizen. He was a father of four children one of whom was adopted by his relatives. The minimum wage per hour was now one dollar or fifty cents higher than before, but there were not any good jobs for him. He worked a few days, then failed to go to work for several days, then started again. He often got fired. He sometimes was made by his father Talamaitu to help a funeral or other ceremonial exchange occasions in the backyard kitchen for the relatives as he often had done in Samoa so that he could not go to work. Talamaitu often asked him to contribute his earnings for

ceremonial exchanges. His obligation as a son of Talamaitu probably kept him from becoming a diligent worker, while his laziness made it hard for him to leave Talamaitu's household.

Sala went to Hawaii in 1981, right after she finished her secondary education in Samoa. After she spent one year in high school, she went to a nursing school. She then went to Chicago with Makelita. While it was a difficult experience to stay in Chicago for Makelita, it was a big opportunity for Sala. She said that she learned to live alone away from other Samoans and to adjust to American way of living. She went to a school to learn to be a laboratory technician. After she went back with Makelita to Hawaii, she was working in an office in downtown. Though she did not have a proper training for her job, she was doing fine as she could speak and write English without any problem. Not so many Samoan girls can attain jobs in offices.

Sala kept a little away from the Samoan community in Kalihi. It was lucky for her that she did not have her close relatives in Honolulu except Talamaitu's family, and Talamaitu did not expect Sala to contribute to his exchanges since she was not in his immediate family. Sala did not go to a Samoan church and was seldom involved in a Samoan cultural occasion. She had a *Pālagi* (white) fiance to wed soon. However, it would not be correct to say that she did not behave like a Samoan anymore. She sent money to her mother every month. She often made phone calls to her mother and her sister in New Zealand, and she was planning to buy a used car to send home for her brother. However, Sala was not much interested in Samoan kinds of activities besides those with her immediate family members.

Attitudes toward *Fa'aSamoa* Involvement

Talamaitu and his wife would be most happy to do as they had done in Samoa. There were many things that they were not able to do in Hawaii. Talamaitu missed the chiefly council that he used to attend every Monday, he had nothing to do during the weekdays except playing bingo or cards. Since they were not expected to work in the States, they did not need to speak English and probably did not want to learn how to speak it. They were not quite happy with the inter-ethnic situation in Hawaii. They preferred staying in their apartment rather than going around. The old couple warmly received their non-Samoan in-laws but did not want any more than that.

They probably would not stay in Hawaii without a Samoan church. When they had a dispute with the minister at the church to which they belonged, they did not go to the church for a whole month. After a few weeks, they missed services and decided to go to another church.

Ceremonial exchanges were other occasions for them to become active. In Samoan ceremonies, Talamaitu might have a chance to make a formal Samoan speech. On such occasions, he looked dignified and self-confident.

Talamaitu complained to me that there were too many exchanges. He complained that it was a burden to every Samoan. However, when I said that Makelita complained that her *Pālagi* husband did not understand why she had to contribute so much money for ceremonial exchanges, he said that Makelita was wrong in not explaining what is the meaning of being a Samoan. He said that it is an obligation for every Samoan to meet such expectations.

Before Makelita was married, she was critical of Samoan youths in Kalihi. She once said that they were so bad that they drank beer to make fights. She might have married a Palagi man partly because she wanted to get away from Kalihi. But she missed her parents and the Samoan environment when she was in Chicago. Now she lived in the weather which she was used to and not too far away from her parents while keeping a certain distance from the Samoan community. Part of the reason why she worked in Waikiki was because she wanted to earn money of her own. She wanted to spend more money on her daughters, but most of her salary went to her parents for ceremonial exchanges, remittances, and contributions. She was not able to use her husband's earnings for such expenditures. When she was fed up with those obligations, she just failed to go to her parents apartment. However, she went for the next ceremonial occasion.

Toma also complained, but he was most helpful to his parents partly because he earned a lot more than his younger siblings. He recently left his Hawaiian wife for an American Samoan woman. It might have had something to do with his involvement in *fa'aSamoa* obligations. Recently he was given a title from Talamaitu's family though he was not related to the family by descent. Being a Samoan title holder, he was expected to give more money than others for exchange occasions.

Vai did not make any complaint. It was reasonable because he did not have enough money most of the time. Sometimes he had a small amount which he gave. It seemed to me that he was lazy because he felt it was no use to work hard since the situation was the same whether he worked hard or not. He had to give more if he earned more. But Vai could not leave his parents because he was the closest son to them. He and his wife lived with them and did most of the housework.

Sala was lucky as she was only a daughter of a cousin to Talamaitu's wife. Nobody in the family expected her to contribute for ceremonial exchanges. Of course, she gave some small amount to her aunt Soa now and then, but that was enough. Since she worked in a non-Samoan environment, stayed with Makelita's family, and had a *Pālagi* fiance, she was not much involved in the Samoan way of life in Honolulu. I found that one of her office mates did not even know that she was a Samoan.

Meaning of Reciprocity in Samoan Overseas Community

Among Samoans, people emphasize generosity. Giving is reciprocal, if the production level is not much different, that is what it used to be in Samoa where every household produced almost the same thing. One gives what he has to someone who needs it. When he needs something, he is given it by somebody. This is the idea of reciprocity.

In a large extended household in Samoa, everyone is supposed to do something according to his/her ability for the whole family under the leadership of the titled family head. Sick people and old people are taken good care of there. In such a household, youths make contribution to their parents and old people in terms of labor and money. They just give and give. They will be given by their offsprings when they become old. This is another form of generalized reciprocity.

In a lineage, each household contributes to ceremonial exchanges. Each related

lineage helps to bring valuables when one has to perform a ceremony such as a wedding, title inauguration, funeral, or church dedication. There is reciprocity among lineages related over a longer time span.

Thus, in the Samoan way of life, generalized reciprocity is very important. However, the recent introduction of the cash economy has brought various effects on the traditional economy based on generalized reciprocity. Not only is there an imbalance in earning cash among households, remittances have expanded the difference. Generalized reciprocity now works mainly as a leveling effect.

Between Samoan in overseas communities and the homeland, it is evident that there is a big gap in cash income. The idea of reciprocity causes a money flow to homeland relatives not only in the form of remittances but in other various forms. Migrant Samoans often invite relatives from Samoa to visit them. Most of the time, the travel expenses are paid by the hosts. When the guests go home, the hosts and his relatives give them money to take back.

When a visitor is a church minister or a lay preacher, he might give a special sermon on Sunday, and the church members collect a fairly large amount of money to give him.

An invitation might be made for particular ceremonial exchanges where the guests usually receive more than they give. There used to be a rule that a lineage gives more female valuables to the lineage related through its female member and more male valuables to the one related through its male member. However, even in the homeland, the rule is not strictly followed anymore, and there is a tendency for people to give male and female valuables equally especially when the exchanged amount of valuables is small. When an exchange transaction takes place between migrants and their relatives in Samoa, the relatives give only female valuables, mostly fine mats, because these are not supposed to be produced overseas. Actually, there are a large number of fine mats circulating in migrant Samoan communities, and the amounts exchanged are much more than in the homeland, although the ceremonies are fewer than in the homeland.

When migrants visit home, they have to pay the air fare and other travel expenses by themselves. They prepare nice presents to give immediate family members and money to share among relatives. When the traveling party has a titleholder, there should be a welcoming kava ceremony in which he must give money to village titleholders.

Thus, the money always flows from migrant communities to homeland Samoa in terms of so called traditional customs. The reciprocity on which the Samoan subsistence economy was based has been transformed to level off the cash income imbalances. The system takes a form of reciprocity, but it is not in reality anymore (Yamamoto, 1993).

There is also reciprocity within the community, mainly concerning church activities. A Protestant church congregation in overseas Samoan communities usually starts as a small congregation of a few related families. Then, as it expands, it invites a minister and tries to find a property to build a church building[7]. It is much harder to build a church overseas, because they have to pay much more while the congregation is smaller than in Samoa. Therefore, besides the regular donations, church members have to try hard to find money, usually holding fund raising bingo games and Samoan dance socials. Bingo is quite a popular pastime among Samoans overseas.

Each member of the congregation invites relatives and friends to dance socials. The congregation provides food and sometimes mats and the people invited bring money.

Realizing that the Samoan way of life costs a lot of money, some Samoan migrants may leave their Samoan relatives in an overseas community. In fact, it is not easy for us researchers to meet such people because they are not in touch with a Samoan community at all. Nevertheless, there are quite a few stories in Samoa of lost children overseas. They just cut themselves off from communication with relatives at home or in an overseas community. They seem to be those young Samoans who are independent and have enough skill and ability to live alone.

Some of them might come back to the community, and some start to communicate again with their parents at home after several years, but they might not get together closely with their relatives in overseas communities.

Sala was sort of such a returned daughter. She did not participate in Samoan kinds of occasions. Although she communicated closely with her immediate family and sent money home, she did not participate at all in ceremonial exchange transactions. She was kind to Talamaitu and Soa, but she did not give money for ceremonial exchanges. She has never returned home since she left home in early 1980. Sala had a brother with whom she had lost contact for many years. She looked for him for years since she had arrived in the States and finally found him in an urban area near Los Angeles. He was married to a *Pālagi* American. He received Sala warmly, but he told Sala not to tell anybody including their mother where he was. He hid that he was a Samoan at his work place and in his neighborhood.

Marrying a partner from another ethnic group is the other way to keep distance from the Samoan community. But such a person would always find trouble when he /she wants to be a faithful son/daughter to the parents, since the spouse does not understand why he/she has to give such a lot of money for a ceremony. The partner's unwillingness might be a good excuse when he/she does not want to give, but when he/she wants to contribute there should be a problem. Makelita had one; she felt herself torn apart between her own family and her parents.

The overview above shows the various factors working in each one's attitude toward *fa'aSamoa* involvement.

For those old people like Talamaitu and his wife, the Samoan way of life was a matter of fact and they did not know another way to organize their own life. It was not necessarily a hard life, in fact, for older people as they were taken care of well in the system. They assigned their sons and daughter a certain amount of money to bring when they had an exchange occasion, a letter asking for a remittance from Samoa, or a church donation to give. If they had no money, it is their children who had to give.

For younger Samoans, how much involved depends on whether one has family member senior to them or not. When they have their own parents in the same community, they cannot get away. Thus were Toma and his half-siblings. However, even if they were not able to afford the money, it did not cause any problem except that they felt shame as they were considered not to be making enough contribution to the family. Such contribution is important in succeeding a title in the Samoan chiefly system.

Toma was given a title probably because the lineage of Talamaitu thought he had made enough contribution for his stepfather and the family. Vai was not trying to get

away. Like his father Talamaitu, he probably did not know an alternative. It also might be a difficult life for him if he left his parents and relatives.

Another factor effecting the attitude is how independent a person is. If one has enough ability to cope with the American environment, has enough English proficiency, job qualification, and the knowledge of American way of life, it makes him /her to be independent like Sala. Nevertheless, she was not like that from the beginning. She believed that her experience in Chicago made her independent. Vai did not have such a chance. Makelita had a chance but she was not able to become independent probably because she was closer to the Samoan community through her parents.

Conclusion

The Samoan system of generalized reciprocity did work well in its subsistence economy. However, now Samoans as an immigrant community live and work in a different economic system in the host society. While they maintain reciprocal relationships in their immigrant community and with the homeland, the *fa'aSamoa* obligation causes a dilemma for Samoan immigrant youths, especially when they want to be independently mobile. The same obligation also creates passive youths who might not have been so in other cultures. Young Samoans are in a dilemma, because of the discourse of Samoan identity : 'If you are Samoan, you must give.' This cultural norm exists wherever Samoans form a community. It seems that, at the moment, the Samoan diaspora has created a global Samoan network of reciprocity based on customs and traditions, which brings a lot of money to Samoans at home.

Notes

1 The research on which this paper is directly based was conducted during one and a half months in summer 1989 in Honolulu. I appreciate the financial support given by the Toyota Foundation for this research. I also acknowledge the East-West Center, the Japanese Ministry of Education, and Hosobunka Foundation for the financial support for my previous researches in Western Samoa. I am most thankful to the Samoan friends who helped me in various ways. This paper is mainly based on the research report (Yamamoto, 1992) written in Japanese submitted to the Toyota Foundation. The draft of this paper was read at the workshop "Contemporary Diasporas : A Focus on Asian Pacifics." held at Los Angels in February 1995, by the Center for Multiethnic and Transnational Studies at University of Southern California and Center for Korean-American and Korean Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. I am grateful for the kind criticisms given by the colleagues present at the workshop, especially by Jonathan Okamura, who helped me in preparing the manuscript.

2 The two island groups had maintained a fairly homogeneous culture before the separation in turn of this century. Samoans are Polynesians.

3 Western Samoa became Samoa as the name of the nation in 1998. I still use the name Western Samoa partly because I need to differentiate it easily form American Samoa and partly because it was Western Samoa when the major field research was done.

4 Nationals may be given American passports but cannot vote in Presidential elections.

5 In order to analyse the situation of the time when the field reserach was done, the statistical data of mearest time is used.

6 American Samoan Defence Force.

7 The description is mainly concerned with the major church organization in Samoa, that is Congregation Christian Church of Samoa, which is now split between Western and American Samoas.

References

American Samoa Government, Department of Commerce, Statistics Division (1996), *American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 1996.* Pagopago: Department of Commerce, Statistics Division.

Barringer, H., R. W. Gardner and M. J. Levin (1993), Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. The Population of the United States in the 1980s: A Censusu Monograph Series. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Forster, J. (1954), The Assimilation of Samoan Migrants in the Naval Housing Area, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. M. A. Thesis submitted to the University of Hawaii.

New Zealand Statistics (1997), *Census 96 Ethnic Groups.* Wellington: New Zealand Statistics.

Western Samoa Government, National Planning Office (1992), *Western Samoa Seventh Development Plan 1992–1994.* Apia: Prime Minister's Office, National Planning Office.

Western Samoa government, Department of Statistics (1991), *Report of the Census of Population and Housing 1991.* Apia: Department of Statistics.

Yamamoto, M. (1990), Transformation of exchange valuables in Samoa. *Man and Culture in Oceania 6,* pp. 81–98.

Yamamoto, M. (1992), Contemporary migrants and their cultural conflict: A research on life histories of Samoan migrants in Hawaii. A report submitted to the Toyota Foundation. (in Japanese: unpublished)

Yamamoto, M. (1993), Western Samoan International Travelers, Paper prepared for ASAO Meeting at Kona, March 1993. (unpublished)

Yamamoto, M. (1994), Urbanisation of the chiefly system: Multiplication and role differentiation of titles in Western Samoa, *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 103 (2), pp. 171–202.