Over a Cup of Tea and Koko Sāmoa

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Over a Cup of Tea and Koko Sāmoa

How the Fa’aSāmoa Impacts Agricultural Development

Liz Stanis - December 3rd, 2018

Figure A
Abstract

The Fa’aSāmoa, a concept that incorporated culture, tradition, and heritage all specific to Sāmoa, impacts the daily life of Sāmoans. Agriculture and farming also have a role in everyday life, as they impact food security, the economy, and have ties to cultural events. This paper recognizes the importance of the Fa’aSāmoa and agriculture separately and then observes how the Fa’aSāmoa impacts agriculture and is incorporated into agricultural development. Through interviews with local Sāmoans and the use of historical particularism, the cultural side of agriculture and farming is better understood and its importance in society is analyzed through customary land and chiefly titles, farming practices, the impact of colonization and globalization, the role of education, resilience to climate change, and gender roles. The Fa’aSāmoa can be argued to have either a positive or negative effect on agricultural development, but its role cannot be understated. (143)
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to a few people, without whom I would not have had this opportunity.

Firstly, mom and dad thank you for funding this semester abroad, along with the rest of my education. Thank you for believing that I have potential.

I would also like to thank Mr. Dierks without who I would currently be stressed out and in over my head competing with other science majors in an attempt to get into veterinary school. I may end up making no money, but thank you for inspiring me to do what makes me happy.

To my Sāmoan ‘āiga fa’aafetai tele lava. Malo onasai ma fa’aafetai fa’aaloalo. Alofa atu.

Lastly, I dedicate this project to all of the hard-working farmers in Sāmoa. Farming is hard work and is often overlooked by the rest of the population. But what farmers do matters and how they farm matters. Here’s to everyone who works every day in order to provide the rest of us with food security. Please when you can, eat local!
Acknowledgements

This independent project could not have been done without the wonderful help of my on-site advisor, Edwin Tamasese. Thank you for aiding my work and helping me focus my research.

I would also like to thank Dr. Kardulis, my advisor back in the states. Thank you for guiding my academic focus and helping me with this paper from thousands of miles away.

To Dr. Taomi, my academic director this semester, Lise, the SIT assistant director, and Ronna, thank you for an amazing semester! You are all wonderful and inspirational women and it has been such a pleasure getting to know you over the last several months.

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Introduction

Agriculture in Sāmoa has undergone changes throughout history. These changes are even more evident if you review the last few centuries broken up into, pre-colonization, colonization, looking at Sāmoa under both German New Zealand rule, and post-colonization, or post-independence. Before colonization farming in Sāmoa consisted of subsistence and communal farming and included staple foods like breadfruit and coconuts. With colonization came western farming ideals, like mono-cropping and large plantations growing for exporting purposes. Colonizers also brought with them western crops. The import-export market not only changed the agricultural landscape but also the economy and diets in Sāmoa. Traditional agriculture and farming practices are often lost as countries industrialize and modernize. In Sāmoa many of these traditions are still retained in villages with subsistence farmers, but these practices are at a risk of being lost because of an increased reliance on imports and because youth do not want to farm. As Sāmoa looks to the future, looking to the past may reveal the best path forward. By moving away from mono-cropping and imported products, while at the same time reincorporating traditional values and culture, Sāmoa has an opportunity to redefine agriculture on their own terms and create an agricultural system that positively impacts their economy, health, and resilience to climate change. With the Fa’aSāmoa playing such an important role in the lives of Sāmoans, it is important when looking at ongoing and future development, to consider the cultural and traditional factors that affect it. This paper delves into how the Fa’aSāmoa impacts and is incorporated into agricultural development in Sāmoa.

The Fa’aSāmoa incorporates Sāmoan values and cultural beliefs. The definition of the Fa’aSāmoa that will be used in this paper is derived from the definitions given by participants. The Fa’aSāmoa, in the simplest terms is the way Sāmoans live, a birthright, and link to one’s heritage. The Fa’aSāmoa then incorporates language, customs, history,
and heritage. However, it is important to understand that the definition of the Fa’aSāmoa is not fixed; it evolves with the people. The practice of the Fa’aSāmoa changes, but the underlying ideals, including the importance of the ‘āiga, or family, as well as the community, along with the principles of respect and reciprocity remain the same throughout time. The ability of the Fa’aSāmoa to evolve has allowed it to remain important, relevant, and impactful on the daily lives of Sāmoans.

Another important term to define is the concept of a farm. The westernized view of a farm, with its high mechanization, perfect rows, no weeds, and often a single crop must not be confused with farms or plantations in Sāmoa. Sāmoan plantations are often planted using an intercropping system and contain multipurpose crops. The crops being grown are often traditional foods, or as Watters discusses in “Cultivation in Old Sāmoa” there are “six staple vegetable foods monopolized the Sāmoan diet—taro, yam, ta’amu, coconut, breadfruit, and banana” (340). Amongst these crops, one will see all sorts of other plants growing, which under western terminology would be classified as weeds.

Similar to the definition of a farm including cultural ties, so does the definition of a farmer. While, there are people who farm as their sole occupation, especially when looking at larger farms growing for export, most farmers would not consider farming to be their primary occupation. This is especially observed in rural villages where most plantations exist for subsistence. A good example of this would be my own host tamā, or father, in the
village of Amaile. My tamā owns a shop, so he would then consider his occupation to be a shop owner. However, he also has a banana plantation and breadfruit trees, making him a farmer. The crops being grown for subsistence are also not often considered in factoring household wealth. This is because many subsistence farmers do not sell the crops they do not eat, but instead, trade with neighbors growing different crops.

Observing how the Fa’aSāmoa impacts agricultural development is important socially, economically, and for the sustainability of Sāmoa. Valuing those who work hard to provide food helps validate the work they do and what they give up to farm. As the average age of farmers increases, it is also essential to attract younger generations. If the profession of farming is ostracized, younger generations will be less likely to consider it, leaving a gap in society. Economically farming provides not only jobs but goods. Exporting, as well as providing products locally creates an economic market which supports other professions and capital.

Farming locally has the opportunity to facilitate Sāmoa’s self-sustainability efforts. As farming is encouraged and diversified, Sāmoa will not be as dependent on chemical inputs or imported food. This, in turn, could also have a positive effect on health. Eating more traditional and local food instead of processed food would help lower the rate of non-communicable diseases, many of which stem from unhealthy diets.

Previous literature also shows that utilizing traditional agriculture could be a key means of adaptation and resilience to climate change. Traditional and local crops are more
likely to survive through natural disasters. Having food locally grown on the island also means if Sāmoa was cut off from shipping routes for any period of time that they would be able to sustain and feed themselves. Because of Sāmoa’s relatively small size and population, in comparison to western powers importing goods into the country, there is a real opportunity to farm in a sustainable manner without a need for agricultural inputs.

This paper has been titled “Over a Cup of Tea and Koko Sāmoa.” The title for this paper comes from listening to an Australian woman, who works for Women in Business Development Incorporated, talk about her work with farmers in Australia. She mentioned that her understanding of the problems farmers were facing were not learned through surveys or research. She said these problems were learned and understood over a cup of tea. The woman took the time to sit and talk with these farmers and listen to what they had to say. This struck me and quickly became the basis of my paper. In order to learn about the cultural side of farming, I believe it is important to sit down and listen over a cup of tea or koko Sāmoa.
Literature Review

It was difficult to locate previous research on the Fa’aSāmoa and agricultural development, that covered both topics together. However, there is data covering both topics separately. Additionally, there a quite a few articles connecting the Fa’aSāmoa with other social issues, like cancer screening and health. These articles showcase the importance of the Fa’aSāmoa in Sāmoa, as well as incorporating the Fa’aSāmoa into new initiatives and developments. However, these articles have not been included in the literature review, as the focus of this paper is on agriculture, defining the Fa’aSāmoa, and their interaction. The articles I have chosen cover one of these topics or combines the two in some way. It is important to note that throughout the literature review, Sāmoa will be referred to as either Sāmoa or Western Sāmoa. Western Sāmoa has links to colonization and references the islands being west of American Sāmoa. The official name of the country as been Sāmoa since 1997.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in Sāmoa published the proceedings from their 2003 National Environment Forum which covered both environmental and agricultural topics. In a section titled “A Study of Indigenous Knowledge and its Role to Sustainable Agriculture in Sāmoa,” Tikiai and Kama discuss their research into the importance of indigenous knowledge for agricultural sustainability. They conducted their research through surveys, which led to a 65% response rate. In their results, Tikiai and Kama disused the effects of indigenous knowledge on soil preparation, planting, weed and pest control, soil fertility, and harvesting. Their key conclusion was that “traditional knowledge is vital to sustainable development of Sāmoa’s natural resources. Sustainable Agriculture development and conservation of Samoa’s resources could be significantly advanced if modern scientific knowledge could be incorporated with
the traditional knowledge system” (78). Tikai and Kama also believe that the use of traditional knowledge is more cost effective and efficient.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, along with other organizations such as the European Union and the Pacific Agriculture Policy Project also released the “Sāmoa Agriculture Sector Plan 2016-2020 Summary,” which details objectives and outcome indicators for Sāmoan agriculture. Four of their main goals are improved food security, competitively priced domestic food, sustained increase in productivity, and sustainable management. These goals will be monitored by observing domestic food being purchased and the ratio of imported to exported food, among other indicators. The organizations argue that the purpose of the “Agricultural Sector Plan” is to help coordinate and keep programs on track, that will best help the Sāmoan farmer.

Christopher Edmonds and Joel Hernandez in “Developing Agricultural Export Opportunities in Sāmoa” cover the importance of agricultural development for the country. They conclude that it is important to diversify crops, in order to enter multiple markets and be sustainable. Edmonds and Hernandez also state that “because taro is a traditional crop, there is extensive local knowledge on taro cultivation, so efforts to redevelop taro as an export crop have focused on investments related to land preparation, site access, basic tools and equipment, and working capital” (185). This highlights the importance of traditional knowledge and ways of farming. Edmonds and Hernandez compile a good list of different crops that grow well in Sāmoa and could be profitable with future development.

In “Food Shortages in Western Sāmoa: Towards a Solution” Leung Wai argues that food shortages in Sāmoa could be lessened if the country increased its own food production while decreasing its importation of food. This paper was written in the 1970s using data from the 1940s through the 1970s. During this period Leung Wai believes
Sāmoa was undergoing a shift from a traditional economy to a monetary economy. It is this shift that he credits as the main cause for food shortages on the island. Leung Wai states that “increasing traditional staple food production will directly overcome local food shortages and help resolve Western Sāmoa’s balance of payments and inflation problems by reducing food imports and increasing the supply of exportable subsistence-commercial crops” (76). Turning to traditional farming and traditional foods has the opportunity to boost Sāmoa’s economy if correctly marketed and made accessible both on and off of the island.

Miranda Cahn in “Indigenous Entrepreneurship, Culture and Micro-enterprise in the Pacific Islands: Case Studies from Sāmoa” focuses on the importance of the Fa’aSāmoa into development. In the abstract Cahn mentions that “in each of the case studies Fa’aSāmoa was interwoven with, and strongly influenced, the livelihood outcomes that the micro-entrepreneurs sought, the characteristics of the micro-enterprise, the risks and vulnerability the micro-entrepreneurs faced, the way in which the micro-entrepreneurs in each of the clusters worked together, and the success and sustainability of the micro-enterprises” (18). This article is a good basis for understanding the function of the Fa’aSāmoa in the daily lives of Sāmoans and its place in development. While this article does not specifically focus on agriculture its approach to covering the entrepreneurship aspect of development makes it unique among the literature referenced.

Per Ronnâs also covers the Fa’aSāmoa in the article “The Sāmoan Farmer: A Reluctant Object of Change?” Ronnâs argues that “an absence of secure market outlets offering predictable and sufficiently attractive prices to farmers and the lack of rural-urban links, in general, are at the heart of the problem” for Sāmoan farmers (339). Throughout his article, Ronnâs makes mention to the Fa’aSāmoa and how it has been inhibited from having a significant impact on agriculture. Ronnâs also covers how migration, remittances,
aid, and bureaucracy also impact development. Ronnås takes a relatively negative view on the Sāmoa farmers situation but makes many interesting points.

Fa’aSāmoa is a complex topic and defining it is very important. In “The I and the We: Individuality, Collectivity, and Sāmoan Artistic Responses to Cultural Change” April Henderson defines the Fa’aSāmoa in the context of her work. Henderson stresses the importance of ways of being and ways of knowing for the Sāmoan people. More importantly, Henderson’s work covers how the Fa’aSāmoa has changed in response to development. Henderson states “while senses of obligation remain a constant component of the Fa’aSāmoa, what is expected in order to fulfill those obligations continues to change significantly and in ways that move Sāmoa further away from a subsistence-based economy to one reliant on imported goods and monetary exchange” (319). How the Fa’aSāmoa is fulfilled helps define its place in the culture.

Charette Byers also covers the significance of the Fa’aSāmoa in “Fa’aSāmoa: The Sāmoan Way.” Byers believes that the Fa’aSāmoa is an intricate part of the life of Sāmoans, stating “Sāmoans are devoted to, and very proud of, their Fa’aSāmoa. Respect, along with knowledge of Fa’aSāmoa and faith in God, are the first things children are taught. For Sāmoans, it is their Fa’aSāmoa that gives them their identity and sets them apart from other cultures” (14). Byers covers the different parts of life the Fa’aSāmoa effects and plays a role in. However, Byers does not state how the definition of the Fa’aSāmoa was crafted for their article. While not every Sāmoan will agree on the exact definition of the Fa’aSāmoa, it will be crucial to have Sāmoan input into the definition, as the Fa’aSāmoa is not a concept that outsiders will truly ever be able to understand or feel.

In “Changing Village Agriculture in Western Sāmoa” Mercer and Scott look at how the changing economy has impacted village agriculture. They believe one of the challenges Sāmoan farmers face is a labor shortage, as increasing numbers of young Sāmoans look
overseas for jobs. Where Mercer and Scott take a Eurocentric view is when they state that “the most encouraging feature is that good plantation methods are being practiced at Vaisala largely because one Samoan sought to learn them from Europeans and subsequently adopted them” (359). Mercer and Scott throughout their article seem to believe that the Sāmoan farmer could not be prosperous using traditional or regionally specific knowledge. This belief is part of the problem. As development pushes for higher yields and more diverse products many farmers abandon traditional practices and begin utilizing western technology and imports, before truly evaluating the end costs and effects.

Using traditional knowledge has the potential to lead to sustainability. In the “Proceedings of the 2001 National Environment Forum,” there are several chapters looking at how to make Sāmoa more sustainable. In chapter three Namilauulu G.V. Tavana looks at how the erosion of traditional knowledge has led to the loss of sustainability. Tavana states that, “traditional knowledge is vital to sustainable development of Sāmoa’s natural resources” and that “this knowledge incorporates Sāmoan culture and language, myths and legends presenting a worldview that contain potent biological information” (25). In chapter six the authors argue that traditional agriculture can help slow down land degradation. The traditional way of planting versus mono-cropping helps protect soil from increased rainfall and natural disasters, such as cyclones. However, as noted in chapter seven, by Wendt, Sāmoa is moving away from an agriculturally based economy. Wendt believes agriculture is the key to economic stability and can be developed sustainably.

Fletcher, et al. also touch on the importance of traditional agriculture as a coping strategy for natural disasters in “Traditional Coping Strategies and Disaster Response: Examples from the South Pacific Region.” The authors concluded from interviews that “several respondents alluded to the fact that there was a need to return to ‘traditional ways
of preserving food to withstand during times of crisis’ with the added threats climate change may bring” (6). They also stated that “another approach suggested by some respondents was to introduce less common food and reintroduce some forgotten foods into diets” (7). It is important to understand that shifting back to traditional agriculture using culture and traditional ways of knowing has the potential to help Sāmoa’s economy and provide a stable, healthier food source, but that it also has the potential to help the island adapt to climate change and withstand natural disasters.
Theory

Historical particularism focuses on the concept that each society is unique in its development based upon its history. This view accounts for the cultural and environmental specific context for each society. The underlying principles of historical particularism were the work of Boas and his students in the twentieth century and is a direct response to evolutionism. This means that historical particularism rejects the idea that cultures are all on an identical track. Instead, societies can reach a state of cultural development through their own means and way.

Boas placed significance on cultural diffusion, the environment, historical context, as well as trade, in affecting how a culture develops. Boas believed using a western societal lens downgraded the achievements and development of non-western societies. Historical particularism then accounts for the advantages and disadvantages each society incurred throughout history. This focus on historical events and the importance of culture make this theory appropriate for my research.

When looking at agricultural development in modern Sāmoa, it is important to understand how the country reached its current state. Traditional agricultural, as well as German and New Zealand colonization have greatly impacted agricultural development in Sāmoa. Similarly, cultural and environmental factors before colonization defined how agriculture would be practiced. Acknowledging that each culture is unique and is a combination of human and environmental factors it is then crucial to evaluate the effect culture has on development.

The Fa’aSāmoa is culturally unique to Sāmoa and Sāmoans. It is intertwined in daily life and significant events. While the idea culture and tradition are universal in practice, each society reacts differently. Since the Fa’aSāmoa has such a large role in society, development cannot be understood without also understanding the role of the
Fa’aSāmoa. The Fa’aSāmoa exists in Sāmoan culture today because it has a function and keeps societies from losing touch with tradition and culture. By using historical particularism the importance of historical events on agricultural development in the region, as well as why the Fa’aSāmoa plays such an important role in society, can be highlighted.

The historical particularism lens is used because it is important to demonstrate that agricultural development in Sāmoa will not look like agricultural development in America or even in Tonga. Sāmoa has developed in a way that reflects its past, in terms of culture, tradition, and historical events. The effects of colonization cannot be ignored when looking at current development. However, traditional Sāmoan practices and values also cannot be ignored. Agricultural development cannot successfully move forward or be understood by outside countries without first understanding where it has been.
**Methodology**

For my research, I have used two methods of data collection to supplement my secondary sources. My primary method was conducting talanoas. Talanoas are informal conversations that cover important topics. Talanoas are a common and respected practice in Sāmoa making it an appropriate form of interviewing for this study. The talanoas were recorded and transcribed, following all typical guidelines of interviewing. Benefits of the talanoa method are that the participants will be more comfortable and that the conversation is free to take any tangents the interviewee may want to go on. Using a method that is culturally appropriate and significant to Sāmoa helps facilitate the discussion on the Fa’aSāmoa, culture and tradition, in Sāmoa.

The method used for this study is not exactly a talanoa, however. It was structured enough to be leaning towards an interview. While complete talanoas would have been the preferred conversation, time constraints hindered this. To properly do a talanoa one should meet with participants more than once and spend a decent amount of time conversing at each sitting. All of the talanoas for this study were completed in a three-week span, including transcription. This pushed the methodology to lean towards structured questions, in order to focus in on would be useful for the research. Questions ranged from being about the participants’ own work to the importance of agriculture in Sāmoa. asked Participants were also asked to define the Fa’aSāmoa and then were asked questions connecting the Fa’aSāmoa to agriculture and their own work. The meetings ranged from fifteen minutes to an hour. This time frame was dictated by how much time the participants had, as well as how much time it takes to transcribe. This was one of the most impactful drawbacks of this methodology. Positionality is a common drawback of interviews. Positionality is one reason why formal interviews cannot be duplicated by another researcher. My positionality an American student in Sāmoa and an outsider to
Sāmoan culture affects my understanding of Sāmoans and culturally related topics. Other drawbacks include reliance on equipment, as well as scheduling and being reliant on participants. It should also be noted that not all of the participants contacted had time to meet for an interview. However, what these sources had to say was still important and they were still eager to contribute. In this case, the participant was emailed the structured questions and returned written responses. This poses its own challenges. Probing could not be done and non-structured questions based upon their answers could not be asked. These answers were still included because what the participants had to say was valid and relevant and it means a lot that they were still wanting to contribute to the research. Farmers have very busy and constantly changing schedules. Allowing participants to write their answers in place of an interview was the best way to work around schedules and still hear their opinions. 

Along with the talanoa method, I conducted a participant observation. This combination best allowed me to understand how agriculture works in Samoa, the role of culture and tradition, and where its place is in the agriculture. The participant observation method is beneficial because it allowed me to see first-hand how farming is done in Sāmoa. A drawback of this method also includes how my positionality could affect my observations. My participant observation was conducted in the village of Amaile, on the south-east side of Upolu. Amaile is also the village where I did my rural homestay. This is how I gained access to the plantations there. I visited a plantation belonging to the village’s high chief, Fa’aSua as well as the plantation behind my house, belonging to my host tamā, or father, Tupuola. 

I had permission to access both of these plantations and take photos which I am using in conjunction with my observations and research. While viewing both plantations I
did not interact with any village members. During my trip to Fa’aSua's plantation, I was accompanied by another American student, Jane McMurry, as it would have been culturally unfit for me to go alone. My five-year-old host nephew Toa was also present. Neither plantation was being worked at the time of my visit, for several reasons which include, the time of day I visited, the heat, and most of the village men being preoccupied with preparing for an upcoming funeral. Being alone made me more comfortable using my camera and taking pictures.

My research was conducted in Sāmoa, primarily on the island of Upolu. During the time of the research I was living in Apia, because of this, farmers in this region were the most accessible to me. In the duration of three weeks, I had a talanoa with or received written responses from seven, either local farmers, people working in the agricultural sector, or academics, which allowed me to get multiple perspectives. The main criteria for participants were that they had knowledge of the Fa’aSāmoa and agriculture in Sāmoa. Criteria that limited my study was having to use participants that could speak English.

I found my participants through previous contact and the snowball method. Each participant was reached through email. This gave the participants a way to not participate without having to say no to my face. As the participants were older than myself and most were my professors, I do not believe I held any leverage over them or made them feel compelled to participate in any way. Not everyone I reached out to did participate. There were several people who I never heard back from. In some cases, I did send a follow-up message but stopped after one follow-up message in order to not becoming a nuisance or harassment.

Each participant was emailed a set of questions in advance as well as a copy of a consent form, that just informed them of what my study is about and included my contact information. For the participants that responded to my questions through email, I had
them sign or electronically sign the consent form. For the participants, I met with in
person I obtained oral consent, as I was told it is not culturally appropriate to ask for
written consent and it often deters participants. The participants who gave oral consent
still were given a copy of the consent form in case they had any questions or needed to
contact me.

All my raw data has been safely kept on my laptop in an encrypted password
protected files. Only I and my advisors have access to the raw data. I asked the
participants if I could include their name and identifiable information in my final work, in
order to showcase the work local farmers are doing but provided the option of anonymity.
My advisors include Dr. Kardulias at the College of Wooster, Edwin Tamasese, who served
as my local advisor, with the approval of the School of International Training, and Dr.
Tapu-Qiliho, who serves as my academic director while in Sāmoa. I have kept my raw data,
from my research, and intend to use it in the future in order to continue this research and
expand it. The protocols for this study were approved both through an ethical review
board at the College of Wooster, though a review board through the School of
International Training, and through a local review board in Sāmoa.
Results

The purpose of this research was to gather data through interviews and participant observation in order to better understand how the Fa’aSāmoa impacts and is incorporated into agricultural development in Sāmoa. After conducting all of the interviews and transcribing them I began to look through them, doing a loose content analysis, highlighting similarities seen amongst the answers. I then paired my participant observation notes with this in order to come up with reoccurring themes. These themes are concepts or terms that were mentioned in the majority of interviews. The themes include customary land and chiefly titles, farming practices, the impact of colonization and globalization, the role of education, resilience to climate change, and gender roles. Through these themes, the way the Fa’aSāmoa impacts agricultural development is more evident.

Customary Land and Chiefly Titles

When asking participants how the Fa’aSāmoa impacts agricultural development in Sāmoa several participants included customary lands and chiefly titles in their answer. Customary land is that is jointly owned by an ‘āiga, a family, or a community. This land is intertwined with the matai system, or the chiefly titles. The lands, instead of belonging to a specific person belong to a title. In order to use customary land ‘āiga’s and fonos, or village councils held by the chiefs, must agree. Both E. Tamasese and Akeli used the figure of 80% of land in Sāmoa being customary.

Customary land was discussed as both an advantage and a disadvantage to agricultural development. Akeli mentions that "it does mean there could be more diversification, some families could grow taro, other families, other sorts of crops" (Personal interview, Nov. 9, 2018). but that access to land and having the right to develop it has always been a key issue. Latai Niusulu discussed how:
“family members are constantly fighting, not fighting but sort of like refusing to let the other person use it, or sort of like saying, okay you can use it, but you never get to own it” (Personal interview, Nov. 15, 2018).

She mentioned that this poses a risk of lands becoming stagnant. However, Latai Niusulu also said that communal lands are beneficial because they have protected families from losing land to large developers. J. Tamasese explained that the:

“Fa’aSamoa has a big impact on agriculture, since agriculture is one of the core pillars in Fa’aSamoa. The Matai (Chief) of the village dictates where crops should be planted within a village as well as what needs to be planted” (Email, Nov. 30, 2018)

E. Tamasese also discussed the impact of customary land and chiefly titles by focusing on the fact that chiefs decide how the customary land is farmed and that the untitled men work just enough of the land to keep the matais happy.

**Farming Practices**

Farming practices were discussed in several manners. Key topics included the practice of intercropping versus monocropping, subsistence farming versus commercial farming, and how farm work is done. When discussing farming in the South Pacific region Tubuna described the type of farming as more traditional “where they use integrated cropping, see like bananas and trees and breadfruit, compared to monoculture, just planting one crop” (Personal interview, Oct. 31, 2018). He said this practice is beneficial because it provides more food and helps families still provide even if something happens to one crop. The use of intercropping is seen in every village in Sāmoa. Monocropping does occur but is often on larger farms growing commercially.

When looking at subsistence farming, Latai Niusulu discusses how Sāmoans have a use for everything they plant. If not for food, then flowers for making leis,

“if not for making leis for during cultural events, then it’s going to be used for decorating churches on Sunday’s which is such an important thing to a Sāmoan, it will be for funerals” (Personal interview, Nov. 15, 2018).
She also mentioned how different plants are used for medicine or for other culturally significant things. Latai Niusulu describes the planting and harvesting of these plants as informal agriculture and said that there are “informal activities that relate to agriculture, such as people that do weaving, from the Pandanus leaves” (Personal interview, Nov. 15, 2018). Livestock also holds cultural significance, Sila discusses how cattle are often raised in Sāmoa for cultural reasons instead of for commercial purposes. Cattle are often given as gifts or as payment for crimes, which is why most families will have one, but not have a herd. While villagers grow more traditional crops for subsistence or cultural reasons, the export market farms have to pay attention to what the global market wants. When discussing growing from export E. Tamasese said:

“So we look at ways we can get produce into markets, so not only, this is mostly for the coconut oil, but we are also looking at things like ginger and turmeric, just so that we can add more value and get more income into the community” (Personal interview, Nov. 7, 2018).

and that the growers shift what they are growing based upon what will make a profit. Sila, who works for the Ministry of Agriculture also mentioned that they would “like to see more livestock farmers to enter the commercial market” (Email, Nov. 8, 2018). Meat farmed locally could help cut down on the amount imported.

When looking at how farming is done in Sāmoa participants referenced how much time farmers spend each day farming and when in the day they farm. E. Tamasese mentioned that with his farm that he doesn’t believe:

“that manual labor is where humans should be. We need to be there for a certain amount of time, but we don’t need to be there for 8 hours a day working, everyone says you need to be working 8 hours a day, I don’t believe that’s helpful at all” (Personal interview, Nov. 7, 2018).
He says there are more important things the workers could be doing with their time like focusing on the community and doing volunteer work. When discussing traditional village farming, Latai Niusulu talked about how farmers get up and work in the mornings, but go back home before mid-day when it becomes too hot to work. She compares this to how farming in America or western societies is very fast pace and always moving.

**Impact of Colonization and Globalization**

I interviewed Akeli, a historian and the director for Sāmoan studies at NUS, specifically about this topic. She talked about one of the biggest changes being that with colonization came the opportunity to be paid money for the work being done and that the scale farming was being done on greatly increased. From a lecture, Akeli gave I have information that I paired with her interview.

While under German control for fourteen years, Sāmoa became a large producer of coconuts, cocoa, cotton, coffee, and beef cattle. During this time the Germans brought over workers for the plantations from Asia and other Pacific Islands. The Germans, for the most part, did not let Sāmoans work on the plantations and encouraged them to continue to subsistence farm. In December of 1919 when the United Nations granted New Zealand mandate to administer, agriculture in Sāmoa shifted. New Zealand administrators did not take the same time and consideration the Germans did for traditional crops and for Sāmoans cultural and traditional ties to agriculture. After independence was gained in 1962 taro production in the country increased but the banana, coconut, and cocoa production decreased.

Today Sāmoa’s largest market to export to is New Zealand, Australia, and American Sāmoa. Because of this Sāmoa is still dependent on New Zealand in many ways. For example, at one point New Zealand stopped accepting bananas from Sāmoa which hurt the Sāmoan economy significantly. In his interview E. Tamasese also brought up the
fact that outside funders, such as countries like China or New Zealand, along with the World Bank, have an influence over what is grown and where through the use of funding. From the interviews, it has become apparent that the impact of colonization is still an issue and has shifted to how globalization impacts agriculture in Sāmoa.

**The Role of Education**

My first interview, in gathering data for this project, was with Tubuna. During the interview, I asked him about young people going into farming. He responded by talking about how many of the young people in the region want office jobs where they get to wear nice clothes. This sentiment was shared by E. Tamasese who said:

“I think we are still recovering from that and then also the education push was not towards industrial or technical skills and things in those areas it was all about accounting, English, economics, and there was science as well, but it was common point of view of creating employees that would support an administrative structure” (Personal interview, Nov. 7, 2018).

Because of these answers, I made sure when interviewing Akeli and Latai Niusulu, both professors at the National University of Sāmoa, to ask them about their view of education’s role in helping the agricultural sector.

Akeli covered the work Universities in Sāmoa are doing to provide a path for those interested in agriculture. She highlighted the fact that the University of the South Pacific’s campus in Sāmoa is the agricultural campus. She also said that the National University of Sāmoa is looking into having more agricultural based programs like on tropical agriculture. Akeli stated:

“the university is trying as well to offer certificates and programs as well in science [because] not everyone will go out and farm but it might be someone going out and looking into science looking into you know what might be [better] to grow [for] more potential for Sāmoa [or] people looking into what markets there are for products overseas. I’m hoping it’s a broader view of how we can engage with agriculture” (Personal interview, Nov. 9, 2018).

Latai Niusulu also mentioned the role of the University of the South Pacific and where the National University has tried to incorporate agriculture, such as teaching rural
agriculture as a key part of the rural geography course. Latai Niusulu began answering this question by saying it is the role of education to not downplay the importance of agriculture. She mentions how agriculture and agricultural professions are perceived and defined and said “education is to blame of those inadequate definitions and I think in order to change that we need, the ownership is on us to change that way of thinking” (Personal interview, Nov. 15, 2018).

The role the University of the South Pacific has cannot be ignored. One participant, Sila graduated from there with a bachelors in agriculture and now works for the Animal Production and Health Division at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Tamasese, E also attended the University of the South Pacific and now works in the private agricultural sector. Both of these participants also discussed how many people negatively view farmers. Sila stated:

“my eldest sister who’s Samoa’s Ambassador to Japan still can’t fathom why I have to wear boots, shorts and T-shirt to work every day, my eldest brother who’s an ACEO in the Stats Bureau sees me as a tomboy and worries that his daughter my pick up my ways, my other older sister who’s a nun and lives in Rome worries that I might get kicked by a cow or something and always states that my job is a guy’s job and the girl’s place is in the kitchen” (Email, Nov. 8, 2018).

It is important to note however, that both feel confident about their profession and enjoy what they do.

Resilience to Climate Change

The Fa’aSāmoa and its impact on agriculture were linked to more traditional styles of farming. Many of the participants said that traditional farming has the opportunity to help Sāmoa become more resilient to climate change. Tubuna stated that “traditional farming systems, you know it enhances the resilience” (Personal interview Oct. 31, 2018). Latai Niusulu went into depth on this as it tied into her doctorate work. Key things covered where that leaving “weeds” helps hold the soil intact and that intercropping helps provide food if something goes wrong with one crop Latai Niusulu gave the example that during
cyclone season the breadfruit will all be blown from the breadfruit trees, but the people won’t starve. During her research, she interviewed farmers and:

"I sort of asked them about, what have you noticed about weather patterns they said that you know they feel like the days are getting hotter and how do they respond, [they] respond and cope with that is now the older ways of doing things, the older practices they really support that and are trying to practice that. Such as, waking up early early in the morning and doing you know walk to your plantation and you do your work and then by 10:00 your back and 10:00 to 3:00 or 4:00 you sleep because you cannot really do anything because it’s too hot and then, only in the evening you wake up again" (Personal interview, Nov. 15, 2018).

Almost all participants talked about agriculture as the backbone of the economy or even society in Sāmoa. Agriculture’s ability to adapt and help aid resilience is then linked to how well other parts of life can also become resilient.

Gender Roles
When asked to describe her experience with the Fa’aSāmoa with her work Sila stated that:

“for as long as I live I am Samoan. I live by it every day and I carry it throughout my work. Such include my respect for my ACEO, my respect for the guys at work whom I literally must call my brothers, my respect for my girlfriends at work for they all see me as their ‘mother’ therefore I must always be seen as a role model for all good things to them. I must also respect the farmers, young and old, by being very careful with my choice of words, never mind what I wear because I’m on the job, as long as I know how to approach them kindly and speak to them appropriately. It’s not a struggle since I know I was brought up well by my parents and both my grandmas” (Email, Nov. 8, 2018).

In many of her answers, Sila discussed what it is like being a woman in the agricultural sector. In her response above she is explaining her role as a female both through the Fa’aSāmoa and her line of work. This highlights that gender roles exist separately in both, but that there is overlap. During a talanoa, Latai Niusulu also discussed gender roles. In terms of the Fa’aSāmoa she mentioned the link the titles and that chiefly titles are gender neutral, but she also discussed her own role as a woman in her village. When talking about gender roles in agriculture Latai Niusulu stated:

“women would also be more involved with planting crops like vegetables [and] flowers, so there would be particular types of plants that you see a gender split in
the way that people tend to do these things. With the livestock, it’s mostly men that would be involved with the farming of pigs and cattle but for chickens, women would definitely be involved” (Personal interview, Nov. 15, 2018).

Along with this Latai Niusulu discussed the importance of women’s committees in villages and referenced crops that are grown for cultural purposes, instead of consumption, like:

"pandanus is something that women are involved with because they use pandanus to make all the handicrafts that you see in the markets so, they would be involved in the growing, harvesting, and drying, and the preparation of the pandanus plant, to weave their mats” (Personal interview, Nov. 15, 2018).
Discussion

The results from this study are consistent with the previous literature. While I did not find any background information specifically connecting the Fa’aSāmoa to agricultural development, my results did align with how important the Fa’aSāmoa is to the daily lives of Sāmoans, as well as the impact traditional agriculture has on sustainability. The literature makes mention of how intertwined agriculture is in Sāmoa, which was also seen in my research when multiple interviewees described agriculture as the backbone of the Sāmoan society, as well as the economy. With this research aligning with previous literature, that looked at the Fa’aSāmoa and agriculture separately, it has the ability to help connect the Fa’aSāmoa and agriculture.

Using the theory of historical particularism focused my lens on how the environmental and social history of Sāmoa has influenced the Fa’aSāmoa’s relationship with agriculture. When conducting the interviews many of the participants addressed the importance of history in Sāmoa. Social history was mainly broken down into pre-colonization or traditional Sāmoa, colonization by the Germans and colonization by New Zealand, and post-colonization or independence. The influence colonizers had on agriculture and the social structures in Sāmoa was mentioned by almost all participants. Similarly, many compared Sāmoa’s current state to traditional Sāmoa. The environmental history and its impacts were not addressed as much as the social side. This very well could be due to the questions I asked and how I probed. However, Latai Niusulu did reference the importance of environment when discussing growing practices and cultural knowledge.

When looking at the overall importance of the interactions between the Fa’aSāmoa and agricultural development, it is important to acknowledge the importance of each separately. When participants were asked to define the Fa’aSāmoa man hesitated and
started by saying something along the lines of “it is very hard to define Fa’aSamoa in a few words” (Tamasese, J, Email, Nov. 30, 2018). The participants defined the Fa’aSāmoa by saying, “it’s the Sāmoan way of living” (Atoa, Email, Nov. 16, 2018) or “It is what defines my existence, my roots, my birthright” (Sila, Email, Nov. 8, 2018). The Fa’aSāmoa is an intricate and significant part of life. With the Fa’aSāmoa having the impact it does on the lives of Sāmoans it would be inappropriate to then not discussing it in relation with other aspects that affect daily life. Agriculture was described as “one of the pillars of any economy” (Tamasese, E, Personal interview, Nov. 7, 2018). During a talanoa with Latai Niusulu, we discussed my host tamā and about how he owns a shop, but also grows for subsistence. During this discussion Latai Niusulu said:

“you’ll probably come back in ten years and it’s either going to increase in size or it’s going to close. If there’s a Chinese big supermarket than it will definitely die out but that does not mean that, that family will die out as well because they’ve got those other mechanisms of survival that they can fall back on” (Personal interview, Nov. 15, 2018).

Agriculture is the key to survival. When talking to Sāmoans they will tell you that for as long as they have known there has always been the Fa’aSāmoa and their people have always farmed. These two systems both play intricate roles in Sāmoan society and it is only fitting that they are talked about together and their intertwined relationship is not ignored.

While, this study was able to show how the Fa’aSāmoa impacts and is incorporated into agriculture and agricultural development, it would be beneficial to collect significantly more data. In the time span, I conducted my research I only talked to seven people either working in the agricultural sector or in academia. To improve upon this study more local
farmers should be interviewed or surveyed. If I were going to continue this research I would want to conduct interviews or surveys in the villages, as well as on plantations growing for export. The hardest part of this research was having several interviews not work out, as well as not hearing back from people who would have been key contributors. Having the opportunity to converse with more local farmers and those working within the Ministry of Agriculture would help better determine the importance of culture on development.
Conclusion

The resilience of the Sāmoan people and their culture was the biggest recurring theme seen throughout the literature, interviews, and participant observation. In the conclusion of “Cultivation in Old Sāmoa” Watters says that “the wealth of the islands seems to have resulted in a narrowing rather than a broadening of agricultural practices” and that “the fact that planting could be done all the year round in most parts meant that losses would soon be recovered, and in the meantime the bounteous natural environment provided fish from the sea, wild yams and roots from the forest, and coconuts along the seashore” (350-351). One of the considerable impacts the Fa’aSāmoa has on agricultural development is its ability to not let the importance of culture and tradition to be forgotten. In many western countries, these pillars of society were lost in many aspects of life, all in the name of capitalism. The Fa’aSāmoa holds the Sāmoan people together and has protected them.

This is seen in both subsistence farming, which is done in every village, as well as larger scale farming for commercial use. The importance of community and the impact the community has on everyday life is seen in farming practices. In the village of Amaile, the plantation was not being worked because the men in the village came together to help a family prepare for an upcoming funeral. When discussing his own commercial farm Tamasese talked about the importance of having time to be active community members, instead of working over eight hour days.

The effects of the Fa’aSāmoa on agricultural development can be argued as both positive and negative. Useable land is often caught up in disputes regarding titles and can sit stagnant. Holding on to traditions too tightly can lead to only growing for subsistence, this is evident when Sila mentions how many families have one cow in case it is needed for a cultural purpose, but will not have a herd. However, the Fa’aSāmoa and communal land
is a key preseason Sāmoa has not been over-developed. As mentioned by many participants the Fa’aSāmoa also is not set in stone, allowing for it to adapt as needed with the rest of society. Regardless of its negative or positive impacts, the Fa’aSāmoa does play a key role in agriculture and that is why it is incorporated into agricultural development and will continue to have a role in the future of agriculture in Sāmoa.
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Appendices

Appendix A: List of Figures

Figure A: Photograph of ta’amu, giant taro, at Fa’Sua’s plantation in Amaile, Upolu, the photograph was taken by myself
Figure B: Photograph of Fa’Sua’s plantation in Amaile, Upolu, the photograph was taken by myself
Figure C: Photograph of my host family’s shop and front yard, including breadfruit trees, in Amaile, Upolu, the photograph was taken by myself
Figure D: Photograph of a bull on the side of the road, in Upolu, the photograph was taken by myself
Figure E: Photograph of my host family’s breadfruit tree from their fale, in Amaile, Upolu, the photograph was taken by myself

Appendix B: General Interview Questions

- Are you Sāmoan?
  - Yes, have you always lived in Sāmoa?
  - No, how long have you been in Sāmoa and why are you here?
- How would you define the Fa’aSāmoa?
- Can you explain your profession/ involvement with agriculture?
  - Can you give some background information about your farm or work?
- What us the importance of agriculture in Sāmoa?
- Do you believe the Fa’aSāmoa impacts agriculture?
- Should the Fa’aSāmoa be considered when discussing agricultural development?
- Can you discuss your experience with the Fa’aSāmoa in your agricultural work?
  - How do you incorporate the Fa’aSāmoa into your work?
- Does the Fa’aSāmoa negatively impact agriculture or agricultural development?
  - Does it inhibit commercial agricultural in anyway?
- How do you feel about your profession?
  - How do you think others view your profession and why?
- Can you touch on the difference between commercial and subsistence farming?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Dr. Safua Aklei

- Are you Sāmoan?
  - Yes, have you always lived in Sāmoa?
  - No, how long have you been in Sāmoa and why are you here?
- Can you explain your profession/ job?
- What is your understanding of the Fa’aSāmoa?
  - How would you define the Fa’aSāmoa?
- What is your knowledge on the history of agriculture in Sāmoa?
- How would you say the Fa’aSāmoa has been incorporated into agricultural development throughout history?
  - Comparing Sāmoan agriculture, with German control, and New Zealand control
- Do you believe the Fa’aSāmoa impacts agriculture?
  - Should the Fa’aSāmoa be considered when discussing agricultural development?

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Dr. Anita Latai Niusulu
Appendix E: Interview Questions for Jamal Tamasese

- Are you Sāmoan?
  - Yes, have you always lived in Sāmoa?
  - No, how long have you been in Sāmoa and why are you here?
- Can you explain your profession/job?
- What is your understanding of the Fa’aSāmoa?
  - How would you define the Fa’aSāmoa?
- What is the importance of agriculture in Sāmoa?
- Do you believe the Fa’aSāmoa impacts agriculture?
  - Should the Fa’aSāmoa be considered when discussing agricultural development?
- What are some benefits to taking a more traditional approach to things like farming?
- How can traditional farming help make Sāmoa more resilient?
- Can you discuss gender roles in farming and their impact?

Appendix F: Participant Observation of a Plantation in Amaile

It’s roughly 11:00 in the morning. The sun is beating down on me as I walk down to the plantation. I am accompanied by my friend Jane, another American student, and my host nephew, Toa, who is five years old. We reach the start of Fa’aSua’s, the high chief in Amaile, plantation. He is growing coconuts, taro, giant taro, and cocoa. When you first approach his plantation it looks too idyllic to even be on a post card. Coconut trees stretch out from thick forest to the beach. The trees are spread out and grass grows at their base. Behind the line of tree lays the ocean which is a dark shade of blue contrasting with the lighter blue sky.

Each coconut tree has notches in it, making them easier to climb. On my last visit to Amaile we came to the plantation with a group of village men and watched them skilfully climb the coconut trees, with machetes in their mouths. Once they reached the top they would cut down...
the coconuts one at a time and then cut down some of the palm fauns.

Today however, the plantation is empty, it is just myself and my companions. There is no one currently working one because of the heat and two, because most of the village men are busy digging a grave for an upcoming funeral. There may also not currently be a need for anything from the plantation. The fact that there is no one here but us makes me feel more comfortable about taking my camera out and taking photos. If the village men had been down here working I would have felt a little awkward photographing something that is just part of their daily life.

We begin to walk back into the denser part of the plantation. If you did not know what taro looked like it would be easy to assume that this was just untamed forest, instead of a working plantation. The ground is not cleared. What back home I would refer to as weeds grow rampant. There are no perfectly laid out beds or rows or at least to my untrained eye things seem relatively disorganized. I try to push out my western preconceptions from the farms I have worked on back home and just take in what is before me.

As we walk further back we begin to see the taro plants. They are growing in the shade provided by the coconut trees overhead. The taro plants have huge leaves and I believe are often called elephant ear plants and are used ornamentally in other parts of the world. They grow scattered around on a plot I would assume is at least five acres, but I am not completely sure how far back the plantation actually goes, as I’ve only ever been showed the front, easy to access section.

Amongst the coconut trees papaya trees and cocoa tree grow. We continue to trek through the plantation until we reach the giant taro plants. These in the simplest of terms are exactly like taro but over twice the size. The leaves stretch higher and are larger than the length and width of my torso. The giant taro are growing on a hillside. The plantation continues up the hill, as no land is wasted or under-utilized.

I take pictures of the plantation and some of the crops and then we begin to hike back to the beach. We spend time sitting on the sand and wading in the water before we head back to my family’s fale. Jane and I sit in the open fale, while To a goes inside to nap. I stare at the breadfruit trees in the front yard. They provide both shade to sit in and food for my family. Only this morning I watched as they used a pole to knock the breadfruit down from the trees. They collected to breadfruit and took it to the umu, or outdoor kitchen, where it will be prepared for lunch and dinner.

The breadfruit during my stay has been served both prepared in coconut milk and a chips. I really enjoy when my family serves me more traditional dishes. Most of the time they try to make food they think I will like such as fried chicken. They also constantly give me canned sausage because it says “America’s Best” on the packaging. I really do appreciate how much they do for me and everything they prepare.

But I digress, behind the breadfruit trees stands my family’s house. Behind the house there is another small open fale, the family graves, and a banana plantation. My family’s plantation is much smaller than the high chief’s and only consists of bananas, or at least to my knowledge it is. My family has been gathering the bushels of bananas as desired to eat. There are way to many bananas for the members of my household to eat alone. Because of this the “excess” (put in quotations because I really do not feel like this is the appropriate term and it also feels uncomfortably western, but I cannot currently think of another word to use) is given to other family members and community members.

This sense of community is one of the things I have loved most not just about staying in Amaile, but in Sāmoa. My family does not grow taro behind their house, but that does not mean we never eat taro or that we have to drive to the store to get taro. Other members of the community grow things we do not and we grow things other members

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don’t. Because of this there is an ability to trade and share. If each member of the community grew everything they would begin to become detached from each other, at least a little. The sharing for crops and food help create a sense of dependency on one another and therefore communal bonds and ties are strong. There is no benefit for you if someone else in your community fails…. a lesson I wish capitalist bankers and big business owners in America could learn.

The farming in Amaile is not for export. It’s not done in order to get buyers overseas happy or to contribute to the global marketplace. Amaile farms for subsistence. They farm in order to take care of their families and community. This makes each family and each community resilient. The road that connects Amaile to getting to the rest of the island could be blocked for a week and the village would not starve. The cyclones will roll in and blow the breadfruit from the tree, but the village will not stave. The taro blithe would wipe out a large majority of the food supply, but still the village would not starve. This could not be said of my neighbors and neighborhood back in America.