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Subsistence in Samoa: influences of the capitalist global
economy on conceptions of wealth and well-being

Tess Hosman

Advisor Mika Maiava

Dr. Fetaomi Tapu-Qiliho

S.I.T. Samoa, Spring 2019

Abstract

This paper studies Samoa's position in the global economy as an informal agricultural economy. A country's access to the global economy reflects a level of socio-economic development and political power. It is also reflective of the country's history of globalization. This research uses an analysis of past and current forms of colonization that continue to influence cultural and ideological practices, specifically practices regarding food. Concepts of wealth and well-being in subsistence and capitalist economies are compared and contrasted. Research takes place on the main island of Upolu, in and around the capital, Apia. Information is accumulated from previous research and interviews with a variety of Samoan participants. The *faasamoa* is regarded as a form of resilience in maintaining cultural values despite the globalization of neoliberal capitalist values. Subsistence and capitalism, although deemed inherently incompatible, function in the same sphere as Samoa utilizes capitalist concepts to maintain cultural practices. Both forms of wealth clash and yet are often held together as Samoa seeks to establish a position in the global economy while simultaneously developing the local economy to overcome colonial forms of dependence.

Key words: *capitalism, colonization, subsistence, community, Samoa*

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Introduction

Samoa is a seemingly small collection of islands located in the South Pacific. It is considered a developing country, defined as an agricultural economy with limited access to other markets in the global economy. The country functions on an informal economy based on the primary production of raw materials. Participation in the global economy is limited, consisting of agricultural exports such as coconut products, including copra, coconut oil, and coconut cream, or niche markets for specialty products. $\frac{2}{3}$ of Samoans are employed in the agricultural sector, including jobs such as fishing, plantation work, livestock farming, and marketing.¹ This fact alone shows Samoa's economic dependency on food production.

Focusing on the changing conceptions of well-being, wealth, and cultural relations with food as Samoa encounters Western values, I seek to understand Samoa's position in the global economy as an informal agricultural economy. In order to address my research topic I must understand historical and ongoing forms of colonization, systems of food production and distribution in village and urban settings, the informal agricultural economy in relation to the export-based economy, national conceptions of wealth and well-being, and the *faasamoa* as a form of resilience. Conceptual questions that guide my framework include; How has capitalist colonization and globalization affected subsistence in Samoa? How are Samoan cultural identities and traditional foods affected by the global food system? How does this process of colonization influence traditional Samoan concepts of land? How are the values of the

¹ New Agriculturist (2006). *Country Profile- Samoa*.

community affected by Western neoliberal concepts of individualization and socio-economic hierarchies?

According to the Cambridge Business English Dictionary, subsistence is the “state of having what you need in order to stay alive, but no more.” Such survival necessities include food, land, and water. The accumulation of capital creates a certain vision of success and well being in which one is surrounded by material goods. Subsistence, on the other hand, fulfills the self through the well being of the community. It is very rare that one is homeless, hungry, or in need. A community’s resources are pooled together to ensure the well-being of all. With access to the land, there are more opportunities than one may think. Unfortunately, due to changing conceptions of wealth through capitalist imperialism, livelihoods are increasingly diminished if they “cannot prove their worth in economic terms.”² Throughout my research I follow varying opinions on export and wealth in Samoa through interviews with individuals and organizations. I delve into the conceptions of well-being in regards to cultural and physical health in Samoa and the influence of globalization, as well as wealth in subsistence and capitalist systems. I then analyze what constitutes hardship in Samoa and the development initiatives that seek to overcome such aspects of poverty. Finally, the *faasamoa* is explored as a form of resilience in assigning accountability and protection of the land and traditional knowledge. Lastly, I conclude by exploring the concept of indigenous capitalism as a framework separate from Western capitalism.

Significance

The article, *Beyond Subsistence Affluence*, reflects on the Pacific islands;

² Nelson, Julie. (1995). Feminism and Economics. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 9. 131-48. 10.1257/jep.9.2.131.

“Because of their small size, remoteness and geographical fragmentation, many Pacific communities are highly vulnerable and suffer disproportionately from external shocks, such as adverse climatic events or market failures...the very existence of several atoll economies is threatened by higher sea levels” (Yari, 43).³

Small island states are regarded as the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Currently, global attention is intensely focused on the region. Climate change will further harm local food production and a community’s ability to survive on their ancestral land through effects such as sea-level rise, increased cyclones, land erosion, and saltwater intrusion. Samoans acknowledge the fact that climate change is occurring and must mitigate the effects actively. There is an immediate sense to act instead of waiting for the global North to claim responsibility for the situation they face. However, the climate change narrative in the global North remains divided between believers and nonbelievers. This topic is very much politically and socioeconomically influenced, not so much focused on the environment. In her book, “This Changes Everything,” Naomi Klein states that climate change deniers don’t necessarily oppose the scientific facts, but more so the implications of this information. One’s belief or nonbelief in climate change is central to their identity through their sociopolitical values (Klein, 2014).⁴ Climate change is affecting many aspects of livelihoods in Samoa, such as the changing seasons causing food insecurity and storms impacting the reliability of harvests. In Samoa it’s not about the loss of profits in a business but more so the impacts on livelihood and the

³ Yari, M. (2003). Beyond subsistence affluence: poverty in Pacific island countries. *Bulletin on Asia-Pacific Perspectives*. 41-54.

⁴ Klein, Naomi, (2014). *This changes everything : capitalism vs. the climate*. New York :Simon & Schuster

family's access to food. Climate change is a global issue given the practices of Western imperialism that instill exploitative concepts of surplus production and accumulation. Many developed nations are unable or unwilling to see the effects of such practices, but the Pacific islands do not have the privilege to ignore such a prominent issue that is currently harming livelihoods.

Oceania stands as a representation of subsistence communities that face the consequences of global North imperialism and pollution; pollution of the environment, cultural values, and livelihoods. Global North countries stand as capitalist hegemony that enforce this socio-economic model on the rest of the globe through imperialist practices, such as food colonialism, a concept coined by Pacific writer, Dr. Cathie Koa Dunsford.⁵ If colonialism alters indigenous ways of life, then food colonialism alters one's cultural food identity. Therefore, food colonialism is a form of colonization in which cultural values related to food and land use are discredited and often forced to assimilate to hegemonic socio-economic systems. Throughout my research I have come across the ways in which Samoa struggles with this form of colonization. However, Samoa retains its cultural food identity, and thus its community values, in the face of Western imperialism

We live in a globalized world in which ideas and resources are in constant exchange. Concepts of wealth have always differed, yet are now being transitioned into the same capitalist definition through the global economy. This exchange is hardly equal and often takes on a

⁵ Dr. Cathie Koa Dunsford. (2010-11). Kaitiakitanga: Protecting our Oceans, Islands, and Skies by Inspiring a Climate Change of Consciousness. *Dreadlocks: Oceans, Islands, and Skies*, Vo. 6/7, 1-23.

paternal role from developed countries to developing countries. Food creates, and is created by culture. Everyone must eat, and food is reflective of a human connection with the land and its resources. Access to food reflects one's socioeconomic status in a capitalist economy. Food can not be studied separately from our current hegemonic socio-economic system. In turn, food cannot be comprehensively discussed without regarding the cultural and social influence it has on consumers. While some may view this as an economic model, separate from other aspects of society, I encourage readers to understand the influence of capitalism on all areas of society. It is a root system, constantly connected, affecting the growth of the forest. The root tendrils of capitalism connect to the roots of subsistence in any given society, due to its global scale. We must think of food as a system of production and consumption, a form of subsistence, and a cultural identity.

Literature Review

When studying the current food system in Samoa, it is necessary to acknowledge economic, social, and cultural aspects through a global lens of international influences. International influences include both historic and modern forms of colonization and hidden agendas such as economic development strategies in regards to agriculture.

This review seeks to collect information and differing perspectives on the global economy and food colonialism in Oceania from current literature. When searching for previous research it became apparent that a lot of literature regarding this issue already exists, specifically in the same lens I will conduct my research; anti-colonial and Marxist. Therefore, I wish to

explore some untouched topics such as subsistence affluence and conceptions of wealth and well-being in Samoa.

Historical and Current forms of Colonization

Colonialism is not in the past. It is an ongoing and multigenerational process of dispossession in which a community is disconnected from their land and culture (Gordon). Current forms of colonization follow the same concept of “accumulation by dispossession” but often in a disguised manner through economic imperialism. Economic imperialism includes national development aided by international donors. Gordon offers insights into early development strategies to improve Samoa’s economic independence through gaining foreign investments, such as the Asian Development Bank. This need for foreign investments in order to maintain participation in the global economy creates a dependency on the global market and funding from developed nations. Funding is often distributed in a paternalistic sense from developed to developing countries. Gordon labels this “colonial paternalism,” the western belief that indigenous peoples have no political will and therefore require enlightenment; very similar to earlier colonialist concepts. Despite declared independence, Samoa remains under the colonial grip through continued dependence and resource extraction. Gordon uses a critical ethnography methodology, analyzing power relations in everyday life. The research is divided into three stages; historical analyses of power relations, analyzing information through a sociopolitical/economic lens, and challenging normative theories to create social action.

Pacific writer, Dr. Cathie Koa Dunsford, coins the term ‘food colonialism’ in relation to the arrival of colonists and the changing of pacific diets, as well as modern forms of unwanted food dumping. Food dumping is the flooding of markets in Oceania with fatty meats and other

rejected food products, or what is conceived as waste from first nations. Dr. Dunsford describes colonization as the betterment of the colonial group at the expense of those colonised. In this sense, colonization affects the health of Pacific island peoples.

Conceptions of Health

Health is influenced by cultural values. Food is a component of health; health of the body, mind, community, and cultural identity. Conceptions of health are often imposed from a western viewpoint, breaking down food into nutrient categories and placing responsibility on the individual. It is often measured through weight, calculated in numbers and percentages of body fat (Seidan).

Food sovereignty is usurped through imports and food dumping in Samoa. As mentioned previously, the infiltration of fatty meats in the market is detrimental to Samoan health, on a physical and cultural scale (Gordon). Physically, such imports lack necessary nutrients and create a “calorie delusion” (Gove) in which processed foods high in fat and sugar keep one satisfied and full without offering any beneficial energy. Because of globalization and global market influences, canned foods and other processed imports replace forms of subsistence farming as Samoans lose access to customary lands and are forced into the capitalist economy. Gove utilizes the *Talanoa* method when interviewing restaurant owners in Apia, allowing the conversation to go where the interviewee deems relevant. This method enforces a mutual relationship between the researcher and the interviewee, in which both give and receive information.

Healthy and unhealthy are categories which are defined based on social concepts of good and bad. There is a dichotomy between local food and imported food. Local is associated with good, healthy while canned imports are regarded as bad, unhealthy, and not necessarily

affordable when compared to traditional produce. This influx in canned imports stands in opposition to Samoa's exoticized tropical climate and abundance. There is a Western vision of Samoa as a place where food grows wild, but this rhetoric doesn't acknowledge flooding of the local market with import goods, decrease in subsistence agriculture and degradation of the environment, and urbanization resulting in the inaccessibility of fresh produce (Gordon). With Westernization, health acquires a socio-economic connotation in which it is only accessible by the affluent. Gove brings this into perspective when discussing the labelling of local food as organic. This doesn't affect the perspective of locals, but more so attracts tourists that are "in search of authentic and healthy island cuisine" (Gove). The exoticization of abundant healthy food doesn't influence locals to change their food habits because the knowledge that local food is healthy is already there. The knowledge can't change actions as long as locals are restricted by finances, accessibility, and globalization.

Healthy is associated with organic. Often times 'organic' is associated with affluence, being more expensive. In the Western perspective, health can only be accessed through financial well-being. But according to Gove, organic isn't co-existent with privilege in Samoa. Instead, organic is a form of "continued resistance to colonization" as a stand-alone agricultural system (Gove). Samoan subsistence has always been 'organic' and just now must compete with global industrial systems of monoculture.

Global Economy

Local production and prices are influenced by the global economy. This is where power dynamics come into play between the colonizers and the colonized. The global economy inherently disadvantages subsistence agriculture (Gordon). Local farmers can't compete in the

global economy at the level of surplus profit and production that a capitalist economy creates. There are no protections or advantages for indigenous forms of subsistence in a neoliberal economy of free trade. Gordon clearly explores capitalist power dynamics, continued colonization, and dispossession, but most importantly the literature ends with a section devoted to forms of resistance in the face of such daunting systems of oppression. Indigenous knowledge, reclamation of land, and collective community are forms of resistance and leave the reader with some hope to hold onto. Instead of simply stating the continued negative aspects of globalization and capitalist exploitation, it is beneficial to acknowledge positive forms of community resistance that are fighting against such forms of colonization.

In order to compete in the global economy, many Samoans migrate to other countries where employment at a reasonable wage is available. Because of the loss of laborers, methods of subsistence farming are decreasing. Samoans are becoming less self-reliant on traditional foods due to this lack of subsistence and increased imports. Migrant laborers send home remittances to their families living in Samoa. These remittances of cash or foodstuffs, such as canned food, make up 50-80% of the household income (Muliaina). This is an important statistic in understanding the forced dependency on imports as well as a reliance on foreign finances. Statistics often create a strong point and give more evidence to those that aren't able to conceive of such theories.

Local Food Production

In Samoa, local production is an avenue for financial access to the global market. According to Hardin, local food actors in Samoa are positioned as “altruistic capitalists.” Food actors practice local production in order to access the global economy through exporting agricultural

commodities. There is a reimagined concept of capitalism in this situation in which subsistence affluence is converted into financial accumulation. With this conversion comes a reimagined sense of wealth and well-being. Local food production can be harmed by this capitalist mentality by emphasizing surplus profit instead of focusing on providing for the community (Gove).

Subsistence farming remains due to community resistance and maintained cultural values such as customary land. 80% of land is customarily owned, generationally passed along to families within a community (Gove). The land is protected from international development agencies and other foreign investors who are grabbing land for profit. But if the need for financial accumulation outweighs the benefits and values of community subsistence, then these customary lands could be given away for capital. The values of the community must be generationally passed down, requiring a form of education that isn't influenced by western ideals. Gordon mentions the influence of education as a space of learning either critical thinking or affirming societal conceptions, similar to Paulo Freire's concept of education as a tool for revolution and social change (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*). Education can influence conceptions of well-being. If a child is taught through a Western system about well-being and sustainability as the accumulation of wealth, they will strive for success by leaving the village to access the global economy instead of valuing community well-being and subsistence living. There could be further research regarding the Samoan school system either as an institution of social change or capitalist assimilation.

Effects of Food Colonialism on Samoan Cultural Identity

Food is culture. It creates a sense of identity through one's physical and social environment (Anderson). Therefore, a changing diet represents a change in culture and vice versa. The history

of food reflects power dynamics and the process of colonization (Bindon). Bindon ties many greater concepts into concrete examples, such as the successful launch of a McDonalds in American Samoa which is reflective of globalization. Adding examples of such concepts assists the reader in better understanding complex systems. Bindon also acknowledges the resilience of Samoan culture by studying the continuation of traditional events as opposed to everyday life which is comprised of convenient alternatives. By recognizing the powerful presence of the *umu* in family feasts and special events, Bindon exemplifies the adaptation of culture instead of the loss of culture.

A communal society values the entirety of the community's well-being. The individual can not be separated from the community (Gove). Therefore, personal wealth is not valued. But more research could be done to understand how further neoliberal influences will affect the wealth of the community. The contradictions of a capitalist economy and a communal society interact with one another.

Conclusion

I agree with the rhetoric of the stated sources of literature and seek to use a similar method of critical ethnography. However, the research is limited in its scope of commodification and capitalist contradictions to Samoan ways of life. Epli Hua'ofa's literature, "Our Sea of Islands," positions Oceania as a bigger identity that connects the diverse cultural identities of the Pacific islands. The paper calls for the identities of Oceania to collaborate in resisting the hegemonic colonization of values by standing together. Throughout history, identities have been marginalized, communities have been separated, and in-fighting is promoted by the colonizer to

limit resistance. The reorientation of Oceania as a fluid area without borders and formed from migration could influence the rhetoric of indigenous resistance and adaptation.

Methodology

It is important to acknowledge my bias. I am a U.S. born citizen and I have only been residing in Samoa for about 3 months. My identity as an outsider influences my experiences in interacting with Samoan people. My observations and interpretations may be skewed by personal bias despite efforts to be impartial. I am also unable to speak the Samoan language which allows for possible misunderstandings in my research. My frameworks of thinking are influenced by Western values.

I utilize Marxist concepts when focusing on a socioeconomic analysis, critiquing the development of capitalism. My analysis of economic activities in regards to cultural influences is based off of the Marxist theory of separation of production and labor. I also use an anti-colonial perspective when evaluating the community, both local and global, in terms of colonial relations. The critical ethnography approach studies interconnecting power relations and the influences on the daily lives of people. I am using a Pacific framework to ensure that concepts are reflective of Samoan interpretations. Much of my information is based on previous research in the field, observations, interactions, and interviews with Samoan informants. I use previous research, scholarly articles and books, that I have accessed through the Mount Holyoke College database. Throughout the semester I gained knowledge from visiting lecturers and have chosen to include relevant information. All of my interviews were recorded verbally with verbal consent. The process was question and answer, as participants were guided by pre-written questions. I would

also alter the relevancy of questions based on the information that I received. I acknowledge the failings of my interview method as I would have preferred a *Talanoa* method. *Talanoa* is an informal conversation that allows for the exchange of authentic information as a personal relationship of mutual trust and respect is formed between the researcher and the participant. I would have preferred to work alongside my informants, but many meetings occurred in a coffee shop or office setting.

My research is focused on the island of Upolu. I compare and contrast village and urban settings, using Amaile as the village and the main city of Apia as the urban. According to Naomi Gordon in *A Critical Ethnography of Dispossession, Indigenous Sovereignty and Knowledge Production in Resistance in Samoa*, “cities represent the localization of global forces” and therefore the influence of the global economy is most recognizable in Apia (Gordon, 2017).⁶

I had the privilege of meeting with the Samoa Research Organization (SROS), specifically the division of postharvest. SROS is a government initiative with the main function of carrying out scientific research to benefit the national economy through access to export markets. I met with the scientific research leader of Plant and Postharvest Technologies, Seeseei Molimau-Samasoni, in her office where I conducted a verbal interview, enquiring about avenues and difficulties of exports. We spoke for an hour as she had much to say about each topic.

I was also able to gather information in my interactions with the Samoan Women’s Association of Growers (SWAG). SWAG is a grassroots organization focused on the mission of providing a space for women farmers in Samoa. Women are trained in networking, marketing, and growing skills to start their own businesses on their own terms. I attended the Wednesday

⁶Gordon, N. N. (2017). *A Critical Ethnography of Dispossession, Indigenous Sovereignty and Knowledge Production in Resistance in Samoa*

executive meeting where the board members came together to discuss and schedule future plans, such as workshops and funding applications. I listened to get an idea of how the organization is run and received contacts. I also sat in on a meeting with the members where I observed a democratic election for the upcoming board members. I was able to meet one of the executive members, Mele Mauala, for a verbally recorded interview. I must acknowledge that my questions were too conceptual and influenced by a Western framework of development and capitalism. Mele was able to point out my errors and encourage me to narrow my topic.

I returned to the village of Amaile to be welcomed into my host family with open arms as I discussed my research with my sister, Sina, and father, Tupuola. I had spent a week in Amaile before starting research. Upon beginning research, I reached out to my family as I knew they owned a store and we talked previously about food in the village. I stayed for two days while conducting verbally recorded interviews. There was difficulty in understanding each other due to the language barrier, but I am very grateful for my informants' use of the English language as I am unable to communicate in Samoan.

Mikaele Maiava acted as an advisor, friend, and informant as I visited his farm in the village of Moamoa. I often visited his farm where we worked together pruning, planting, making deliveries, and running errands. During this time we were able to discuss my research. Our interviews were informal. I would prompt with questions at different times, leading to a longer conversation. I am grateful for Mika's openness and expertise as I spent some unforgettable time on his farm with his family.

If the interview was conducted with voice recording, then I asked for verbal participant consent. If the interview was informal and not recorded, I gained consent through written

approval, such as a signature allowing me to use the information gained from the conversation. I asked each participant if all information was free to use or if some should remain confidential. I have utilized the main overall points of interviews and have chosen to omit any personal information that was shared. All informants have given consent to use their names. All interviewees are above legal age.

Findings

In the global North, the local food movement is often aligned with the food sovereignty movement in which local food production is consumed within the community, for the benefit of community health and resilience. I always assumed that local production meant local consumption, but the two concepts don't always align. In Samoa, local production is an avenue for financial access to the global market. Hardin explores the concept in "Producing Markets, Producing People." He writes that food actors are equated to "altruistic capitalists" in the way that they encourage local food production to participate "responsibly" in global markets, assuming "responsibly" means on the terms of Samoan interests, instead of foreign interests. Food actors seek to "transform the market to change consumer preferences "for the better," in other terms, promoting healthy imports. The concept of what healthy entails will be further discussed in the following section. Altruistic capitalists use capitalist logic, including concepts of export commodities and financial accumulation for the benefit of Samoans and the "health of the nation."⁷ Accessing the global market on the terms of Samoan well-being, using the market as an avenue for independence, is a reoccurring theme in my research. I will explore varying perspectives on export through the views of interview informants.

⁷Hardin, J., & Kwauk, C. T. (2015). Producing Markets, Producing People. *Food, Culture & Society*, 18(3), 519–539

The Grassroots Organization: SWAG

The Samoan Women's Association of Growers (SWAG) is a grassroots organization run by women to give a platform to women farmers. Women are encouraged to learn networking and marketing skills in order to be in charge of their business and the money they earn. Often times women work on the plantations alongside their husbands yet they don't receive any credit for their labor. SWAG seeks to empower women to proudly proclaim their presence in agriculture as well as learn how to negotiate on their own terms. Often times women are creative when coming up with sustainable solutions to emerging problems such as the effects of climate change and market instability as they are "conscientious of the fact that their actions have ramifications for their families."⁸ Therefore, women are a necessary component in moving forward into a sustainable future for generations to come. A large component of the organization is their market presence. Jams, pickles, chutney, and other specialty products, as well as vegetables are sold at the Sunday market. Any member is allowed to join and sell their products. I had the privilege to speak with an executive member who played a part in the creation of the organization. Mele acknowledged the stigma of the market and agricultural labor. For many "the concept of selling at the market seemed like the lowest of the low" (M. Mauala) so she sought to change people's perceptions. SWAG's table at the market has been their "steadfast way of guaranteeing we have a presence somewhere every week" (M. Mauala). It is a location that can encourage networking, community building, and knowledge sharing. Mele had been selling her chutney at the market alongside a friend who was selling vegetables. She noticed that she was making a lot more

⁸ M. Mauala, Personal interview, April 25, 2019

money off this specialty product than her friend who was receiving two *tala* for her cucumbers. Reflecting on this she stated, “the moment we turned that into pickles, we were selling it for 15 *tala* a jar. That’s a huge profit margin” (M. Mauala). She wanted to let others in on this market demand, thinking of the church and school fees that many families had to pay, and at the end of the day there would be some money left over for any other needs that arise.

This realization was a component in the creation of SWAG, as they host many workshops to teach women how to create these products. Mele creates specialty products using readily available crops, “I’ll take lots of traditional fruits or vegetables that Samoans take for granted and then I’ll turn it into something.” This inspires others to look at the fruits and vegetables growing in their backyard in a different lens. Interestingly, Samoa doesn’t have a high demand for food preservation seeing as crops can grow all year round due to the warm climate. However, there is more food security in being able to sell a crop long after its season has ended. Mele made the claim, “If you want a thriving economy you need a lot more products to guarantee a diversified market so individuals have a place in it.” An individual’s ability to create a specialty product assures a place in the market and less competition while others are competing to sell the same produce.

Instead of supplying large exporters, SWAG encourages women to be a full part of the process through exporting directly to markets overseas. The organization provides training and networks to “give farmers the ability to be confident enough to go online and start those negotiations themselves” (M. Mauala). Many farmers will supply an exporter with their product and have no knowledge of where their product goes after that. Mele’s father exports his cocoa directly to a chocolatier in New Zealand. He follows the beans from the moment he harvests

them and turns them by hand to the day they arrive at the chocolatier. He can take responsibility for his product as well as pride. The farm to table movement has popularized this process of selling directly to producers, because people are more willing to pay for a product that is transparent in who produced it. They “want to know the story behind the farmer” as it reflects the quality and care put into their harvest (M. Mauala).

Aside from encouraging women to access the global economy on their own terms, SWAG doesn't focus solely on export as a means of financial accumulation. Unfortunately, a large component of agricultural production for profit is the focus on export at the expense of the domestic market. Supplying local markets comes second to supplying the global market. Local production must be strengthened “rather than trying to funnel everything into one source for export” in which the exporter gets a large portion of the money (M. Mauala). Many will underestimate local demand. In reference to SWAG's bee initiative, a project to encourage local beekeeping, “a jar of honey here can go anywhere between 20 to 40 *tala*, you don't have to export that...it's a desired product we don't have a lot of” (M. Mauala). Therefore, a farmer doesn't have to export to ensure the wellbeing of their family. “What will guarantee success is so many other things that aren't monetized” such as the health of the family, environment, community, etc. (M. Mauala). When casually discussing my research topic, an insightful individual used a brilliant example when explaining Samoa's position in the global economy. He described canned fish, a commonly consumed product in Samoa, as local fish that is shipped, packaged, and resold back to Samoa. This reflects the epitome of the global economy in which local resources are commodified through production as they enter the global market.

Many plantations are certified organic as they have been long before the term organic was created. Women in Business Development Inc. is an organization based in Samoa that seeks to provide families with the access to overseas markets. They assist farmers in becoming certified organic in order to access niche international markets and create sustainable business relations.⁹ In her research regarding local food in Samoa, Gove states, “Organic growing does not take on the connotations of a privileged alternative to conventional agriculture, but rather a people’s continued resistance to colonization by embracing its own ways of being.”¹⁰ Due to the increasing food justice movement in the global North and the demand for transparent food products, there is a presence of niche markets for organic specialty products in the global economy. Most importantly, I must acknowledge that ‘organic’ is a Western concept. In Samoa “organic has been associated with increasing the profit margin of your product because it’s more valuable but that doesn’t mean that they are organic in production so we wanted to step away from the organic concept” (M. Mauala). Organic is a label with no genuine value, therefore SWAG uses the term “planet conscious.” To be conscious is to think of the well being of the next generations that will live on the land. The organic label has little meaning to Samoans, but it can still be profitable when exporting. As Mele explains, “It’s a Western concept to begin with, so why not monetize it?”

The concept of local food differs in a primarily traditional subsistence economy in which the majority of people retain the knowledge and the customary land to grow crops. Local food is therefore not an indication of one’s economic status. Instead, imported processed food products represent one’s ability to access the global economy. According to Hardin, in the article,

⁹ Women in Business Development. *Organics*.

¹⁰ Gove, Emily, "As Good As Niu: Food Sovereignty in Samoa" (2017). Honors Theses. 978.

Producing Markets, Producing People, “studies show that income generated from increased agricultural production often leads households to shift food consumption patterns to more expensive foods that are not necessarily healthier.”¹¹ This contrasting access between local and global food systems stands as a representation of Samoa’s limited access to global markets. Due to the lasting economic impact of colonization resulting in the capitalist logic of economic production, subsistence agriculture is viewed by some as an unproductive endeavor. Living a life without financial accumulation is increasingly impossible as the capitalist economy diminishes subsistence communities, following a migration into urban centers and the search for employment opportunities.

Youth in Samoa is defined from age 18 to 35 according to the 2011 National Youth Policy.¹² Samoa has a population with a large majority of youth, over 40%¹³, a contributing factor to high youth unemployment rates. Most importantly, families depend on youth for subsistence farming and village chores (M. Mauala). The loss of labor power to urban areas and other countries is an ongoing issue for small island states. More youth are leaving to find better paying employment or educational opportunities in places such as New Zealand or Australia. According to Muliaina in *Migration and Remittances*, subsistence agriculture is being neglected as villagers migrate. Instead, remittances are sent home, such as cash or canned foods. In fact, remittances account for 50-80% of the household income.¹⁴ Many families rely on their family members that live and work overseas to provide for their monetary needs.

¹¹ Hardin, J., & Kwauk, C. T. (2015). *Producing Markets, Producing People*. *Food, Culture & Society*, 18(3), 519–539.

¹² SNYC, National Youth Policy, 2015

¹³ CIA World Factbook (2018). *Samoa Demographics Profile 2018*.

¹⁴ Muliaina, T. (2005). *Migration and remittances : serious threats to food production in Samoa*. *Just Change*.

The Village: Amaile, Upolu

I had the privilege of living with a family in the beautiful village of Amaile, located on the east coast of Upolu. My sister, Sina, lives with her in-laws in the village as her husband works overseas in Australia doing seasonal agricultural labor. He is gone for six months at a time. Luckily, I was there to witness his arrival home and the excitement of his two young children upon being with their father again. Noticing the emotional toll his absence had on his family, I asked my sister why he didn't work in Samoa, she replied, "He will never work here in Samoa, will never go plant taro and banana" (Sina).¹⁵ There is a higher monetary value for agricultural labor in Australia than in Samoa. Sina is no stranger to urban living. She grew up in a village next to Amaile and moved to Apia to provide for her children who stayed behind in the village. In Apia she was a salesperson. Her limited salary went to her family, food, housing, and other basic needs such as transportation. She now resides in Amaile where all needs are provided for. There is a freshwater pool to collect water, bathe, and wash, as well as the ocean, a plantation, and customary land to live on. She is busy with many tasks such as cooking, cleaning, serving others, and caring for the family. When asked to compare her experiences in Apia and Amaile, she stated her preference for the village, "In Apia we always need money, in our village we don't need money. We plant the food so there's no need for us to use money to buy the taro, banana, laupele" (Sina). If a family is struggling with providing food, the community is there to assist, "we can share our food and they can share with us, that's the Samoan way of life" (Sina).

My father in the village, Tupuola Eteuati, has an extensive knowledge of Amaile as he grew up there. He holds a *matai* title and is a part of the village council, which speaks to his

¹⁵ Sina. (2019, April 13). Personal interview

influential role in the community. As an elder he provides for his family which includes financial needs and subsistence needs. He also must provide for community services such as funerals, the church, and other events. He plants the family's food in the village plantation, however he emphasizes his aging and loss of energy as he reflects on his responsibilities, "I'm too old, I'm tired to go and work on the plantation" (Tupuola).¹⁶ However, he owns a small store located in front of his house where he sells canned and packaged goods such as instant noodles and canned fish. This is the only store located inside the village, aside from another small shop further down the street near the entrance of the village. His parents owned the store before him, so he grew up working in the store from a young age. While living in the house, I observed many community members throughout the day coming to his store for food items. The children would be sent to get the items, sitting patiently while Tupuola finished his meal, re-tied his *ie lavalava* around his waist, and walked out to the store, unlocking the chains on the door and stepping inside. When I questioned where he got his items for the store, he mentioned his sons in American Samoa and New Zealand who would send him money to purchase anything he wanted to put in the store. Because of this store, the family has a source of monetary income which provides the opportunity to purchase goods in Apia. Most importantly, Tupuola can "give some money to buy the taro from someone" instead of planting and harvesting the taro himself. His sons are not there in the village to take over the responsibilities of the plantation, leaving him with no choice but to pay someone else to provide food for his family. Reflecting on changes he has noticed over his lifetime in the village, he spoke of the loss of fish, "When I'm young, that is the good time for fishing, get plenty of fish, the big fish, but now the wave from the hurricane

¹⁶ Tupuola Eteuati (2019, April 14). Personal interview

takes out all the fish from the reef, broken all the corals, and that's why now there's not that many fish" (Tupuola). He is referencing the cyclones, Ofa in 1990, and Val in 1991. The effects of these cyclones included the destruction of reef ecosystems, damage to trees, crops, houses, and roads, as well as the loss of lives.¹⁷ Such storms are detrimental to the village's livelihood as many sources of food are wiped out.

The Farm

Mika's farm, located in the village of Moamoa, is nestled against a stunning backdrop of green mountains covered in lush vegetation. The property is teeming with life; pigs, plants, and people. The property is owned by the elder council of Tokelau and worked upon by Mika and others to send food back to the island, a territory of New Zealand that lies North of Samoa. The harvest goes to many places; Tokelau, friends and family, and guests on the property. There is also a daughter who pays to have fresh food delivered to her mother every week.¹⁸ If someone is in need of food, Mika will be there to provide. The property not only functions as a farm, but also a place for families to stay as they seek medical treatment in Apia. The land is a site of knowledge exchange in which other farmers come to share sustainable growing techniques. School groups also come to visit and gain inspiration from the work that is being done. Many youths have returned and built their own raised beds at school, becoming sustainable leaders in their community. The food is not sold at the market nor exported to big distributors. Yet it is sent to the atoll island that is in need of such a harvest. As more islands struggle with the effects of climate change and other detriments to the soil, these systems of exchange could be set up to alleviate such hardships. The many islands of Oceania could once again overcome colonial

¹⁷ Burt, C. *Samoa Cyclone History*. Weather Underground, Dec 13, 2012.

¹⁸ Maiava, Mika. (2019, April 10). Personal interview

borders to care for one another as a collective unit and ensure the survival of these diverse livelihoods. There are multiple regional organizations focused on climate change, adaptation, resilience, etc. However, Tokelau's low soil organic matter could be improved through sustainable practices, such as growing in raised beds and working to build up the soil, but "no one wants to put in the work for the soil" (M. Maiava). Instead, there is more of a focus on the development of buildings such as schools and houses. This reflects the common rhetoric of development as economic growth, a way in which to ensure the well-being of the territory.

Tokelau is an atoll island formed by coral reefs, North of Samoa, that remains a territory of New Zealand. The soil is high in pH, has a low organic matter content, low water retention, and low amounts of nitrogen and potassium (Dr. Kader, 2019).¹⁹ This all accounts for a low quality soil when it comes to growing certain crops such as vegetables. Therefore, many people rely on Mika's harvest that he ships back to Tokelau from Samoa. The soil is relatively young, but further detriment comes from the effects of climate change such as salt water intrusion and land erosion caused by sea level rise. Mika recalls a time around 1999 when a news story was released which stated that Tokelau would sink. Instead of preparing for evacuation, the people went to the sea to watch how big the wave would be. They wouldn't leave their land and would rather sink with it. Mika asks, "where would you go?" Tokelau is hardly a contributor to climate change. It is the first nation to rely on 100% solar energy (M. Maiava). And yet, these islands are experiencing the full effects of climate change and have no choice but to adapt and mitigate the symptoms in order to protect their land. Mika states, "we are all responsible, but some are more responsible." Pacific islanders can not wait for industrialized nations to take responsibility,

¹⁹ Dr. Kader (2019) Lecture: *Climate Change and Pacific Soils (Powerpoint slides)*

because it may never happen. Instead, communities such as Tokelau take responsibility to enact change in the impending face of climate change due to the fact that “we are aware” (M. Maiava). Mika pointed to his four wheel drive red truck that he relies on for transport, “I need this truck” indicating that he understands the environmental damage that is caused by his vehicle and the oil industry it relies on. The government and the industries should be held responsible in order to enact systemic change, but instead of waiting for a day that may never come, Pacific islanders are taking action. If there was a way to make the truck hydro-powered, Pacific peoples would have it done within the next day (M. Maiava). There would be no delay because people know what needs to be done to mitigate climate change, in part due to their mutual relation with the land.

“Climate change destroys the land, who we are” (M. Maiava). The land is inseparable from cultural identity. Mika reflects on his work with the Pacific Climate Warriors, a grassroots movement under 350 Pacific, a network of youth leadership that raises awareness of the effects of climate change in the Pacific. Such influential actions include building traditional canoes and forming a blockade in the coal port of Newcastle to protest the Australian coal industry.²⁰ These actions seek to inspire others to take initiative. In spite of the overwhelming negativity, here are these people that are told their land will disappear, along with their culture and have hope that they can make a difference. They will not sit back and watch their land disappear without a fight. “We see the world from a small island” and thus we see the good in the world and must encourage others to do the same (M. Maiava).

The Government Initiative

²⁰ 350 Pacific. *The Pacific Climate Warriors*.

The Scientific Research Association of Samoa (SROS) is an organization that focuses on export as a means of economic growth in the country. They seek to revitalize agriculture and manufacturing to promote the national economy.²¹ The organization is 95% funded by the Samoan government which covers the many salaries and other functions that require money.²² However, funding for the main research projects often comes from the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research, New Zealand foreign affairs and trade management, U.S. research grants, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and many other collaborations with other researchers (S. Molimau-Samasoni). External funding is required for research needs such as equipment.

There are many divisions within the organization, but I was most interested in the plant and postharvest technologies (PPT) division as it focuses on ensuring food security through improved postharvest handling and opening access to overseas markets. There are two main aims; to boost agricultural exports either as produce or “value added processed agricultural products” and to create new products that can replace the presence of imports in the country (S. Molimau-Samasoni). The PPT team hopes to achieve these aims by researching produce and how to extend its shelf life and treat for pests. There is a current project that focuses on the export of taro to Australia, which comes up against many problems. Australia has a similar climate to grow taro, but there is also the fear of bringing about the taro leaf blight in the country due to Samoa’s previous history of the blight. The taro leaf blight of 1993 began with a highly infectious plant disease that infected the leaves of the taro plant, also causing rot in the corm. Taro is a staple crop in Samoa, therefore this had detrimental effects on the livelihoods of many

²¹ Scientific Research Organization of Samoa (2006).

²² Molimau-Samasoni, Seisei. (2019, April 16). Personal interview

people.²³ The lasting impacts include difficulties with exporting Samoan taro as the possibility of a blight poses a threat to other countries and their taro production. However, there remains a demand for Samoan taro from Samoan populations overseas. Samoans that live abroad in New Zealand, Australia, and the U.S. are a large target market for taro and breadfruit because “they want the food from home” (S. Molimau-Samasoni). This migration overseas creates a niche market that SROS aims to access.

PPT works with traditional crops to create new products. Breadfruit is a staple crop in Samoa. It is growing just about everywhere, in backyards, in the village, along the streets, etc. Therefore, SROS’ use of breadfruit in creating products such as flour or fries, which are often imported, is admirable in the sense that it could strengthen the cultural food identity. The project of breadfruit flour has some difficulties in regards to the expense. According to Seeiseei, “There’s a huge potential for breadfruit flour because it’s more nutritious, however it’s a more expensive alternative” that Samoans wouldn’t necessarily buy. Therefore, the flour would be better sold in markets overseas as a gluten free alternative to wheat. Another project focuses on breadfruit fries in which the women’s committees and unemployed youth have been taught how to prepare the fries. They are then able to begin a business on their own terms. In Savai’i, a women’s committee sells breadfruit fries at the village bingo night where many people gather (S. Molimau-Samasoni). I was brought to many a bingo night while living in the village and these are events where many of the women come together to hang out. There is often food being sold such as sodas and doughnuts, so providing a new version of a common crop could replace such imports. However, SROS can’t produce such products they create on a commercial scale since

²³ Hunter, Danny & Pouono, Kirifi & Semisi, Semisi. (1998). The Impact of Taro Leaf Blight in the Pacific Islands with special reference to Samoa. *J South Pac Agric*. 5

they are funded and tasked with research. A company would have to come in, take up the technology, and be willing to take the risk with a new product.

Acquiring reliable produce for export was identified as a difficulty when dealing with local farmers. There is an inconsistency in planting as many small farmers follow the market, growing a crop that is in high demand, flooding the market, and dropping the prices. Once a farmer receives a reliable amount of money, they may stop growing for export for a certain amount of time until more money is needed. Due to this phenomenon taro production fluctuates;

The subsistence farmers see the taro prices are up so they all plant taro at the same time and then there's a heap of taro that comes through and the price drops and then they're all thinking it's not worth it, so they stop growing taro, but the time when they stop growing taro the price is going to increase. It's a difficult spot to be stuck in (S.

Molimau-Samasoni).

Many Samoan farmers prefer to farm at the subsistence level making it difficult to encourage them to grow on a commercial scale to “build up the volumes that's needed to sustain an export pathway” (S. Molimau-Samasoni). SROS seeks to define a priority produce with market value that farmers should focus on cultivating, but they “have no control over what farmers choose to grow” (S. Molimau-Samasoni).

Export agriculture often requires intensive farming techniques that continually supply the market with products. These practices are often unsustainable, utilizing monocropping thus requiring the use of pesticides and herbicides as the soil is depleted. According to Bayliss-Smith in, *Subsistence and Survival: Rural Ecology in the Pacific*, the agricultural land of tropical climates must have a fallow cycle as it “cannot be continuously cultivated, even though it may be

abundant and initially productive.”²⁴ Therefore, SROS seeks to encourage sustainable practices in growing surplus by using multi-cropping techniques. Short term crops such as cabbage, papaya, pineapple, and taro are interplanted with long term crops such as coconut, cocoa, breadfruit, and avocado. This practice guarantees the family will always have money coming into the home as each crop has a different harvest time (S. Molimau-Samasoni).

While seeking to develop the national economy and bring about economic growth, the land falls under a certain commoditized category in which it acts as an access point for monetary gain. Therefore, if the land is not being used for financial access, then it is being wasted.

Goldstein’s concept of *Terra Economica* focuses on the historic production of a “whole earth available to be worked upon and made profitable by rational economic actors.”²⁵ Wasted space has been developed as a means to take away land being used by women, children, and the poor community in order to be profited off of through privatization. *Terra Economica* sees the world and its people solely as an economy. The commons is enclosed as it is deemed unproductive. My informant’s perspective on land not being utilized for monetary gain reflects this concept of wasted space. This is visible in her disappointment in Samoans for not leasing land to the Chinese for commercial farming as “they’d much rather have a land full of weeds, growing nothing of importance than handing it over to other people to work” (S. Molimau-Samasoni).

Western conceptions of wealth are tied into commercial farming as an avenue for financial accumulation; “you have families with so much land and so much potential to be wealthy in the Western definition of the word, but they are not wealthy because they choose to just let the land

²⁴ Bayliss-Smith, T.P. and R.G. Feachem, eds., 1977. *Subsistence and Survival: Rural Ecology in the Pacific* (London, Academic Press) 267)

²⁵ Goldstein, Jesse. “Terra Economica: Waste and the Production of Enclosed Nature.” *Antipode* 45, no. 2 (2013): 357–375. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8330.2012.01003)

do its thing and not cultivate it” (S. Molimau-Samasoni). In this economic perspective, the land is profitable if it is controlled and cultivated. Export is an avenue in which to “provide benefit to Samoa’s industries, government ministries, corporations, agencies and communities and in turn the national economy.”²⁶ SROS seeks to develop the local economy by accessing the global economy. The land and its resources are profitable if functioning on a commercial scale.

Conceptions of Well-being

Capitalism focuses on individual economic well-being, but what constitutes well-being may differ in other social contexts. In subsistence societies, the well-being of the self relies on the well-being of the community and vice versa. The physical self is just one component in a range of other symptoms. According to Dr. Maria Kerslaki, the Samoan concept of health comprises of the well-being of the physical, emotional, spiritual, community, environment, and culture.²⁷ Food is sacred, as is the land and family. All components are interconnected.

The influences of capitalism not only affect economics, but also the health of the nation. Cheap imports such as instant noodles, rice, and fatty meat products are increasingly replacing the traditional diet of fish and starch. The globalized capitalist concept of labor undermines subsistence living, as those employed in the workforce have less time to cook or grow their own crops (Hawkes and Ruel 2008). Families are leaving their plantations unmanned as they live and work in Apia with little labor time to grow food.

Health in Samoa is deeply affected by food colonialism practices. A study conducted from 1978 to 2013 presents findings such as the rising rates of type 2 diabetes and obesity in all

²⁶ Scientific Research Organization of Samoa (2006).

²⁷ Dr. Maria Kerslaki (2019) Lecture: *Samoa Perspective on Health (Powerpoint slides)*

age groups and sexes²⁸, reflecting the physical ramifications of food imports such as flour, sugar, and butter and the reduced consumption of traditional root crops. The physicality of the nation is affected, but I find it necessary to reflect on the cultural consequences of such colonization as well as the cultural influences on what constitutes health. A document on the nutrient intake in Samoa includes the influence of social obligations, such as gift giving, as a possible detriment to a family's "dietary quality."²⁹ The study states that statistically, the mean share of income that is spent on gifts to the church or other households constitutes 16.8% of the family income. Therefore, some aspects of well-being may compromise others as the community is often put above the self. However, there is no division between the self and the community and one's reciprocity is not taken without gratitude and the favor returned in some manner.

Through the process of food colonialism, colonial foods often become traditional. This is visible in the cultural value of salted beef. This food was brought to Samoa by missionaries and explorers where it became a high-ranking food as imported foods were considered more valuable than indigenous ones.³⁰ Salted beef still remains as a highly valued food and is exchanged at church and family feasts to "strengthen the bonds of kinship, express community solidarity, and help maintain the cultural traditions and social ties that constitute identity" (Wilk, R. 2008). Despite the food's origins, it is assimilated as a cultural food that holds value far beyond its

²⁸ Lin, S., Naseri, T., Linhart, C., Morrell, S., Taylor, R., McGarvey, S. T. Zimmet, P. (2016). Trends in diabetes and obesity in Samoa over 35 years, 1978-2013. *Diabetic medicine : a journal of the British Diabetic Association*, 34(5), 654–661. doi:10.1111/dme.13197

²⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2013). *Dietary Patterns of Households in Samoa*.

³⁰ Wilk, R. 2008, 'A Taste of Home: The Cultural and Economic Significance of European Food Exports to the Colonies,' in *Food and Globalization: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World*, (eds) A. Nützenadel & F. Trentmann. Berg, Oxford & New York: 93–108.

colonial roots. Samoans will say “povi/pulu masima is part of their roots” in the regard that it maintains and carries cultural value (Wilk, R. 2008).

A visible form of food colonialism is the process of food dumping in the Pacific islands. Fatty meats that are deemed unhealthy in developed countries, where they are only fed to dogs, are sent to Samoa where they flood the market with cheap meat. These meats are often turkey tails and mutton flaps that are seen as the wasted parts of the animals while the “better” parts are kept for developed countries. These cheap meats, high in fat, contribute to Samoa’s health problems as many struggle with obesity and noncommunicable diseases. Reflecting on Samoa’s compromised position in the global economy, Gewertz describes flaps as “both the product and the symbol of seemingly inextricable relationships of dependency.”³¹ The health of the nation is increasingly influenced by global imports and what is considered affordable. Samoa’s political economy is dependent on migration, remittances, aid, and bureaucracy (Gewertz, 2010).

Gewertz’ research on meat traders and the inundation of fatty meats in the Pacific islands is filled with stories of foreign meat traders not getting their money back for the products they sent to shopkeepers in the Pacific. One trader recounts his interactions with a Samoan shop owner who “had a relative who was a politician and that he himself was a chief of the village and so had to share with everyone in the village. So, if he made a thousand dollars, only a third of it would actually go to him.”³² Traders struggle with the culture of Samoa as they seek to use the capitalist logic of an individualistic society, not understanding the communal aspect of the

³¹ Gewertz, D., & Errington, F. (2010). *Cheap Meat: Flap Food Nations in the Pacific Islands*. University of California Press.

³² Gewertz, 2010.

faasamoa. An individual must provide for the community, but these responsibilities are increasingly becoming monetary.

Global concepts of health not only influence what is imported into Samoa, but also what is exported. Agricultural economies can either benefit from or be harmed by global marketing strategies that either encourage or discourage certain foods. Coconut and its byproducts such as oil and copra are Samoa's main exports. In 2017, the American Heart Health association released a study stating coconut oil is unhealthy due to its high saturated fat content.³³ This triggered a debate in the larger community, primarily in the US, as to whether or not coconut oil should be used or not. In this case, coconut oil was cast as the enemy. This could have an influence in decreased exports, along with many other factors. The decline in production is also a contributor as coconut crops age. However, the popular use of coconut oil in beauty products has benefitted Samoa's exports. In 2018, Samoa began a joint venture with the U.S brand soap company, Dr. Bronner's. 3,000 litres of coconut oil are expected to be exported to the U.S. annually.³⁴ Depending on the market image of a product, certain economies will flourish or perish. There is a common neoliberal view that the market is "the most efficient mechanism to determine the availability and consumption of goods" (Gewertz, 2010).

Food is not only about physical health, but the health of the economy, politics, and the local and global community. Food reflects a nation's position in the global economy. The local and global are mutually dependent and influential of each other. In her article, *Postcolonial Paradoxes*, Susanne Freidberg best describes food's influence;

³³ FM Sacks, AH Lichtenstein, JHY Wu, et al. Dietary fats and cardiovascular disease: a presidential advisory from the American Heart Association, 136 (2017)

³⁴ Vui-Talitu, Sara. (2018, March 26). *Samoans celebrate expansion of coconut oil exports*.

Food's unique nature has made it uniquely central to human social life and therefore a carrier of historically constructed meanings both intimate and geopolitical.³⁵

Conceptions of Wealth; Subsistence, Capitalism, and Development

Well-being is increasingly dependent on monetary wealth in part due to global capitalist imperialism. Samoa's position in the global economy is one that participates in capitalist ideals of financial accumulation as a way to continue cultural practices that would otherwise be colonized. Despite the overwhelming need for money in order to participate in global politics, Samoa retains subsistence wealth nationally. The two seemingly incompatible forms of wealth function together, yet they still clash and hold the other as invalid. Wealth reflects what is valued in a society.

Subsistence Wealth

Subsistence wealth values the quality of life instead of the quantity of financial accumulation. Familial relationships, land, and cultural values are held in higher regard than individual monetary wealth. "From a western perspective everything becomes about dollar value," which is reflective of the capitalist values of wealth (M. Mauala). Subsistence affluence gathers its wealth from the land and communal reciprocity. Due to Samoa's family values and means of redistribution, there is an absence of certain symptoms of extreme poverty such as homelessness and hunger. There is always extensive family to live and eat with. I must acknowledge that poverty is a capitalist concept in and of itself, therefore it is influenced by

³⁵ Freidberg, Susanne. 2008. "Postcolonial Paradoxes: The Cultural Economy of African Export Horticulture." In *Food and Globalization: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World*, ed. Alexander Nutzenadel and Frank Trentmann, 215–33. Oxford: Bloomsbury

values of financial accumulation. According to the UN Sustainable Development Assessment Report, poverty can not be adequately measured based on national household income surveys because this doesn't account for subsistence wealth.³⁶ Poverty of income doesn't fully recognize the other aspects of wealth in a subsistence community in which basic needs are provided for without the need for money. Reciprocity also isn't accounted for when analyzing one's income, "even if one can not afford minimum consumption wage then they will be cared for by the people."³⁷ The community serves, not the government. There is a lack of government infrastructure in regards to welfare due to this responsibility taken on by the community.

Wealth is measured by how much one can give. The Samoan word, *Tatua*, means service (M. Mauala). By serving the community, one gains respect. Reciprocity "is part and parcel of how we survive, by serving others" (M. Mauala). If someone is without the means by which to access sustenance, they will be provided for by someone who is wealthy in that regard. There is a shared sense of responsibility in caring for one another, relieving the burden of independent accumulation that is enforced through neoliberal capitalism. Many may be led to believe that such a level of giving could create a sense of dependency, but reciprocity assists in times of need, encouraging the individual to get back on their feet so they may return the favor. In this system of communal sharing, "You're always giving and you're always receiving, and sometimes you're giving more than you're receiving" (M. Mauala). However, there is no account book in which one keeps track of what they are owed. What was given will eventually come back around in times of need due to the communal level of responsibility and redistribution.

³⁶ Government of Samoa (2019). *World Summit on Sustainable Development Assessment Report*. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

³⁷ Government of Samoa (2019).

Mele explains, “when you invite a Samoan to the table they’ll never ever not bring anything, then they’ll always expect to take something home.” No one arrives or leaves empty handed. Capitalist colonization not only affects concepts of wealth, but also reciprocity. What is exchanged or gifted is increasingly monetized. Monetary offerings are now given at communal events such as funerals or weddings. Food remains a large part of exchange, but purchased food such as canned goods and other imports are gifted as well. In contrast, the theory of reciprocity as a universal component of socio-cultural systems is argued to be incorrect by Annette Weiner. In her book, *Inalienable Possessions*, Weiner presents her theory of keeping while giving. Certain items are hoarded for their value and kept out of exchange to ensure a hierarchy. Inalienable possessions become a source of capital as they hold wealth. However, this theory of exchange is highly debated.³⁸

Food has an innate value, although it can also take on a monetary value when it enters the market. The harvest can be used directly within the family or if the need for money arises, it can be sold. Therefore, food holds both a use value as well as an exchange value, representing the intersection of subsistence and capitalism. When discussing the wealth of the farm, Mika pointed to the biodiverse abundance of plants growing on his land. He referred to the plants as “crop money,” meaning he can both sell his harvest and eat it (M. Maiava). Crops represent sustenance as well as financial accumulation, depending on the need that arises. However, Mika countered with an interesting perspective that money will never be as important as sustenance, “Money is not everything. You can plant all of this and if your family gets sick, you have it all.”³⁹ Plants

³⁸ Weiner, Annette B. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions. The Paradox of Keeping While Giving*. Berkeley: The University of California Press

³⁹ Maiava, Mika. (2019, April 10). Personal interview

provide healing, nourishment, and can guarantee the overall well being of the family. Money may provide access to the market, but the land provides sustenance. Subsistence wealth also guarantees the well being of generations if the land is properly cared for. Instead of the capitalist concept of financial inheritance, Mika asks the question “will they have land?” Access to land ensures the security of one’s livelihood. Land inheritance is a form of future use value as generations may use this land to continue the production of what is valued in the given society.

Capitalist Wealth

In contrast to the values of subsistence, capitalism prioritizes financial accumulation as an indication of wealth. Due to the globalization of the capital economy, Western forms of wealth are privileged. Social interactions become economic transactions, through the value of monetary accumulation. Wealth and capital are two separate concepts and must be analyzed separately. Wealth is immaterial, its value lies in the prospect of future opportunities. It is “that which mediates what is valuable now to what is anticipated as valuable in the future, and as such it is a hinge between past, present and future” (Foster, 2018).⁴⁰ Wealth is a concept that has been present long before capitalism as it is a “more culturally laden concept than capital, money, property or commodities” (Foster, 2018). Wealth is status, power, and hierarchy. Under capitalism, it is a social representation of capital. Capital, on the other hand, is an exchange value. It is a process in which values are exchanged, shifting between the forms of currency and commodity, accumulating more capital in the process as “circulation’s necessary by-product is

⁴⁰ Foster, Robert. 2018. “Entropy, Alchemy and Negative Pigs: Obviating the Matter of Wealth.” *History and Anthropology* 29 (3): 292–306.

more accumulation.”⁴¹ Marx explained the concept of fixed capital as capital that is “waiting to be exchanged” but during this waiting period, more value, and more capital, is accumulated.⁴² Value is constantly shifting, it is complex and intertwined with many other social dynamics. Surplus isn’t necessarily physical, such as a large harvest of taro, but more so conceptual as a large amount of profit gained from low wage labor and resources. Surplus value is a way of attributing social and economic status. This is what Smith describes as the shift from use-value to exchange-value. The monetization of capital creates the opportunity for value “accumulation beyond immediate use” (Goldstein, 2013)⁴³ This allows for productivity to be “abstracted away from the exigencies of local needs and instead oriented towards the accumulation of endless amounts of value” (Goldstein, 2013). The large harvest has only a use-value, but the sale of the harvest transforms food into financial accumulation which can then be invested to create more monetary gain.

In contrast to the communal aspect of subsistence wealth, capitalist wealth is individualistic. Returning to capitalism’s inherent function of separating the working class from the means of production, capital is accumulated by the owner of such production. According to Goldstein in his book, *Capitalism at a dead end*, “No amount of redistribution of wealth under capitalism, through government spending, union contracts or any other method, can overcome the class inequality that flows from the right of the capitalists to own not only the means of production, but all the products of production.”⁴⁴ The management of reproduction creates power

⁴¹ Theodoros Rakopoulos & Knut Rio (2018) Introduction to an anthropology of wealth, *History and Anthropology*, 29:3, 275-291

⁴² Marx, Karl. 1978b. *Capital Volume II*. London: Penguin Classics

⁴³ Goldstein, Jesse. (2013). Terra Economica: Waste and the Production of Enclosed Nature. *Antipode*. 45. 10.1111/j.1467-8330.2012.01003.

⁴⁴ Goldstein, Fred. (2012). *Capitalism at a Dead End*. World View Forum.

dynamics of who is able to control the exchange of capital. Money is not redistributed or communally owned, it is accumulated by the few at the expense of the many.

Poverty: Development and Community

When discussing wealth, we must also explore conceptions of poverty. Capitalist wealth accumulation creates the modern concept of poverty.⁴⁵ Poverty as the lack of opportunities, capital, and other resources is attributed to the inaccessibility of capital accumulation. The loss of subsistence livelihoods and depreciating value of other forms of wealth contributes to one's inability to access a labor income due to unemployment and inaccessibility to the market. I seek to unpack what is implied in the concept of poverty

Yari defines poverty as the inaccessibility to education, health care, nutrition, clean water, and the adequate consumption of food.⁴⁶ There are many forms in which poverty presents itself. I have chosen to focus on the poverty of income and opportunity as these are most prevalent in Samoa. As I mentioned previously, due to redistribution and reciprocity, many forms of poverty such as access to food and water aren't primary concerns as these needs are cared for by family and the community. Poverty of income is the lack of financial assets, often due to unemployment and the inability to access such opportunities. Poverty of opportunity includes such factors as the isolation from global markets, unemployment, limited education, lack of health services, political marginalization, and social exclusion.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ James V. (2019) *Lecture: Development in the Pacific* (Powerpoint Slides)

⁴⁶ Yari, M. (2003). Beyond subsistence affluence: poverty in Pacific island countries. *Bulletin on Asia-Pacific Perspectives*. 41-54)

⁴⁷ Asian Development Bank. 2002. *Priorities of the People: Hardship in Samoa*. © Asian Development Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/11540/3016>. License: CC BY 3.0 IGO

In 2002, the Samoan government released a “Participatory Assessment on Hardship” to understand Samoan perspectives on poverty. Samoan citizens, from both rural and urban areas, were asked to define hardship based off of their own experiences. When defining hardship, the word *mativa* was often used. *Mativa* translates into the lack of money and the deterioration of family values. The three categories of hardship, according to the government’s assessment, are the lack of income, lack of services (education, health, transportation, and communication), and the lack of jobs and access to external markets. Samoa is geographically isolated from external markets, contributing to the many difficulties in accessing the global economy through exports. Due to this difficulty, 81% of rural participants in the assessment reported that they had to give away excess harvests from their plantations.⁴⁸ The influence of capitalist wealth is visible in the value of monetary contributions. The traditional system of reciprocity is “strained by modernization- the need for cash, shift away from subsistence farming, growing population, and movement of people to towns” (ADB, 2002). The shift away from subsistence creates a need for money in order to access basic needs. Respondents attributed hardship to the many church and village obligations. *Faalavelave*, a contribution to events such as weddings and funerals, is increasingly associated with monetary donations, straining a family’s limited income. This act of giving is also influenced by competitive aspects as many families seek to show off to others and may even go into debt by giving more than they can afford.⁴⁹ Instead, this practice must return to its traditional roots in expressing love and reciprocity.

⁴⁸ Asian Development Bank. 2002.

⁴⁹ Lesatele, Robyn (2016, September 26). *Fa'alavelave, Financial Burden or Family Imperative?* Radio New Zealand.

When asked how such hardships should be addressed in Samoa, participants developed a list of priorities. The first step would be to reduce the cost of living. Second, access to loan assistance would allow people to access opportunities such as education or invest in starting a business. Third, participants called for support for agricultural development. Fourth, access to basic services such as a steady water supply, local schools, markets, and roads, particularly in rural areas, would improve access to more opportunities. Lastly, access to housing assistance should be provided in the circumstances in which people are unable to access customary familial land.⁵⁰ Such actions are calling upon the government of Samoa to assist in welfare standards in areas that the collective community can not provide.

The assessment emphasizes the importance of grassroots organizing in regards to development work. The community is called upon to participate in development through decision making and ensuring such initiatives will directly benefit the community. Poverty and development often go hand in hand in such discussions as people seek to alleviate aspects of poverty through humanitarian and financial assistance. As an informal economy, Samoa often receives assistance from foreign organizations in the form of financial aid to improve the local economy and access to global markets. Development projects are often funded by foreign investment interests, such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. Such projects contribute to the common assumption that development and economic growth are tied together.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Asian Development Bank. 2002.

⁵¹ Gordon, N. N. (2017). *A Critical Ethnography of Dispossession, Indigenous Sovereignty and Knowledge Production in Resistance in Samoa*.

In reality, these projects don't contribute to lasting economic change and instead create temporary changes that fall short of expectations.⁵²

Development aid functions on similar grounds of paternalism in which the donor gives assistance on their own terms. In turn, the recipient country prioritizes the means by which to attract donors, undermining local initiatives. Development projects aim to increase the export economy before developing the local economy. Donor countries gain a foothold in developing markets through these paternal relations, benefitting from the initiatives more than the recipients. The initiatives are mainly economic and influenced by political agendas, but there are social and ideological impacts that undermine Samoan structures of sovereignty. The global economy has been structured through “debt servicing, weakening traditional economies, and bolstering the state’s subjugation to international finance.”⁵³ I am not recommending we do nothing in terms of poverty alleviation. Instead, criticisms regarding development and humanitarian aid should be encouraged in order to create a dialogue about systemic poverty and the lasting forms of colonization that contribute to a country’s inability to achieve sovereignty. Development often encourages uneven power relations. However, development initiatives could be beneficial through some structural changes. Direct aid could be allocated and initiated by those who are receiving the aid, however the distribution of aid can still be corrupted within the community. If a development project lacks policing and transparency, individuals can siphon off money. For example, a large sum of money was granted to the Samoan Ministry of Agriculture but there

⁵² Warner, Matt (2017, September 28). *Is Development Aid the New Colonialism?* Foundation for Economic Education.

⁵³ Sassen, S. (2010), “Global inter-city networks and commodity chains: any intersections?”, *Global Networks*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 150-163

remains much confusion as to where it all went.⁵⁴ Another way to address national hardships could be to bolster the local economy before focusing on global markets. According to Dr. Faafetai, Samoa is implicit in reinforcing the agenda of capitalism “every time it relies on foreign curriculum in education, adopts global policies in the interests of a few, or systematically looks the other way when small businesses close down because they can’t compete.”⁵⁵ There is an elite population in every national economy, and Samoa isn’t immune to corruption.

I have made the mistake of romanticizing the community in a Western framework. Coming from a place in which there is a lack of community, such a term often entails grassroots organizing in the face of systemic oppressions. Community is hardly associated with negative connotations in a Western framework, but corruption within the community is a common occurrence. When discussing the distribution of development aid, Mele acknowledges the failings of development work as well as the community. Alike corporations and governments, individuals can be influenced by self-interest and corrupt a project based on their own agendas, “We use the word community as if it’s somehow the most beautiful perfect thing in the world and it doesn’t have its own failings” (M. Mauala). Even when development agendas are led by members of the community there may be a conflict of interest in which the money is falsely used for individual agendas.

Aspects of greed and exploitation can be attributed to capitalist functions, but they also stem from the community. It can be debated where these practices originate from; if it is human nature or a learned practice; “From a Samoan Christian perspective, greed is not treated as

⁵⁴ Mauala, Mele. (2019, April 25). Personal interview.

⁵⁵ Faafetai Aiava, PhD. (2019, April 30). Personal interview.

something with traditional roots but rather intrinsic to human nature” (A. Faafetai). These aspects of human interactions have been around long before capitalism emerged as a hegemonic socio-economic system. Greed, being the excessive desire for resources, is a source of self-preservation.⁵⁶ The individual focuses on their own survival, without regarding the survival of others. However, humans are social beings and therefore the individual can rarely be removed from the well-being of the greater community. Greed inherently functions as a capitalist value through individualization, but it has origins in many other socio-economic systems and societies.

Faasamoa: Land, Knowledge, and Accountability

The *faasamoa* translates into the Samoan way. This includes all aspects of respect, family unity, service, and *alofa* (love). When researching socio-economic food systems in Samoa, I came across three prevalent aspects of the *faasamoa* that kept coming up in conversations; land, knowledge, and accountability. Samoan systems of governance remain highly influential in national and international discussions. Such systems are highly influenced by cultural values and hierarchies.

Land

When a child is born, the umbilical cord, known as the *fanua*, is given to close family members. The family then places the *fanua* in the ground and plants a coconut tree atop of it. The coconut tree soon grows and produces more trees, and the child becomes a part of the earth, unable to be disconnected from the land. “You are the tree” (M. Maiava). This relationship with the land is inseparable from the *faasamoa*.

⁵⁶ 1996 Richard F. Taflinger., the sociological basis of greed

Land is a necessary component in the process of colonization, as the removal of one's land is a form of dispossession. Beginning in 12th century England, small landholdings were consolidated into larger farms, sectioned off into individually owned plots of land. Common lands were privatized, removing people from their means of subsistence.⁵⁷ These lands were used for grazing livestock and providing for other needs in the village. This process of privatization is known as the enclosure movement. The enclosure of the commons continued throughout Europe and is now reflected in the ownership of private property; one must pay to access land. In reference to Samoan land Gordon writes, "For the agents of colonial capital, land is an extractable resource for accumulation and by enveloping the commons, liberalization reconfigures indigenous land tenures, shifting collective subsistence production to individualist commodification."⁵⁸ Samoa is not 12th century England, however the globalized privatization of land as a form of dispossession is very much tied into capitalist colonization. In contrast, 81% of land in Samoa remains as customary, meaning the use, access, and allocation of the land is governed by customary groups using traditional value systems.⁵⁹ The shared use of the land is protected through the formal recognition of customary groups. The presence of English common law and customary law is a representation of two incompatible systems functioning in the same sphere. In a response published in the Samoan Observer reflecting on the 1960 constitution that came into effect upon independence in 1962, Oisole writes, "During the struggle for independence our founding fathers foresaw a much needed mechanism to protect our future

⁵⁷ Surprise, Kevin (2018). *Capitalism and Climate Change*, (Lecture).

⁵⁸ Gordon, N. N. (2017). A Critical Ethnography of Dispossession, Indigenous Sovereignty and Knowledge Production in Resistance in Samoa.

⁵⁹ Corrin, Jennifer. 'Resolving Land Disputes in Samoa.' Australian Agency for International Development, Making Land Work 2.1 (2008): 199-221.

generations from the Colonial land-grabbing that has taken place all over the Pacific” (2018).⁶⁰

Customary land has ensured the survival of subsistence livelihoods and acts as a safety net against land dispossession.

There are three systems of land ownership in Samoa; customary, free hold, and public. Free hold land tenure is the outright ownership of land. It may be owned by individuals or corporations. The land holder can do what they wish with the land, such as lease it in coordination with the law. Public land is free from customary titles or estate fees. It is owned by the state. The majority of land is customarily owned, which has both its positives and negatives. Customary land doesn't necessarily ensure equal access to land as some individuals within a community are given separate rights. Rights to the land allocate who may use the land and its resources as well as who may make decisions regarding how the land is transferred or utilized.⁶¹

Customary land laws are a main source of conflict in Samoa. The lands and titles court is overwhelmed with many cases of fighting to claim customary land. Customary land is often owned by families throughout generations, tracing back to their ancestors. Since most of this history is not recorded in writing, many different groups claim to have rights to the same land as familial lines become extensive. The process of claiming land requires one to prove kinship.⁶² Customary land is often seen as an impediment to economic growth. Development initiatives seek to profit off of Samoan land, but struggle as they come up against laws that restrict land leasing. Because of the protection of customary land, corporations are unable to buy up large

⁶⁰ Oisole (2018, April 14). The truth about the alienation of customary lands. *Samoa Observer*.

⁶¹ Australian Agency for International Development (2008). *Making Land Work, Vol. 1 Reconciling customary land and development in the Pacific*. Commonwealth of Australia.

⁶² Corrin, Jennifer. 'Resolving Land Disputes in Samoa.' Australian Agency for International Development, *Making Land Work 2.1* (2008): 199-221.

amounts of land and displace communities; “You can’t have a Dole company come in here and buy all of our land and turn it into pineapple crops like in Hawaii,” referencing the annexation of Hawaii and the land seizure that occurred (M. Mauala). If a company wishes to grow a crop for export, they must speak with the families that own the land and ask the village farmers to shift their plantations towards growing such a crop and set up a system of exchange.

Land is the physical space where Samoan culture and identity are rooted. “The land is everything. It’s who we are. It gives you everything” (M. Maiava). Therefore, the loss of land is the loss of one’s cultural identity and livelihood. Samoa’s prime minister, Tuilaepa Malielegaoi, states, “It has been our tradition to work with nature rather than to oppress it.”⁶³ The *faasamoa* lives on through customary land despite the overwhelming influences of globalization.

Knowledge

Cultural identity is also rooted in traditional knowledge that is passed down throughout generations as a mechanism in which cultural values are maintained. Knowledge is required to grow and tend to crops, cook food, and continue subsistence livelihoods that require techniques in working with the available resources. Knowledge is power, therefore it should be shared in many circumstances to guarantee equal access to opportunities. However, knowledge is kept within families in Samoa due to the generational practice of a skill. Families train their own kin to carry on traditional practices such as tattooing, building, healing, and farming. Such skills ensure a family’s livelihood therefore, “It’s not an un-Samoan practice to only share the information that you’ve gathered from your experience with those that will carry on tradition” (M. Mauala). However, this protection of knowledge becomes problematic when an outsider

⁶³ Tuilaepa Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa

comes in and refuses to share knowledge at the expense of others “because then they’re reaping the benefits of our ignorance” (M. Mauala). This is exemplified in colonialist practices that separate the laborer from the means and knowledge of production. Indigenous knowledge is often commodified for the economic benefit of the colonial power.

Accountability

Another component of the *faasamoa* is the acknowledgment of accountability within the community. The village council, comprised of *matai*, remains as the main governing system in Samoa. Senior *matai* hold the power of decision making. If there is a dispute within the community, it will be resolved by the village council. According to Mele, a person was offended by a post someone else had posted online, which also speaks to a whole new dimension in social interactions with the rise of technology. The woman complained to the village council and the individual who made the rude comment was forced to delete it from social media and forbidden from using social media for a month. They then had to apologize in front of everyone and make an offering (*faasala*).⁶⁴ Members of the community must seek the leaders of the community to mediate disputes that are a regular occurrence in a small village.

The *faasamoa* acts as a mode of organization and resistance to the globalization of western ideologies. Samoan values remain strong and influential despite past and current forms of colonization. Subsistence subsumes capitalism and, in a way, it plays the global game that is impossible to win. Capitalist values are noticeable in which the well being of the economy is attributed to the well being of society, however this doesn’t eliminate the values of the *faasamoa* as is common in most forms of colonization. Samoa continues its cultural practices through the

⁶⁴ Mauala, Mele. (2019, April 25). Personal interview

use of capitalism, “I’m using capitalism to promote *faasamoa*. I’m using all of the means by which you can generate profit to help support our cultural practices” (M. Mauala). Capitalism has altered the way of life, but culture is still practiced in a monetary form, guaranteeing the continuation of cultural practices.

Analysis

Samoa is an independent country formally marked by previous and current forms of colonization. Samoa’s early history is predicated upon interactions with Fiji and Tonga through migration, trade, intermarriage, and disputes long before there were borders separating the identities of island states. The history of Samoa is the history of Oceania and all other islands as the people were migratory and the identities of the Pacific Islands often mixed and melded. I find it necessary to explore the timeline of European colonization in Samoa in order to reflect upon such global influences and the changing dynamics of Samoan society as outsiders with very different power dynamics and societal values interacted with Pacific peoples. This is a very basic understanding of Samoa’s colonial history, and much is not included. I simply wish to focus on Samoa’s history of ideological colonization and how the country was brought into the global economy on unequal grounds.

The first recorded recognition of the islands in Europe occurred in 1722 by Dutch explorer, Jacob Roggeveen. The Samoans very likely already knew of the Europeans from their neighbors in Tonga and their recounts of such interactions. The term “*papalagi*”, referring to one of European descent, is recounted throughout Western Polynesia.⁶⁵ Therefore, when European

⁶⁵ Tcherkézoff, S. (2008). May 1768, the French ‘discovery’ by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville. In *First Contacts in Polynesia: The Samoan Case (1722-1848) Western Misunderstandings about Sexuality and Divinity* (pp. 23-28). ANU Press.

explorers first made contact in Samoa in the early 1700s, the Samoans had already discovered the *papalagis* long before. In 1830, the London Missionary Society led by John Williams landed in Samoa to spread the teachings of Christianity. The message was well received in Samoa as “there were many parallels between it and our traditional beliefs and practices” (A. Faafetai). Samoan ancestral stories guide the *faasamoa* and develop a relationship with the land. In one of Samoa’s creation accounts, the cosmos and the environment are deeply intertwined and “therefore what others label as non-living (land, sea, sky), we treat as living (autonomous) persons from whom we have descended” (A. Faafetai). With European Christianity comes European ideologies, as missionaries brought concepts of capital, financial accumulation, and property ownership.

In the 1880s, the U.S., Great Britain, and Germany established trading posts in the Samoan islands. This occupation by foreign powers was led by economic accumulation through the exportation of the islands’ resources. Each foreign power sought a stake in the islands and formed alliances with warring factions of Samoa in order to protect their commercial interests, encouraging civil in-fighting by providing arms and combat training. After much fighting between the three global powers for control of the islands, the 1899 Tripartite Convention divided the islands and Germany acquired Western Samoa. German colonization was motivated by economic interests as they sought to occupy the land and restricted settlement and relations with the locals. Large scale plantations were set up, taking the best land, to grow copra and cocoa for export. These are the early stages of Samoa’s participation in the export-based economy.⁶⁶ The concept of selling one’s labor by working on the plantation in exchange for a wage did not

⁶⁶ Meleisea, Malama. *Lagaga: A short history of Western Samoa*. Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific. 1987, Ch. 7

align with the *faasamoa* in which one acquired the food they worked for. Locals refused to work on the plantations, thus labor was imported from China and Melanesia which brought along more global influences as these laborers interacted with local Samoans. Small farmers could not economically compete with the surplus production of German owned plantations for monetary accumulation.

Upon the start of World War I, the colonial power shifted to New Zealand under British mandate in 1914. New Zealand, alike other colonial powers, took on a paternalistic role in which Samoans were viewed as incapable of caring for themselves in the modern world. Their lifestyle and values did not match modern concepts of wealth accumulation and development, therefore they were considered powerless, impoverished, and in need of leadership. The New Zealand administration abolished many Samoan cultural values and systems of leadership, with the ability to remove *matai* titles and banish chiefs.⁶⁷ Cultural events were banned and forms of community production and subsistence living were deemed unproductive. Arising from this blatant disregard for the *faasamoa* was the non-violent Mau movement in the late 1920s. The Mau fought for independence from a colonial government that was ruled by foreign business interests. They fought to retain the *faasamoa*, customary land, and cultural values through civil disobedience. Passive resistance techniques included pulling children out of government schools, leaving harvests to rot on the ground, destroying coconut plantations by breeding the plant's enemy; the rhinoceros beetle, and boycotting European stores.⁶⁸ Many of these actions were directed at the economic sector, creating a loss of profits for the colonial power. After WWII there was a trend towards decolonization led by the United Nations. The dedicated work of Mau

⁶⁷ Ministry for Culture and Heritage (2014, September 2). 'The rise of the Mau movement'

⁶⁸ 'The Rise of the Mau Movement,' (2014)

members culminated in Samoa's fight towards independence, officially granted in 1962, becoming the first Pacific island to gain independence. Although, this achievement does not eliminate past influences and existing forms of colonization.

Foreign business interests still influence Samoan politics and the local economy, on unequal grounds of paternalistic development. European concepts of wealth have become the status quo as capitalism stands as a global hegemon. In order to understand capitalism as a colonial force, we must acknowledge the inherent exploitative mechanisms on which this socio-economic system functions on. I characterize capitalism as socio-economic as it not only affects the economic sector, but also the cultural and social through the process of surplus accumulation for the few. This system functions on the exploitation of resources; both human and non-human. Such examples as over-fishing, monocrop commercial plantations, depleting or polluting water sources, dredging, and sand mining come to mind when thinking of resource extraction in Samoa. These effects of exploitation lead to erosion, salt-water leaching, coral bleaching, loss of mangroves, etc. but most importantly these exploitative actions on a global scale have contributed to climate change, causing the overall degradation of the environment.⁶⁹ This is the second contradiction of capitalism in which the resources of capitalism are depleted through environmental degradation (Marx). The exploitation of resources for profit includes human labor as a resource. Capitalism functions on the process of separating peoples from their land and privatizing the means of production, forcing people to sell their labor in order to access products that were once owned by the community.⁷⁰ Subsistence agriculture stands as a

⁶⁹ Government of Samoa (2019). *World Summit on Sustainable Development Assessment Report*. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

⁷⁰ Marx, Karl, 1818-1883. (1959). *Das Kapital, a critique of political economy*. Chicago :H. Regnery,

representation in which the land remains in the community and people work the land to reap the benefits of the harvest. The land and its resources are collectively owned. In contrast, modern commercial agricultural operations privately own the land and bring in laborers that receive a low wage to then buy back basic needs such as food, water, and land.

When monetary value is assigned to resources, commodification occurs in which aspects of the environment lose their innate cultural value. The environment and indigenous peoples are exploited through the global economy as a form of capitalist imperialism. Developed countries are able to benefit from and access the global economy at the expense of developing countries. One territory is benefited at the expense of another, and wealth is concentrated in certain places.

⁷¹ Capitalism is an appealing system in theory, as many believe that an individual may gain what they work for. Many will argue that those who work hard are rewarded for their labor with economic gain. In reality, the few are able to benefit off of the many. Unequal access to opportunities, systemic discrimination, generational poverty, and lasting impacts of colonization contribute to one's inability to access capital. As Fraser states in, *Capitalism: a conversation in critical theory*, "accumulation proceeds via exploitation" (60).⁷²

For a small country with an informal agricultural economy, Samoa has limited access to global markets when it comes to competing with large exporters with cheap surplus prices. This may all seem dire in the overall scope of things, but Samoa is a noteworthy place in the fact that the country retains cultural resilience in the face of globalization. The *matai* remain in authority, sacred family roles are maintained, and the village council still mandates community rules. Samoans are still primarily subsistence living, relying on subsistence agriculture for the majority

⁷¹ Harvey, David. (2004). *The New Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession*. Socialist Register. 40.

⁷² Fraser, Nancy (2018) *Capitalism: a conversation in critical theory*. Cambridge, UK.

of their food.⁷³ The privatization of property has been kept to a minimum due to the majority of customary land laws.⁷⁴ Samoa's economy may be largely dependent on agricultural exports, development aid, and remittances from overseas, but the country utilizes these avenues of financial accumulation in the hopes of functioning as a self-determined economic agent.

Capitalism is hegemonic, determining global interactions and power dynamics. Therefore, small island states marked by ongoing forms of paternalistic colonization are continually at a disadvantage in determining their own socio-economic means. However, such places often have no choice but to play the game in order to ensure cultural survival. Indigenous capitalism is a term defined by Alexis Bunten as a way in which indigenous groups negotiate self-determination by participating in global political economies.⁷⁵ Although the term capitalist is used, indigenous capitalists differ greatly from non-native, Western capitalists in their historical relations of incorporation, mitigation of value systems, and the duality of subsumption and self-determination (Bunten, 2010). Historical relations of incorporation focus on the actions of settler colonial governments, such as the stealing of land and “genocidal acts of colonization” (Bunten, 2010). Such colonists have sought to repay reparations in the form of corporatization through development initiatives and subsumption into the capitalist economy. This duality between subsumption and self-determination reflects the common rhetoric that if one is not

⁷³ Samoa Bureau of Statistics (2015). *Report on Samoa Agricultural Survey*. Samoa: Government of Samoa.

⁷⁴ Corrin, Jennifer. ‘Resolving Land Disputes in Samoa.’ Australian Agency for International Development, *Making Land Work* 2.1 (2008): 199-221.

⁷⁵ Bunten, Alexis Celeste 2010 More Like Ourselves: Indigenous Capitalism Through Tourism. *American Indian Quarterly*. 34(3): 285-311

fighting against a system, then they are a part of it. In actuality, indigenous capitalism may use the system as an avenue for self-determination. According to Bunten,

By engaging in late capitalist production, Indigenous Corporations can use political clout acquired through the accumulation of large amounts of capital to support self-determination through a strategy to “beat the systems in power at their own game” (2010).

Surplus funds, instead of hoarded, can be invested in education, health care, and the continuation of cultural practices “such as subsistence, the arts, ceremony, language, and passing on traditional knowledge” (Bunten, 2010). Instead of the exploitative practices of Western capitalism, indigenous corporations utilize a holistic approach in which sustainability is valued above all. There is a level of accountability and responsibility in the actions taken by such corporations. This is a mechanism in which to assert self-determination while reinforcing cultural values. However, the concept of subsumption views such incorporation into the socio-economic system as a way in which “indigenous peoples finally benefit from their resources, but at the ultimate price of internal colonization” (Bunten, 2010). Colonial values may be internalized, such as the exploitation of the environment and individualistic wealth. Although reflecting on the romanticization of the community, indigenous communities also have internal systems of “class, privatization, and accumulation of excess wealth” therefore the binary becomes blurred (Bunten, 2010). Aside from conflicting interests, indigenous societies strategically adopt capitalist structures to benefit the common good. ⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Clifford, James 2009 Hau'ofa's Hope Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania 2009 Distinguished Lecture. University of California, Santa Cruz

Conclusion

This paper gains information from informants, both individuals and representatives of organizations, regarding their views on export and subsistence. Concepts of wealth, subsistence and capitalist, are compared and contrasted. Poverty in Samoa is analyzed as well as development initiatives that seek to alleviate such hardships. Conceptions of well-being are also studied in regards to the physical and cultural health of Samoa.

As this is my first time conducting independent research, I have made many mistakes along the way. These mistakes include approaching the topic with a Western framework, using binaries, and using a conceptual outlook instead of narrowing the topic. My use of binaries such as “domination and resistance, system and subversion” (Clifford, 2009) have positioned capitalist as bad and subsistence as good. This is a limited view on such a complex topic in which the two systems interact in many ways. Assimilation and decolonization are not two separate pathways nor are they linear.

Samoa’s current position in the global economy is influenced by previous and current forms of colonization. Economic initiatives function on uneven grounds as developed countries take on a paternal role as former colonizers. Despite the inherent incompatibility of subsistence and capitalism, these systems function within the same sphere in the local community. Both forms of wealth clash and yet are often held together as Samoa seeks to establish a position in the global economy while simultaneously developing the local economy to overcome colonial forms of dependence. Samoa utilizes capitalism to maintain the cultural practices of the *faasamoa* and to function as a self-determined economic agent.

Recommendations for further study

Future research should be more in-depth and should occur over a longer period of time. The research would benefit from more informants such as market vendors, exporters, farmers, and families in both Apia and the village setting. Samoans overseas should also be interviewed. Interdisciplinary frameworks should be used such as anthropological, economic, political, historical, and indigenous in order to provide a holistic approach. A non-linear and non-binary lens must be utilized in order to do justice to such an intersectional topic. Perspectives of Pacific anthropologists, such as Epli Hau'ofa, must be utilized more. In fact, this topic would benefit from an authentic Pacific perspective uninfluenced by Western frameworks of capitalism and community.

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Glossary of Terms

Global North- wealthy, technologically advanced, politically stable nations located in the Northern hemisphere (include Australia and New Zealand) that control global resources

Matai- a chief that represents a family

Fa'asamoa- the Samoan way

ie lavalava- a traditional article of clothing worn tied around the waist as a skirt

Fanua- umbilical cord, land

Fa'asala- an offering for forgiveness

Talanoa- a participatory dialogue

Umu- traditional way of preparing food in an earth oven

Papalagi- a term used to describe foreigners

Tatua- service

Appendix A
Informed Consent Form

TITLE OF STUDY

Subsistence Affluence in Western Samoa: Influences of the Capitalist Global Economy on Traditional Food Production and Conceptions of Wealth

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Tess Hosman
SIT Samoa 2019
7504036
tesshosman@gmail.com

PURPOSE OF STUDY

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to understand the influences of globalization and its effects on Samoan values of land and food. The majority of Samoan land remains as customary land. The land is abundant with food and resources and the community continues to provide for itself. It is this idea of community well-being and the production and distribution of food that guides my research. I seek to research changing conceptions of wealth as Samoa encounters Western values.

STUDY PROCEDURES

The interview will be informal. It may be recorded through a recording device or written down. Interview information will not be shared with the public. The duration of the interview is up to the participant and how much they wish to speak.

RISKS

You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study, aside from assistance in any tasks or labor that you may be doing at the time of the interview. However, I hope that the information obtained from this study may assist in acknowledging the full impacts of the global economy and the resilience of Samoan communities.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your responses to this interview will be anonymous. OR For the purposes of this research study, your comments will not be anonymous. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file, not available online.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Primary Investigator, please contact the Institutional Review Board at (865) 354-3000, ext. 4822.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B**Interview questions****SROS**

What is SROS' mission? What are the main goals in addressing agriculture in the global economy?

What are some ways that local agriculture can access the global market?

How do you work with the community, local economy, markets, farmers?

How do you promote traditional, native crops?

How do you maintain the *faasamoa* in global interactions? How are things done on the terms of Samoa, such as the value of the land, renewables, sustainability?

How do you ensure food security?

How do imports affect Samoan identity?

How are you funded?

Mika

How is the harvest distributed?

Who is employed on the farm?

What sustainable growing techniques do you utilize?

Do you feel wealthy? How would you define wealth?

How is the community involved?

What is your perspective of the *faasamoa*?

How is this land leased?

How has climate change affected your experiences farming?

SWAG

What is SWAG's mission?

Who is able to join? What does membership entail?

Where do you find funding for projects?

How do you address gender inequality?

How is knowledge shared?

What does it mean to be 'planet conscious'?

How do you form networks?

Do you focus on the local or global or are they mutually exclusive?

How is the physical health of Samoa affected by globalization?

What is wealth?

What is Samoa's position on organic agriculture?

How does the *faasamoa* tie into agriculture?

What is subsistence?

Sina

Do you feel wealthy?

Where does your food come from?

What were your experiences working in Apia?

What are your roles in the village?

How would you compare Apia and Amaile?

Tupuola

Where do you get your products for the store?

Where do you get the food to feed your family?

What are your roles in the village?

Did you grow up in Amaile?

Have you noticed any changes in the land?

Dr. Faafetai

What is the cosmic community?

How do you assign responsibility?

How do you address the rhetoric that God gave humans dominion over the Earth and therefore humans can exploit all resources?

Exploitation isn't always foreign, but it can occur in the community. How does greed occur within the community?

Can you speak more on the failure of restraint and how this affects the land?