3. Journeyings
Samoan understandings of movement
SA`ILIEMANU LILOMAIAVA-DOKTOR

‘E lele le toloa `ae ma`au ‘i le vai.

(The albatross flies but always comes back to its home, the water pond.)

Migration research in Oceania has produced a problematic genre that continues to be dominated by conceptions of population movement occurring between two poles: the rural and urban, or village and metropolitan areas. Embedded in migration assumptions are notions of individualism, social disjuncture and the primacy of economic motivations as understood in capitalist terms. Rather than construct movement and identity of people in places rural or urban, or framed by the bipolar model of settler and sojourner, this study goes beyond such polarities. Through an analysis of how a culture, in this case fa`a-Samoa (Samoan way of life/culture), integrates movement, `aiga (household, family, kin group) and configurations of mobility, I argue that embodied experience is central to Samoan identities as exemplified in local metaphors of movement, identity and place.

This paper focuses on Samoan understandings of malaga (journeyings, movement back and forth) and offers a detailed examination of kinds of mobility and their different configurations.1 In the following, I attempt to elucidate the interconnected links between the social, spiritual, political and economic aspects of malaga and its relation to `aiga and place. The cultural dimensions and essence of movement are the primary concern here, with a focus on the connections that people establish and re-establish as they move. This paper draws on interviews conducted over 18 months of primary fieldwork in a Samoan village, Salelologa on Savai’i, the big island of Samoa (see Map 3.1) with members in Auckland, New Zealand, and Santa Ana, California.2 It also describes the extent of past as well as recent movement between Salelologa, the rest of Samoa and overseas. Circularity remains a significant part of the Salelologa movement experience, irrespective of the gender or generation of those who move.

I also argue that the metaphors of fafo (overseas or foreign lands), as associated with things derived from overseas, and i’inei (local place), as
associated with things derived locally, are continuously evaluated in terms of power differentials not only between places but also between people. *Malaga* is the cultural imperative that connects the *`aiga i`inei* (family here) with *`aiga i fafo* (family overseas). I highlight the embodied and social nature of *malaga* in dwelling and reaching. *Faf*o and *i`inei* cannot be presented as polar opposites, for within the context of Salelologa they are mutually interdependent (see also Lilomaia-Doktor 2009a). These metaphors are frequently drawn upon as people talk about connections and relationships in general, rather than discrete individuals and mutually exclusive spaces. Metaphors provide an important means of how social experience is conceived, for it is through these that discourses are shaped and gain authority (Barnes and Duncan 1992, cited in Young 1998, 28–29).

In addition to cultural metaphors of movement, this paper is also concerned with the individual journeys made by those of Salelologa. Their journeys are not simply movements through space but, like all travels, led to a reshaping of boundaries and reconfigurations of culture, community and spirituality, as well as an expanded territorial distribution.

*Va* (social space) is a core concept tied to *malaga*. It connotes mutual respect in sociopolitical arrangements that nurture the relationships between people, places and social environments. *Va* is conceived of as the space between – not empty space that separates but social space that relates. Wendt writes:
Important to the Samoan view of reality, is the concept of \textit{Va} ... A well-known Samoan expression ‘Ia teu le va’– cherish, nurse, care for the va, the relationships. This is crucial in communal cultures that value group unity more than individualism, that perceive the individual person, or creature, or thing in terms of group, in terms of va or relationships. (1999, 402)

The concept \textit{va} is a way of thinking about space, specifically social space. In Samoan epistemology, \textit{va} is a highly complex phenomenon influencing interactions in everyday life. \textit{Va} governs and guides individual and ‘\textit{aiga}’ behaviour, inflected by factors such as gender, cultural status, age and marital status. In both public and private spaces, food division and distribution, sleeping and sitting arrangements, and language usage are all conceived through \textit{va}. Culturally proper and improper behaviours are signified by \textit{va}. Thus, \textit{va fealoa’i} (social respect in relationships between people and environment) is considered culturally appropriate. Its complementary opposite, \textit{va tapuia} (sacred spaces and taboo relationships), establishes limits and boundaries in sociopolitical and spiritual arrangements. Chief–orator, sister–brother, clergy–village and husband–wife relationships are tangible examples of \textit{va} at work. Transgressions of boundaries, either by physical contact or by the use of vulgar or obscene language, constitute \textit{va tapuia}. Fines that the \textit{fono} (village council) imposes on offenders are often to do with those who transgress or disregard \textit{va}, social space.

A more refined explanation of \textit{va} is found in research undertaken in New Zealand by Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave and Bush (1997) of Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services. They describe the Samoan sense of self as ultimately relational:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Samoan traditions and protocols explain the nature of Samoan being as that of a relational being, that is the Samoan person does not exist as an individual. There is myself and yourself. Through you, my being is contextually meaningful and whole. Through myself, you are given primacy in light of our collective identity and places of belonging (fa’asinomaga), our genealogical lineage (tupu’aga), and our roles and responsibilities and heritage (tofiga) (1997, 28).}
\end{quote}

This insight is important as I shift discussion to themes of legitimacy, belonging and appropriate behaviour in the second half of this paper. I show that \textit{va} remains a moral imperative and strongly influences ongoing
relationships among people of Salelologa as they move around. In short, \textit{va} is the central idea and crucial context for how movement informs Samoan identity and social legitimacy. Many discussions focus initially on mobility as a way of advancing the homesite. The acts of giving and receiving, as manifested in exchanges of letters, care packages, phone calls and cash remittances, symbolise \textit{va}. Salelologa narratives expressed views of mobility, identity and place.

Social space is also used here metaphorically to describe the cultural communications and social relations rooted in mobility. The underlying theme of mobility, viewed from the standpoint of a local community, is closely linked to the enhancement of the ‘\textit{aiga}'. The development cycle of the ‘\textit{aiga}' refers to its social, physical and economic shifts in parallel with the life cycles of individuals within an ‘\textit{aiga}'. Life cycle and development cycles are both integral components of mobility, identity and kinship.

\textbf{Malaga as concept and meaning}

\textit{Malaga} is the Samoan word for migration or, more accurately, to travel back and forth or journeyings. It implies both visiting and returning, irrespective of time involved. \textit{Malaga} is also the polite word for both \textit{alu} (go) and \textit{sau} (come). Simultaneously, \textit{malaga} is a noun describing formal travelling parties of two or more people. A \textit{malaga} is a ceremonial planned visit following Samoan custom, characterising dignified activity.

Built into \textit{malaga} is a perception of the reciprocity between dwelling and reaching as captured in Anne Buttimer’s (1985) linked metaphor of ‘home’ and ‘reach’. \textit{Malaga} plays a crucial part in maintaining relationships between \textit{matai} (chiefs and orators), ‘\textit{aiga}' and \textit{fanua} (communal land holdings). Thus, talking about \textit{malaga} is simultaneously speaking of Samoan values of \textit{alofa} (love, compassion), \textit{fa’aaloalo} (respect), \textit{tautua} (service) and \textit{fa’alavelave} (life cycle events). The conceptual basis for \textit{malaga} is in the life-cycle, cultural events surrounding births, marriages and funerals. However, contemporary movements for the purposes of education, health and economic opportunities have broadened its scope. The term \textit{malaga} is also used to describe our being on earth as a spiritual journey. \textit{Malaga} therefore has both physical and metaphysical qualities.

Samoans often travel across and among the islands, either on short trips or for long periods, and they go for a variety of reasons. Craig Janes describes some of the events that underpin \textit{malaga}:
Marriages, funerals, church dedication, graduation, vacation, and family gatherings related to title successions involve brief visitations. Collectively, such visits are traditionally institutionalised in the form of malaga parties in which the visiting group headed by the ali`i (high chief) and his tulafale (talking chief) travel to another village for such specific purposes as seeking betrothal of a taupou (village maiden). Adoption of children, ambilocal residence upon marriage, pursuit of education and increasingly employment prospects are some of the other reasons (1990, 19).

Janes further argues that intra-Samoan movement can lead to journeys farther out to either the US or New Zealand. What Janes glosses over, however, is how social relationships are cultivated, the cultural basis for malaga, the ritual interactions that legitimise and render it meaningful. I begin by examining the oldest forms of malaga that have great longevity and are deeply cultural (Table 3.1). All these movements invariably involve the mobilisation of resources such as talent, ideas, service, people and capital; they are rooted in the development cycles of the ‘aiga and the life cycles of its individual members.

Weddings: Faletautu and fa’aipoipoga

One of the most important events that constitute a malaga is a faletautu (traditional Samoan wedding), where the manaia (unmarried chief or son of a chief) and orators of his village travel to another village to court a taupou (daughter of a chief). Kramer (1902) describes faletautu in his ethnographic record. In a faletautu, the chief and his orators seeking the hand of a taupou have to convince her family and her father. If both the taupou and father accept the manaia, a traditional Samoan wedding takes place. Between the time of courtship and the actual wedding, which can range from three to twelve months, the orators of the manaia live with the girl’s family, acting as guards in case another chief comes along. They also serve the family by building a house or stone platform, cultivating new land, or whatever else the girl’s family wishes. When the actual wedding takes place, the manaia’s orators are rewarded with fine mats, tapa, kava and food.

‘Asomua Simi, an elder who described a faletautu to me, emphasised, ‘If a union of this stature is consummated, it not only results in family alliances but also village and district alliances. Families and villages take great pride in such unions, as their genealogies and fa’alupega (honorific salutations)
are enhanced by such alliances’ (‘Asomua Simi, pers. comm., Salelologa, September 1999). The couples are traditionally called the fale na fuafua (house purposefully planned). The bride’s family presents her husband’s family with special fine mats, such as the ‘ie avaga (elopement fine mat) and ‘ie tu (stand tall fine mat), other sleeping mats, tapa and handcrafts. The groom’s family reciprocates with productive goods in the form of pigs, chicken, cattle and taro. Through these ceremonies, connections and alliances between the two families are officially legitimised. Upon completion of all marriage protocols in the bride’s village, the newly wedded couple usually stay for a week or two before they move to the husband’s community.

The children of these unions are just as important as economic connections between the families. They are given traditional titles such as tama o le fuafuataga (child deliberately planned), or tama o le fa’asau (child declared), or tama a le malo (child of victory). These terms are used as honorific salutations, emphasising belonging and legitimacy to the ‘aiga (kin group) and nu’u (village) of the husband and wife. These terms also connote how deliberate was the planning by families and villages to make sure their manaia and taupou were allied with the highest-ranked chiefs.

As Samoa has become Christianised and modernised, the traditional Samoan wedding has been modified. The contemporary version called a fa’aipoipoga is a legally registered church wedding. Like the older faletautu, the fa’aipoipoga lends legitimacy and authority to a marriage and the offspring later born (Table 3.1). Reciprocal exchanges between the husband and wife’s families continue, although families have changed the styles and kinds of goods involved. For example, a wedding cake is now an essential element of a modern wedding and goods exchanged now include bedroom sets and furniture, cash and linens. Weddings are also held in church halls or hotels, not only in a bride’s village.

A child born out of wedlock, tama a le po (child made in the dark), does not have the same well-defined status. Although such children may have legitimate claims to the mother’s ‘aiga, claims to the ‘aiga and title of the father remain highly contentious.

Fa’ailoagatama and fa’afailelegatama

In Samoan custom, when an expectant mother nears the due date, she returns to her family to have the baby. Her husband often accompanies her. Babies are delivered at home by a Samoan fa’atosaga (midwife). A few months
later, the mother and father’s families prepare for the *fa`afailelegatama* or *fa`ailoagatama* (making known the child’s kinship) (Table 3.1). The *fa`afailelegatama* ceremony demonstrates the family ties of the newborn, as the family of the mother presents the father’s family with Samoan oil, baby mats, sleeping mats, bathing items, a tub, soap, a mosquito net and baby clothes. A special fine mat called *‘ie ‘o le fa’amatua* (fine mat to cement the connections of the baby’s two families) is also presented to symbolise the arrival of the new child and to demonstrate the legitimate claims of the child to both the mother’s and father’s families. In return, the father’s family provides a meal and presents a *sua* (reciprocal presentation) of a cooked pig, tapa and cash for their fare.

Today, although many babies are born in a hospital in Samoa or overseas, *fa`ailoagatama* continues to occur once the mother and her newborn return to the village. Since family members travel to attend the ceremony,

Table 3.1. Ceremonial reasons for mobility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CULTURAL/POLITICAL /ECONOMIC EVENT</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>faletautu</em></td>
<td>Seeking betrothal of a village maiden or taupou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>fa`aipoipoga</em></td>
<td>A legally registered church or civil marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>fa<code>ailogatama* or *fa</code>afailelegatama</em></td>
<td>Birth of a child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>maliu</em> or <em>tu`umalo</em></td>
<td>Funeral, particularly of an orator or chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>saofa`i</em></td>
<td>Bestowal of title or <em>matai</em> investiture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>umusaga</em></td>
<td>Official opening of <em>matai</em> residential house, or Samoan guesthouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>fa`aulufalega</em></td>
<td>Same as <em>umusaga</em>, official dedication of a new church, minister’s house or school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tatau</em></td>
<td>To get a Samoan tattoo, and its dedication: for male <em>pe`a</em>, for female <em>malu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>fa<code>apa</code>iaga</em></td>
<td>Ordination of a minister, priest or nun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>fa<code>au</code>uga</em></td>
<td>To attend graduation from college or high school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interviews 1999–2002
it is another form of malaga, as members overseas come to Salelologa to celebrate. Fa’ailoa’agitama may also be held to acknowledge relationships with any member who may have been living with another ‘aiga in another village or island. The same ritual can occur in the case of adoption. Malaga is the foundation of a complex network of sharing, participation and reciprocal obligation which continues throughout the life cycle of individuals and the ‘aiga. Faia (social connections) continue to be legitimated through malaga.

Funerals
The other crucial life event that generates malaga is a death in the ‘aiga. In the case of a funeral, the exchange of special fine mats is compulsory: the ‘ie o le mavaega (farewell fine mat from son- or daughter-in-law’s family) and ‘ie o le measulu (children’s farewell fine mat). If it is the husband who has died, at his funeral the wife’s family presents to his family the ‘ie o le mavaega and ‘ie o le measulu; the husband’s family does the same if it is the wife who has died. ‘ie o le measulu is presented only if there are children from the marriage. These fine mats are important in addition to other gifts contributed to the funeral feast. In all the different ritual occasions, special fine mats are obligatorily marked by particular names, which are always exchanged.

Matai investiture: Saofa’i and nofo
The conferring of a matai title is the other cultural event that mobilises Samoan families wherever they reside. Saofa’i and nofo both refer to matai investiture, but saofa’i is used for orator titles and nofo for ali’i titles. Matai conferment occurs following the death of a senior matai, when a new matai is needed to lead the ‘aiga. In keeping with Samoa’s population growth, families now allow split titles, so that several matai may be conferred at one time after a family has given consent that he or she may lead the ‘aiga. At the ceremony, the family hosting the saofa’i presents a fine mat, called ‘ie o le nofo (fine mat of the new matai), to the village council. This fine mat goes to the senior orator making the keynote speech. The exchange of fine mats, food and cash from the host family to the village council legitimates the incorporation of the matai and ‘aiga into the decision-making process of the village. Relatives of the recipient of a title come from all over Samoa, and beyond, to help with the ceremony.
Dedication of fale talimalo: Maota and laoa

Another event stimulating malaga is when a matai builds a faletele or faletalimalo (guesthouse) for the `aiga, which traditionally requires the collective effort of every family member, unlike new private sleeping houses or faletofa. Guesthouses are usually situated in the front row, facing the malae (village green), while sleeping houses are located just behind with cookhouses adjacent. Every matai title includes an associated site in the village where homes for the family are built. Houses provide not only dwelling places but also constitute a link between identity and place, as Rensel (1997) explains for Rotuma in Fiji. Rotuman houses are central to the social production of kin groups, with blood ties reckoned from a common ancestor who lived at or had claim to a named house site. Thus ‘physical houses stand as tangible reminders and powerful symbols, embodying the responsibilities and relationships of all who participate in their construction, repair, and use’ (Rensel 1997, 27). The Samoan term used for the home and house site of a chief is maota and for an orator laoa.

Completion of a new guesthouse is followed by umusaga (official dedication). Related families travel from all over Samoa, nowadays also from overseas, to show their appreciation and pride in the matai’s accomplishment as well as to reaffirm relationships by blood and marriage. At the dedication, the matai presents the lead builder and his wife with a special fine mat called an ‘ie o le fulumageso along with other fine mats, tapa, goods and cash, as payment. The builder in turn redistributes these among the construction crew including himself. The ‘ie o le fulumageso means ‘fine mat to clear itching’ and reflects the end of construction. In old Samoa, when a matai arranged for a traditional house builder to construct a guesthouse he brought a gift to commit the builder to the job. Where the builder goes, so also does his wife. She helps by weaving the roof thatch made from sugarcane leaves, which are itchy and unpleasant. The fine mat goes directly to them as a special token of their skill and commitment.

Today, school buildings, churches and community halls may also have dedication ceremonies. These fa’alavelave make visible the tautua (service) of the matai and other `aiga members, contributing to the enhancement of family status. For the dedication of the largest Catholic cathedral in the capital, Apia, Upolu, on the weekend of 30 May to 1 June 2014, thousands of parishioners and guests came to witness the celebration (see Map 3.1). Representatives from Samoan parishes overseas such as New Zealand, Australia, the US and Europe came in full force, each bringing cash donations
and the indispensable fine mat for their *ta’alolo* (gifts presentation). An elderly parent from Hawai’i cancelled a surgery appointment in order to attend the magnificent occasion. As Mrs Seleni Bartley said, ‘I had to be here … the new cathedral is breathtaking.’ Another elderly lady from Apia parish was proudly telling about their fundraising efforts: ‘We have been contributing and fundraising all we can for the past years to make sure God’s house stands’ (*Samoa Observer*, 7 June 2014). Cultural events such as church or school building dedications occur every year. These communal projects also reflect *tautua* to the church and community, thus sustaining the social and economic fabric of a well-run village.

### Dedication of *tatau*

*Malaga* also occurs when members of *‘aiga* want to have *tatau* (tattoo), which requires much collective effort. Before individuals commit to having *tatau* they must be prepared mentally and physically, and must also inform their families because *tatau* is life-threatening. In *tatau*, a person is not allowed to do it without a partner; as a result, there may be two to six people in a sitting. Those who undergo *tatau* must follow the protocol of being prohibited from moving around alone and eating certain foods. If the person is strong physically and psychologically, it takes two to three weeks to complete a *tatau*. An unfinished *tatau* brings shame to an individual and his *‘aiga*. During the *tatau* session, the tattooist and his crew stay with the family, returning to their village when the tattoo is complete. Families of those undergoing *tatau* are continuously present to give encouragement, offer moral support and provide food for the *tatau* artist and his crew. The crew also help by singing songs to soothe the pain, wiping away the blood as the tattooist’s needle works its way on a man’s lower back, torso and just below the knees.

The tattoo for a woman is called *malu*; it begins at the upper thighs and ends below the knees. *Tatau* also have *umusaga* (dedication), as for the official opening of a guesthouse (Table 3.1). Once the *tatau* is completed, the families of the tattooed members present the tattooist and crew with a special fine mat called *‘ie o le fusita* (fine mat that wraps and binds, symbolic of *tatau* ink and mark on the body), as well as mats, pigs and cash. The public dedication symbolises the successful completion of *tatau* and how appreciative the families of the men and women involved are.

The transnational communities of Samoans in the diaspora have necessitated the movement of the art of *tatau* from Samoa. Although the
meanings and ritual of *tatau* are often thought to be set, unchanging, and seem to have a timeless past, the significance of *tatau* is as much made by those who wear them as by those who create them. The art of *tatau* is now practised overseas in places with significant Samoan communities like Auckland, Los Angeles and Sydney. Cultural ideas and customs are being transferred and transformed across the new geographies of contemporary Samoa (Mallon and Fecteau 2002). Samoans distinguish between receiving *tatau* by machine or by the `au (traditional implements). Using traditional `au is culturally important and emphasises the place of pain in this ritual. It demonstrates one’s dedication and endurance, and following the way of the ancestors, thus making the *tatau* legitimate and authentic. Despite some resistance by both elders and others to the use of a power machine, it is preferred by more and more Pacific Islanders of Samoan descent born overseas because the equipment is more easily cleaned and faster. Samoans express concern that this is making a ‘chop-suey’ of *tatau* in *fa’a Samoa* and some question their legitimacy and authenticity. Most, however, say legitimacy depends on context and point to the production of *tatau* by power machine as pragmatic and sensible, especially for shoulder sleeve, arm band or leg band options (Philip Wendt pers. comm., April 2014). The completion of a full *tatau* is celebrated both in Samoa and overseas, and family members travel to pay respect at these occasions.

The ceremonial reasons for mobility also reveal their deeply cultural nature (Table 3.1). Nowadays, malaga to attend religious ordination of ministers, priests or nuns, or to celebrate graduation from college or high school, are significant reasons for families to come together. Malaga changes to suit new social configurations, but customary forms have not disappeared. They continue to have relevance in contemporary Samoan society at the same time that some old aspects of malaga have been discontinued, and new ones added.

*Malaga and faʻalavelave*

Previous observers of Samoan life have noted the many opportunities for public display of social connections. Samoans live their private lives in a public arena, especially at faʻalavelave such as weddings, funerals, matai investitures or the dedication of new residences or churches. Faʻalavelave attended by the whole village are said to have been shown high esteem, or aloaʻia. This is demonstrated by the saying, ʻ*Ua aʻafu ma aʻai le nuʻu* (The village was well covered and they ate to their heart’s content). Although
weddings may be considered family affairs, in Samoa the entire village often becomes involved as personal and social identities are intricately connected to both ‘aiga and village.

Moving away from one's home does not result in severing of ties or loss of identity. As one member said, ‘E maota tau‘ave pe laoa tau‘ave le Samoa’ (Samoans carry the manners of the house and morals of place with them). In other words, the cultural domain is inscribed in matai status, rights and claims to particular land, house sites and honours. This travels with Samoans wherever they go, for the honours and dignity inscribed in Samoan identity are not bounded in space or tied to particular locations (Galuvao Tanielu, Samoan judge, pers. comm., Samoa, October 1999). This sentiment was

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT AND PURPOSE</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fagafaga</td>
<td>To go hunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa‘atau meamata</td>
<td>To sell produce at market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faigaluega</td>
<td>To go to work either for the government or private sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’ai logaina o aso fanau</td>
<td>To attend a milestone birthday celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nofo ‘oga</td>
<td>To go to a day or boarding school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asi ‘aiga</td>
<td>To visit relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asi ma‘i</td>
<td>To visit a sick relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si‘i ma‘i</td>
<td>To seek medical help in a Western-style hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>su’e taulasea</td>
<td>To seek medical help from a Samoan healer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fagota</td>
<td>To go fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma‘umaga or fa‘ato‘aga</td>
<td>To go to the plantation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asi ‘aulotu</td>
<td>To visit a church or village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fa’amasinoga</td>
<td>To attend court cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>su‘egatupe: aulotu</td>
<td>To go on a fundraising trip for communal church, village or school projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>su‘egatupe a faipule</td>
<td>To go on campaign fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suegatupe: ‘aulakapi, ‘ausoka, ‘auvolipolo, ‘aunetipolo</td>
<td>To go on a fundraising trip for a sports team: rugby, soccer, volleyball or netball</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interviews 1999–2002
echoed during a conversation in January 2001 with Loia Fiaui, a Samoan educator in Hawai‘i. Routine or daily movements also are part of malaga, including more recent practices such as seeking paid employment (Table 3.2). In everyday life, many of these involve circular mobility between pitonu ‘u (hamlets) in villages, inter-island between Savai‘i and Upolu, and even between Samoa and American Samoa. However, their daily occurrence does not preclude people from moving beyond the Samoan archipelago to metropolitan rimlands.

**Legitimacy and belonging**

Malaga, ‘aiga and fa’alavelave interactions involve networks of sociocultural relationships that engage Samoans irrespective of geographic location. As Samoans move overseas, their territorial distribution expands and so does their ‘aiga and the fa’alavelave they hold. Samoans have obligations to both their ‘aiga o le tama (father’s family) and ‘aiga o le tina (mother’s family). Together, these are called the ‘aiga ‘o le fanau (families of the children). Village and church groups also malaga to fundraise for community projects. Just as any individual can find lodging with a relative overseas, group malaga can count on accommodation by fellow Samoans who came from the same original village.

Attending fa’alavelave reflects alofa (love), tautua (service) and fa’aaloalo (respect). It provides members of the ‘aiga with a sense of security and elevates family status. As one member put it, ‘In short, it shows your relatives and other ‘aiga that your son or daughter, uncle or aunt, niece or nephew is not a pa’u fa’i (banana peel), but somebody who has an ‘aiga.’ Although some people with whom a specific fa’alavelave is associated may not live in Salelologa, their relatives in the nu ‘u (village) will take a si’i (gifts to pay respect) for them and acknowledge their existence. Those overseas do the same for relatives in Samoa if a fa’alavelave occurs in New Zealand or the US.

Legitimacy is at the core of the Samoan social world. People are proud when the family comes to demonstrate kinship, especially in the place where they now reside. It reaffirms one’s importance in society. Material resources, time and energy are often expended at great cost, but malaga and fa’alavelave energise Samoan life. A wide range of relationships are renewed, political allegiances re-established, ties deepened and social encounters maximised. In this sense, malaga and fa’alavelave both deplete and replenish life. The conception of malaga is thus much larger than migration, which implies a
narrow perception of movement and human relationships limited to concerns for survival and material consumption (see also Lilomaiaava-Doktor 2009b).

In *A Study of Place, Mobility and Embodiment in Fiji*, Raymond Young (1998) studied families in Lakeba, Lau Island, and in the capital, Suva. He speaks of *wakolo* (pathway) as a metaphor governing social relationships in Fiji where Fijian life is closely tied to a web of social networks. Young was critical of the dualisms of rural–urban or village–metropolitan that dominate mobility studies in Fiji and he writes, ‘Rather than construct conceptions of movement and identity around places rural and urban, local cultural metaphors expand and redefine people’s relationships with one another as they move’ (ibid., ii). In a recent study of Tongan overseas movements, Tevita Ka’ili (2007) studied *tauhi va* (nurturing of sociospatial ties) among Tongans in Maui, Hawai`i. He explains that *tauhi va* stipulates symmetry and harmony whether it is between individuals or a group. In short, there is personal and group responsibility to maintain balance and harmony in *tauhi va*.

Similarly, I sought to understand how the people of Salelologa conceive of migration and *malaga*. What emerged from interviews is the profound way that *malaga* is tied to social relationships, that is *va* and kinship. As one senior woman put it:

*Our word for migration is malaga, it captures our movements, the comings and goings of Samoans. A malaga does not occur out of the blue. There are reasons for malaga. A malaga is also a noun like a formal travelling group as in malaga `aiga (family trip), malaga nu`u (village trip), malaga `aulotu (church trip) or malaga `autalavou (youth club trip). When a person or `aiga or nu`u sets out for a malaga they usually take gifts, cooked food, fine mats, mats and so on. This is a little donation to help the hosts. The hosts are also prepared to await the malaga. There’s usually `ava [welcoming kava ceremony] upon the arrival of a malaga.*

*SL: (Sa`iliemanu Lilomaiaava-Doktor) Does that mean we have to tell those people over there about our malaga?*

*Yes, we always do that first. This is about teuga o le va. [It is about caring and nurturing social space, *va* so that cultural protocols and social relations are kept intact]. It also depends on the purpose of the malaga, eh? With local trips to our own `aiga, like in Apia or to other villages we don’t have to, you can just arrive. But in cases where we have a son or daughter, whom we want to stay with relatives to be near school or work, say in Apia, of course, yes.*
**SL:** What about *malaga* overseas?

Definitely, we consult our `aiga overseas and they often sponsor a boy or a girl we want to send. Many Samoans go to New Zealand, or America, or Australia through our `aiga.

**SL:** Is this the same with the village *malaga* or church *malaga* we hear about these days?

Oh yes, definitely.

Samoans are not so much concerned about the monetary resources expended on *malaga*, although this can be important, as influenced by their being both recognised and consulted prior to implementation. For in that recognition, the principles of *va fealoa‘i* (social respect) have been considered, so *malaga* is warmly welcomed. As `Ai`ono (1992, 123) explains, ‘Samoan culture firmly believes in the efficiency of the consultative approach in making long-term decisions, because it is the decision making process that makes the appropriately involved individual feel important by being consulted.’ It is also a transparent way of identifying those within the family, community, public or government ministry who will accept responsibility. Once everyone agrees, there is total commitment to seeing a successful implementation. In other words, because of Samoan pride in family and/or village affiliations, Samoans give of their best even under severe economic circumstances, a competitive aspect of *fa‘a-Samoa* that can be manipulated sometimes.

Knowledge of connections is fundamental to mobility. In an interview with a parent in Salelologa, the interconnections between mobility, identity and `aiga became clear:

*We don’t just go to any fa‘alavelave, we go because we have pathways and social connections, well-trodden pathways of relationships that are recognised through every fa‘alavelave we participate in and reciprocal exchanges. This is expressed in the expression ‘O le ala `ua mutia, `ae le se ala fati’ [It is not a new path but a well-trodden path]. We go to present gifts at a fa‘alavelave because we don’t want Sina or Sione to feel ashamed because none of her or his family comes to their fa‘alavelave. It is no use saying, ‘My dear daughter Sina or son Sione’ but not go to a fa‘alavelave when it occurs at their husband’s or wife’s home village. The importance of our relationship to Sina or Sione means in fa‘a-Samoa that we must*
go to demonstrate our relationship through giving a gift and love for them during fa’aalavelave. Likewise when we have a fa’aalavelave they should do the same. What’s the use of saying, ‘My dear parents’ and none of them comes?

SL: What happens if you don’t go and take gifts to Sina or Sione’s fa’aalavelave?

It shouldn’t be a big deal, but to us Samoans it is a big disgrace. It tells others we don’t have love. In fa’a-Samoa, a daughter-in-law or son-in-law’s family is our shelter … If these relatives don’t show up at a fa’aalavelave, you know what everyone will say: ‘My god! Where is Sina or Sione’s ‘aiga, what kind of ‘aiga is that?’

SL: So this is considered bad?

Yes, it is bad public relations. We don’t want our family to be labelled an ‘aiga with no brains, no guts, can’t provide anything for their so-and-so, whoever the member may be.

SL: Does it make a difference if a couple have children?

Yes, that is even worse. If the couple have children, the in-laws will say, ‘My god! Not even one fine mat or 10 dollars. Alas! They did not recognise the eyes of the children, as if they don’t exist.’

This interview demonstrates that the onus of kinship is on everyday interactions. It is not how much relatives provide, but the fact they appear that is important. The saying ‘E mativa fesaga’i le Samoa (Samoans face each other irrespective of social and economic status), means that sociocultural relationships are crucial, far more than material things (Fa’alenu’u Lilomaiava Niko, pers. comm., Salelologa 2001; ‘Aumua Mata’itusi, pers. comm., Hawai’i 2002). An overwhelming number of Salelologa people responded to mobility, ‘aiga and fa’aalavelave in this way. In a recent study of Melanesian-Samoan women over three generations, Asenati Liki (2009) reveals similar understandings of and motivations for helping the ‘aiga, emphasising the important role women play in the wellbeing of families in the islands and overseas.

Time and time again, the essential dynamics of fa’a-Samoa were revealed and the role of the ‘aiga and fa’aalavelave shown to be paramount. For these Samoans, there was clearly a primary motivation for population
movement: the need and the desire to enhance the status of the collective ‘aiga. Fundamental to that enhancement is the journeying and travelling, malaga to attend the fa’alavelave.

From a geography of space to a geography of va (social space)

As should now be clear, malaga is conceptually tied to sociocultural relations. Whether at i`inei or fafo, Salelologa members relate the same sentiments about malaga, ‘aiga and fa’alavelave. Distance does not separate them, but only provides further interconnecting social pathways. Nor does greater distance translate into diminishing commitment to the ‘aiga, because social connections constitute a significant part of their identity and self-esteem. It is therefore social connections rather than geographic boundaries that are central to Samoan conceptions of movement. Redirecting our attention to understanding Samoan mobility through kin connections carries us beyond the geographic boundaries of nation states or origin–destination and rural–urban dichotomies. This is similar to what Olofson (1976, 70) calls a ‘geography of the mind’.

In her study of mobility on Satowan atoll, Chuuk state, Lola Quan Bautista uses the concept of social space to describe people’s understanding of mobility. She writes:

*Social space, which may include mobility, stresses the significance of subjective or cognitive ‘space’ as a way of knowing and evaluating the physical environment and behavior. Events are expressed by metaphors of staying and moving, coming and going, purpose and wander, commitment and estrangement, trodden and avoided paths. People’s corresponding mobility is described as embodiments, journeys and travels, an imagery of relationships between people and social space (2010, 63).*

As argued, we must think more socially and less geographically about mobility. Rather than emphasising territorial boundaries, it is more meaningful to view mobility from the point of view of Samoans who, without hesitation, consider moving appropriate if it advances enlargement of the homesite. In other words, the moral imperatives of moving are culturally, economically and socially driven. As Buttmer (1985, 313) writes, the challenge is for researchers to articulate ‘new metaphors and cognitive
categories that strive towards a contextual understanding of migrant identity’ rather than to focus narrowly on geographical mobility in its most obvious locational and physical sense.

One of the concrete ways to comprehend interactions between those at home and at reach is by examining exchange and communication networks. In a study of two agricultural communities in Nepal, Subedi (1993) used letters, remittances and visits made by those at home and at reach to evaluate these connections. Most Salelologa members keep close contact through letters, telephone calls and visits back and forth between Samoa and fafo. They also continue to evaluate the va between relatives at i`inei (home) and fafo (overseas). The question of whether to return to Samoa is not as much a visible concern as the acknowledged commitment by those at reach to help with fa’alavelave and to uphold the honour of their ‘aiga. Likewise, those at home must act responsibly to take care of family land and titles, hence also contributing to the honour of the ‘aiga.

Legitimate forms of mobility are purposeful in the context of the development cycle of household or community. Nowadays, malaga includes the strategic search for better economic opportunities, formal education or medical help. Leaving the homesite is seen as appropriate if it helps sustain the socioeconomic integrity and development of families; moving overseas becomes the means to achieve goals nearly impossible to realise locally. Much of this reasoning reflects the notion that no source of income is adequate or secure enough in and of itself, so most families deliberately plan for financial success and security in old age. Although parents would prefer to have all children living in the village for life, reality dictates that one or two must have a regular wage job in Apia or overseas. In her summary of Pacific and particularly Tongan diaspora over the last two decades, Helen Lee (2009) notes similar decision-making and strategies by Tongans. This is a risk-minimising strategy given the uncertainty of economic times and conditions.

Among Salelologa residents it is not important to define for how long a person intends to be away, which could be for as much as years, just as those living overseas do not always plan the time they will remain away. More central are the reciprocations between kin at i`inei and fafo, which inform malaga, as exemplified in the saying at the beginning of this paper: ‘E lele le toloa `ae ma`au `i le vai (The albatross flies but always comes back to its home, the water pond). Thinking on movement, identity and place is best summarised as ‘We move only in body, not in spirit.’
Unstructured and improper mobility

Just as structured movements that constitute *malaga* are considered culturally appropriate, others are culturally inappropriate when *ʻaiga* are not enhanced. As with legitimate mobility, however, improper forms are guided by aspects of both the life cycle and *va* (social space).

In a study of the Hausa people of northern Nigeria, Olofson (1976) analysed different types of movement in terms of their legitimacy. Legitimate experiences are useful as they help keep the place clean and improve family cohesion and economic standing. Illegitimate experiences are those seen as useless and do not contribute to household enhancement. Like Olofson, Bautista tells in her own essay how, during fieldwork in 1997–99, she found that the Satowan people of Micronesia also perceive mobility in both legitimate and illegitimate terms, often associated with how it enhances the *falang* or homesite. On Satowan, the term *urur* refers to improper movement. However, young men who have been remiss in their responsibilities to the *falang*, often are forgiven on returning with something to compensate for their absence.

In Samoa, life stages, marital status, gender and age greatly influence perceptions of mobility as being proper or improper. Young and able-bodied adolescents or *matai* who wander about the village are looked upon with disdain (Table 3.3). Both men and women are expected to be productively engaged or working on the family plantations, rather than hanging about aimlessly. Although this expectation applies to both men and women, the consequences for women are heavier, because the *feagaiga* (taboos) prescribed by *va tapuia* restrict the number of places to which women may wander, especially if unmarried. Young girls can go in groups to fetch firewood or play in the *malae* (village green). At night, girls and boys are allowed to congregate on the *malae* but are expected to be home by nine o’clock. Those who stay out beyond this time, especially if female teenagers, are considered improperly mobile and not engaged in legitimate behaviour. *Matai* monitor these evening curfews and warn those who overstay the time, while repeated offences are reported to the village council.

Although most local accounts of population movement are grounded in moral terms, in other words how to enhance the household, to automatically condemn improper movement could overstate the case and impose overly bounded categories on kinds of mobility. As one Salelologa member explained, the terms for improper movement are varied:
We call somebody, especially a young, able body who wanders from `aiga to `aiga all day without good purpose, ta`ata’a, tafaofao or fealualua`i [Table 3.3]. If that person eats at his neighbours’ every day of the week that isn’t considered appropriate and polite. We value sharing and have lots of love, but if somebody wanders like that continuously that is not proper Samoan behaviour … Only pigs and chickens roam like that.

These terms are used interchangeably to describe and comment on movement made without apparent reason to urban areas or nearby villages.

On the other hand, such movements are not always as lacking in purpose or as random as they may appear. A mother of a young man who had been absent told me, ‘My son has been gone for a while, who knows where, maybe he’s in Apia or in one of my families.’ Upon interviewing her two weeks later, she happily said that her son had returned with a bag of rice and a carton of 48 cans of fish. The food was the son’s reward for helping his uncle, a house builder. When I asked the son about his recent whereabouts, he still dismissed it as fealualua`i or tafaofao, even though in the end he had contributed to family welfare. Aimless wandering can thus open up new connections and re-establish older ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.3: Types of improper movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tafaofao+solo</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fealualua`i+solo</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ta<code>ata</code>a+solo</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaeva+solo</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Laufa+solo</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interviews 1999–2002
Under certain conditions, proper mobility can become improper. For example, a son or a daughter who receives a government scholarship to go abroad to study but fails examinations or becomes involved in drugs brings shame on the family. Similarly, ‘aiga members who hold responsible positions but are dismissed for careless and irresponsible behaviour bring shame to both themselves and ‘aiga, because their actions during movement have not assisted the family’s reputation and status.

Village polity: Appropriate social behaviour and mobility

As part of social space, mobility is incorporated into larger frames of cultural understanding of behaviour. Mobility also ties into nu’u (village) polity and the flow of everyday life. While everyone goes about the business of raising families and improving ‘aiga, by participating in communal activities they also observe well-defined social rules that enhance a cohesive society.

The nu’u (village) consists of pitonu’u (hamlets) made up of clusters of ‘aiga, which in many cases consist of smaller lineages in established alliances. Personal and family identity is therefore intimately associated with village identity; the two are not easily separated. While physical attributes of the nu’u include houses, people and domesticated animals, its psychological attributes have to do with how people conceive of the village as a centre of personal and collective belonging. Samoan villages are politically autonomous. Every village follows similar protocols of fa’a-Samoa, but particular histories distinguish each such community.

In the close proximity and personal closeness of Samoan society, being a member of ‘aiga is tantamount to being a village member. The matai is the ‘aiga’s representative to the village political forum or fono. On the occasion of saofa’i (matai investiture) each ‘aiga formally incorporates its matai into the fono, thus perpetuating the contribution of ‘aiga to the making of the village. The fono formally acknowledges the new matai, who takes a rightful position in the meeting house as prescribed by the village fa’alupega (honorific salutations). The fono is where all political, social and economic decisions to do with the village are made. A significant part of the identity of ‘aiga lies in the fact that it is involved and recognised by the fono. Thus, each matai and ‘aiga is said to be totonu o le nu’u (inside the village political centre).

There are times when a matai and ‘aiga might be excluded from political decision-making in the village, a period referred to as tua o le nu’u (out of
the village, not in the centre of village decisions). The fines and sanctions a village *fono* may levy on members of *ʻaiga* for various offenses also have consequences on people’s mobility (Table 3.4). *Matai* of that *ʻaiga* are excluded as the *fono* adjudicates the fine for these infractions, which depends on their seriousness. Politically and socially, to exclude someone means to disconnect them from the centre of village decision-making and overall community authority.

During research from 1999 to 2002 there were several instances of *faateʻaga* (political and social ostracism). An individual who frequently incurs *sala* (a fine) may be banished from the village, and if fines are not paid on time, departure may also occur. In many cases, such a person goes to stay with *ʻaiga* in other villages until they have calmed down and are more repentant. Return to the village can occur as soon as the fine is paid, although sometimes individuals decide to stay away permanently. Coming back to the village also depends on the continuous effort of the *matai* to convince the *fono* to allow this, for much negotiation is involved.

In one case, a serious fine resulted in limiting the mobility of a *matai* and his family – a story with a personal side, as it involves some of my own relations. In 1998, Savelio was banished for disagreeing with the village council’s decision to give land at the wharf to government. He argued this land included a plot belonging to his family as had been confirmed in previous court cases. He also thought the deal the *fono* negotiated with government was not in the long-term interest of Salelologa, whereas the village council considered the chiefs and orators to have jurisdiction over the land and that the council’s decision would be final. Savelio then took the village council to court.

Meanwhile, the government went ahead with its plans for resurveying land around the wharf area, and the village council banished Savelio from Salelologa. Anytime he is seen anywhere in Salelologa the family or individual housing him is fined, and several fines already have been imposed on his *ʻaiga*. In September 2000 Savelio’s sister passed away and his family announced her death on the radio. Since Savelio is the *matai* of her family, his name was mentioned – which prompted a fine of $3000, along with another for attending the sister’s funeral. As long as Savelio remains stubborn, his chances of returning to Salelologa are slim. In the meantime, Savelio must minimise contact with relatives otherwise they will suffer more fines. The village council’s rationale for banishment was based on what they consider a disregard for the *va* (social space).
### Table 3.4: Mobility consequences of types of offenses and sanctions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURE &amp; STIFFNESS OF SANCTION</th>
<th>CONSEQUENCE ON DWELLING AND MOBILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fa`asala</strong> (to penalise)</td>
<td>A light fine given for misconduct such as swearing at a matai’s wife in public, a fight between relatives, obscene language, shouting at a church gathering, embezzlement of village funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fa<code>ate</code>a</strong> (to disconnect, exclude)</td>
<td>A matai will be fined and barred from making decisions in the fono when a matai’s family member is guilty of serious offences such as adultery, beating up a matai, failure to apologise for a car accident, disputing a land boundary, stealing taro from a neighbour’s plantation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fa<code>atula</code>i or fa`asavali</strong> (to pack up and hit the road)</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fa<code>ato</code>ele`ele</strong> (to disown, disrupt, fall into an abyss, disconnect from soil/land)</td>
<td>Banishment can be imposed for extremely serious offences or repeated offences including adultery by a chief or church minister, incest, land disputes, extreme family disputes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong><code>Oso ma le lau, or ati ma le lau** (</code>oso is a planting stick for taro. Remove the planting stick = remove the food).</strong></td>
<td>Same as above, but the food crops of the `aiga are also removed from the land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interviews 1999–2002
In 2009 the village of Salelologa was returned 2400 acres of its lands, part of the original 2800 acres taken through previous negotiations with the then Prime Minister Tofilau Eti (who was a member of parliament from our constituency), who passed away in 1999. The government kept only 400 acres for the township after long deliberations between the village and government (Fa’alenu’u Lilomaiava Niko, pers. comm., 2009). Savelio had received the most extreme punishment of banishment from a village called fa’ato’ele’ele (see Table 3.4). In 2007 Savelio passed away; in September 2011 Savelio’s family was reinstated back or fa’a ae to the village and fono council. During this fa’a ae the village council was given fine mats and cash. There was an ‘ava ceremony where words of reconciliation were exchanged between the council and Savelio’s ‘aiga.

In Sala’ilua: A Samoan mystery, Shore (1982) analyses from a structural perspective the murder of a matai and the banishment of his murderer, Tolova’a, along with his family. While Shore is largely correct in delineating the factors that led up to these sad events, the structure of village organisation does not alone account for them. Many believe it was a breakdown of va fealoa’i (social respect) between matai and matai, matai and village fono, matai and immediate family that was crucial. The murder victim was considered arrogant and demeaned Tolova’a during an ‘ava ceremony, thus failing formal village expectations of how a chiefly orator should behave.

Va, social space, is thus a cognitively complex phenomenon. Its structural and social protocols guide the moral economy of fa’a-Samoa and infractions can affect the lives and movement of people. The expression la lauamato’oto’o (To deliberate methodically, with care and respect for the dignity of those involved) highlights its significance. In village politics, public image and social harmony are highly important, indicative of a nu’u faimea lelei (good and well-administered village) or nu’u faimea maopopo (cohesive and well-administered village). No person wants to be associated with a nu’u fai mea leaga (village with bad administration, lacking integrity) or a nu’u vaivai (weak village, lacking leadership). To a considerable extent, lack of social unrest and political turmoil in Samoa depends on the integrity and leadership of the ‘aiga and village fono. National courts in Apia work in parallel with the village fono. They recognise their role when sentencing those guilty of a crime, by taking into account punishments already mandated by fono.

Expulsion or banishment of a family member can be devastating to the ‘aiga, but processes of reconciliation exist. If the member of an ‘aiga has offended against somebody, an ifoga (penance or act of contrition) can be
undertaken. The high chief and orators of the guilty family bow down in front of the victim's house. Their heads remain covered with fine mats until the *matai* of the victim's family uncovers them, signifying that the *ifoga* is accepted. Following reconciliation, the offending individual and family are allowed to return to the village and the *matai* may participate again in formal decision-making. To be returned to the village centre and permitted to participate in its administration is known as *fa`aa`e*.

Banishment is rarely meted out by the village *fono*, and usually only for extreme offenses. It has a profound impact on individual movement and people's livelihood, especially when entire families are ostracised. Sometimes, the stakes of village politics can lead to expulsion or banishment. In 2001 the paramount chief Tuimalealiʻifano Vaʻaletoa from Falelatai village on Upolu island was fined and *fa`ate`a* (socially and politically ostracised) from Falelatai for refusing to step down as an election candidate, after the council had already agreed to support another person, Misa Telefoni Retzlaff. A *fa`aa`e* ceremony a year later brought Tuimalealiʻifano back into the village, as food and fine mats were exchanged and reconciliation made. Misa Telefoni Retzlaff, who was minister of commerce, labour and tourism and deputy prime minister, was present. The village council welcomed Tuimalealiʻifano back and the *Samoan Observer* (March 2002) reported Misa as saying, ‘I am personally very happy that Tuimalealiʻifano has returned to the district and hopefully this will bring peace to Falelatai.’

Over long swings of time in Samoa, Savaiʻi and Salelologa, many forms of mobility have endured, some have been modified and some have dissipated as new ones have emerged. *Malaga* is deeply rooted in the society’s past, so that many forms reflect the vitality and shifting nature of customary life. Mobility also indicates how people respond to the sequence of life events, for as family members grow, marry and have children, new households are established. But as Subedi (1993, 293) writes of village communities in eastern Nepal, ‘To leave “home” in the quest for cash for survival, for maintenance, and for improvement in household status is not a contemporary phenomenon and for centuries has quite often driven people away from their cultural hearth.’ The cases described here illustrate the political and social aspects of mobility as tied to maintaining a coherent and civil society. As demonstrated, mobility is constantly negotiated around family, village politics and social exigencies.
Conclusion

In elucidating the indigenous meanings of *malaga* (journeyings, movements, travel back and forth) and *va* (social space, space between, space that relates) it is clear that *va* is a central idea and crucial context for how movement informs Samoan identity and legitimacy. In this paper, I explored indigenous conceptions to enhance understanding and ‘expand the limitations of an a-historical, economistic view of Pacific migrations’ (Cluny and La`avasa Macpherson 2006, 2). Other indigenous scholars before me have embarked on this journey (Gegeo 1998; Meyer 2001). Similarly, in this study I have focused on Samoan cultural metaphors of mobility like *malaga* and the connections that people establish as they move. Samoan conceptions of movement and identity are associated with the complex goals of households desiring economic and political advancement. What people emphasised was the coming and going that describes the interconnectedness of land and society. Social worlds are not bound by geography and return is a simple shift of residence between places.

The use of ‘intent’ as an indicator of whether a person is a migrant, a sojourner or a circulator continued to strike me as spurious the further my research progressed, and focus turned towards movement as a process of establishing and re-establishing relationships. Bonnemaison (1985) begins to delineate this prospect in discussing the ‘tree and canoe’ metaphor, where he likens the people of Tanna, Vanuatu, to trees rooted in their kin group but collectively venturing out, like canoes that have paths to explore in the wider world. Bonnemaison suggests that places cannot be described as ‘urban’ or ‘rural’ because notions of territory transcend such obvious boundedness. The relationship between physical and conceptual spaces can be grounded in examination of metaphors, which are simultaneously part of cultural communication and reflections of social relations.

To fully comprehend the epistemology of *fa’a-Samoa*, mobility and identity, I teased out various cultural and sociopolitical dimensions of mobility. Conceptually, this went beyond the conventional economic understanding of mobility to highlight the sociopolitical dimensions of the household. The concept of *malaga* provides a powerful instance when migration is investigated from a specific cultural viewpoint, as in this case *fa’a-Samoa*. As Chapman aptly put it, ‘Over the years … research [on island societies] has crystallised larger questions, that is the cultural specificity of the conventions of “migration”, and the need to elucidate ones that are locally
relevant but reported in ways that still permit cross-cultural and international comparison’ (Chapman 1975, 144).

The Samoan formula for maintaining identity and ensuring the recognition of shared identity and belonging with others is often expressed publicly in the saying with which this chapter began, ‘E lele le toloa ‘ae ma’a u i le vais (The albatross flies but always comes back to its home, the water pond). Recently Fepulea’i Micah Van der Ryn, writing of case studies from American Samoa, has invoked the same proverb. He observes that ‘an understanding of indigenous concepts, institutions and practices must be incorporated into any analysis for it to be credible ... [Thinking about] mobility must include considerations of cultural identity, social relationships, and membership in extended family networks that entail major economic and social obligations’ (Van der Ryn 2012, 277). This proverbial expression refers to va or the social space that informs Samoan relationships as related to homeplace and to an underlying moral economy. Thus physical displacement, the result of movement, is not necessarily tantamount to social displacement.

A concerted effort at longitudinal studies of island communities at home and abroad, along with a deliberate mix of inside and outside perspectives, would produce more nuanced conceptual approaches. Empirical detail informs theory. Cultural and population approaches to mobility research are often textual and hypothetical but can benefit greatly from field study, which enables scholars to understand the meaning of movement rather than merely describing or explaining it.

Notes
1 Fieldwork from summer 1999 to December 2002 was supported by the Social Science Research Council, New York, the American Association of University Women (Honolulu Branch) and the Globalization Research Centre, University of Hawai`i. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the people of Salelologa in Samoa, of Auckland in New Zealand, and of Santa Ana in California for their generous assistance and hospitality throughout the duration of this research.