

Introduction

Helen Lee

In the context of contemporary globalisation and increasing population mobility, the topics of migration and transnationalism have become the focus of studies in a number of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, cultural geography and political science, and the contributors to this collection reflect this diversity. They bring a range of perspectives, theories and methodologies to their research, and focus on many Pacific Island states and Pacific populations in the main host nations of New Zealand, the United States and Australia.

Within the vast body of literature on global migration the Pacific is well represented, however within the field of transnational studies the Pacific is virtually absent as there has been a focus on the transnational practices of migrants in the United States and Europe from the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and Africa. This book provides, for the first time, a collection of papers that unite Pacific migration studies with the field of transnational studies and present a number of detailed case studies of contemporary Pacific populations. The authors focus on transnationalism as a feature of migration, although the term 'transnationalism' can be used more broadly, in relation to global business, finance, governance and so many other aspects of globalisation. The case studies presented in this book show that these broader aspects of transnationalism are often vital to the connections between migrants and their homelands, as when people remit money via financial institutions such as Western Union, or when globalised technologies such as the internet enable them to communicate with friends and family around the world.

Previous work on Pacific migration has focused primarily on migrants' experiences within the diaspora; to a lesser extent this work has examined migrants' ties to their homelands. Within the literature on connections between Pacific migrant populations and their countries of origin the central concern has been remittances and their impact on island economies, and the chapters in this volume acknowledge the importance of remittances as a crucial element of Pacific transnationalism. However, the contributors also seek to go beyond a narrowly economic focus in order to examine the multiple strands of transnational connections that weave a complex web linking the islands and the many parts of the Pacific diaspora. For Pacific Islanders, transnationalism involves the multidirectional movement of people, money, goods of many different kinds, artefacts, ideas and symbols, and involves individuals, families, groups and institutions.

Indeed, it is difficult to discuss Pacific migration without also discussing transnationalism, because Islanders' experiences of migration have always been inherently transnational. People's motivations for migration are diverse but the desire to retain connections to kin 'at home' has long been a feature of Pacific Islanders' mobility. As the chapters in this volume show, kinship may be the strongest thread in the transnational web but is by no means the only one; the authors address other elements of transnationalism as varied as the movement of food around the Pacific and involvement of migrants in homeland politics.

In presenting 'Pacific perspectives' this book does not claim to cover the entire sweep of Oceania. The book's chapters focus on the regions known as Polynesia and Micronesia, although the French territories and former territories of the United States are not represented, nor is the region known as Melanesia, with the exception of Fiji, which has long had an ambiguous position within these European-imposed regional designations. And, while there is a chapter on Fijian migrants, there is little mention of Indo-Fijians, who have migrated in large numbers in recent years. Rather than attempt a broad but inevitably shallow coverage of the entire Pacific region, the chapters instead present a range of case studies that highlight the key themes of Pacific migration and transnationalism: reciprocity and gift-giving, kinship, identity, work and the ideal of a return 'home'.

After a chapter presenting an overview of the history of Pacific migration and transnationalism, and some of the current issues in the literature on these topics, the themes of reciprocity and kinship are highlighted in the next four chapters. Chapter Two, by Ping-Ann Addo, draws on ethnographic research conducted in Auckland, New Zealand and California in the United States, to examine Tongan women's roles in controlling family economics by exchanging *koloa*, traditional wealth in the form of textiles produced by women, across sites of Tongan transnationalism. Addo explores the role that cash has come to play in such exchanges and she uses a Tongan funeral in the diaspora as a case study of how the transnational Tongan economy is transforming as cash enters into ceremonial gift-giving.

Sa'iliemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor brings a *fa`a-Samoa* (Samoan culture and way of life) perspective on transnationalism to Chapter Three, examining how social, cultural, political, and economic practices have changed over time, and the forms that Samoan transnational processes take, with a particular focus on the concept of 'social remittances'. Her chapter continues the themes of reciprocity and kinship by focusing on gift exchanges as a central nexus of transnational activity for Tongans. She draws on research in the village of Salelologa on Savai'i, in independent Samoa, and as in Addo's chapter she also focuses on villagers' *'aiga* (family, kin group) in Auckland, New Zealand and California in the U.S. Her chapter exemplifies the importance of considering the transnational engagements

of those who remain in the islands, as well as acknowledging the active agency of Samoans in constantly transforming practices such as gift exchanges.

In Chapter Four, Cluny and La'avasa Macpherson describe kinship as the foundation of Samoan transnationalism. They draw on their longitudinal research to examine transformations in 'kin-based activity' in Samoan migrant communities in New Zealand since the 1950s which, they argue, have transformed the nature of Samoan transnationalism and have influenced practices in Samoa itself. Like Lilomaiava-Doktor they focus on the reciprocity of gift exchanges as central to expressions of *fa'a Samoa*, tracing the changes in gift-giving practices over time in the Auckland communities. Their concept of a contemporary Samoan 'meta-culture' which encompasses Samoans at home and abroad could usefully be applied to other Pacific populations and is a new way to imagine the spread of Pacific peoples and their interconnectedness over vast distances.

Kalissa Alexeyeff's Chapter Five on the Cook Islands describes *tere pati*, the movement of large groups of people to visit Cook Islanders in other locations, both within the islands and between the Cook Islands and New Zealand and other diasporic locations. While much of her chapter focuses on the excitement and sociality of *tere pati*, Alexeyeff also reminds us that migration and transnationalism inherently involve experiences of 'loss and dislocation'. Transnational movement means that people experience not only the joy of visiting family and friends but also the sadness of leaving them again and movements such as *tere pati* are constant reminders of the distances between loved ones.

The issue of identity, which is a thread running through each of the preceding case studies, is addressed more directly in Chapter Six, by Nancy Pollock, through a broad comparative approach across the Pacific with a focus on food. Pollock looks at the mobility of 'gastronomies' across the Pacific and describes the centrality of food as means of cultural expression. She traces the movement of foodstuffs into the Pacific from Asia in the original migrations, and the modern influences of Asia on Pacific diets, as well as the influences of European and American cuisines. Pollock also describes the influence of transnational corporations which bring particular kinds of food and drink to the Pacific, and the rest of the world. Her chapter takes us right back to the first migrations into the Pacific then brings us to the present day, to contemporary Pacific migration and transnationalism and the increasingly complex expressions of identity both within the islands and in the diaspora.

Chapter Seven, jointly authored by Mike Evans, Paul Harms and Colin Reid, continues the focus on identity as a key theme in Pacific migration and transnationalism. The authors employ a quantitative approach, using a survey of Tongan adults in Tonga and Auckland. Their survey was designed to ascertain participants' attitudes towards key elements of Tongan identity and to assess

whether these are influenced by demographic factors. Their work demonstrates the value of taking a quantitative approach to issues that have previously been researched qualitatively, such as how being 'Tongan' is defined through specific values and practices. Like many of the chapters in this book, it also demonstrates that the home/abroad dichotomy should not be overstated, with people living in transnational households, even transnational villages, rather than in divergent communities.

The importance of employment as motivation for migration is highlighted in Chapter Eight, by Mark Schubert, which presents a case study of Fijians in Griffith, a regional town in Australia. Schubert focuses on the issue of 'overstaying' in order to work (illegally) overseas. He looks at why Griffith is an attractive destination for Fijians who have overstayed their short-term visas and who are seeking unskilled work picking fruit and vegetables, and he examines their interactions with documented, settled Fijians in the town. He also looks at the transnational activities of Fijians which bring visiting relatives, friends and church ministers to the town, or entail trips to Fiji for holidays and family events, and contact via telephone phone and email. For the undocumented Fijians, the options for transnational engagements are more limited and their situations are more tenuous given that they can be apprehended and deported at any time. Schubert's paper is timely, given the introduction in 2009 of short-term labour schemes in Australia, as these may well be a way for Fijians and other Islanders to live and work legally in Australia and more fully engage in maintaining transnational ties to their homelands.

Chapter Nine, by Maria Borovnik, looks at another form of temporary work away from the islands; the seafaring undertaken by people from the Pacific 'microstates' of Kiribati and Tuvalu, formerly colonised by Great Britain. Borovnik traces the history of recruitment of Pacific seafarers onto international merchant vessels since the 1950s and looks at the experiences of modern day seafarers from Tuvalu and Kiribati. She shows that these men, and today some women, are participating in a global system yet retaining ties to home, including remitting money that is now helping to support many of the families remaining in the islands.

John Connell's Chapter Ten, on the return migration of skilled health workers to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, draws on quantitative data from surveys of nurses and doctors, both those who have migrated and returned and those who have not migrated. Connell explores their reasons for leaving (largely economic) and returning (largely social), and why some have chosen to remain in the islands. He also looks at why some who have returned intend to leave again for overseas. Return migration is a topic generating considerable interest in transnational studies and Connell's paper provides an example of how important it can be to the countries of origin; as he points out, even when health workers who return

do not work in the health sector their impact is nevertheless 'significant for both social and economic development'. However, returnees encounter numerous difficulties in readjusting to life 'at home' and may desire to move back overseas; understanding why this is the case can be helpful in the development of policies and programs aimed at encouraging migrants to resettle in their country of origin.

Return migration is also a focus of Chapter Eleven, in which Vili Nosa addresses the situation for Niue, another Pacific 'microstate' and the most depopulated island country of the Pacific. He describes the history of movement from Niue, from the labour trade within the Pacific that began in the mid-19th century to present day movement beyond the Pacific. Nosa describes the rapid decline in population once Niueans gained citizenship in New Zealand in 1974; today far more live outside Niue than remain on the island. In his chapter he explores the various strategies that have been employed to encourage return migration. He shows that Niue's environmental, economic and political problems present even greater obstacles than those described in the previous chapter.

Like Niueans, Tokelauns have New Zealand citizenship and many have moved away from the islands while retaining ties to kin at home. Chapter Twelve, by Ingerd Hoëm, examines the issues of citizenship and governance for Tokelau. She looks at how these issues have changed over time as Tokelau's relationship with New Zealand has changed; and how in turn this has affected patterns of sociality in the atolls. Hoëm describes the debates that have occurred in Tokelau and its diaspora about self-governance, many of which revolved around retaining New Zealand citizenship so that transnational mobility could continue. She shows that the overseas Tokelauan community was very active in these discussions, reminding us of the 'long distance nationalism' that can have a significant influence on the homeland.

The following chapter, by Steve Tupai Francis, complicates the prevailing picture of transnationalism and the study of diaspora and movement out of Oceania by comparing different patterns of transnational movement from three Tongan villages. He demonstrates through the comparison of these villages how movement can differ within island nations, and how variables such as history, origin and socio-economic context can greatly affect how transnational movements are enacted and transacted. Through the case studies Francis also shows how the lives and experiences of individuals and families are shaped by transnationalism, even in remote island villages.

Finally, in Camille Nakhid's concluding chapter, we return to the relationship between Pacific migration and transnationalism and to the wider literature on transnationalism. Nakhid argues that the transnational practices of Pacific Islanders are shaped by the central importance placed on the principle of reciprocity, particularly as it influences cultural identity and the relationship

of migrants to the homeland. As her chapter, and so many of the others, makes clear, Pacific migrants are deeply embedded in complex relationships that transcend national borders and create webs of connection spanning the distances between them and their homelands.

The chapters in this book were developed from papers written for a conference on Pacific Transnationalism held at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia, in November 2006. This two-day conference drew together for the first time scholars from around the world who are researching aspects of transnationalism among Pacific populations, leading to many lively and exciting discussions. Not all papers presented at the conference could be included, or this volume would be considerably larger, as it would be if every Pacific country was included. A forum was held during the conference, during which members of Pacific communities in Melbourne shared their experiences of migration and transnationalism. Their stories provided a powerful reminder of the profound emotional significance of the interconnections that transcend national borders and sustain a sense of identity and belonging for Islanders wherever they may live.

An element of drama was added to the conference when we heard from Paul Harms, a co-author of Chapter Seven, who arrived mid-conference from Tonga after witnessing the riots that devastated Nuku'alofa on 16 November. Paul's vivid description of the riots and their immediate aftermath, and a passionate address by Don Kennedy about the future of Tuvalu, during the community forum, brought a sombre note to the proceedings, reminding us that the future of Pacific countries is uncertain. As they face political unrest and the impact of climate change, as well as ongoing problems including precarious economies and environmental destruction, the ties between the islands and the diaspora will continue to be crucial and should not be ignored in any discussions of Pacific peoples. The future of the Pacific is inherently tied to Pacific migration and transnationalism.