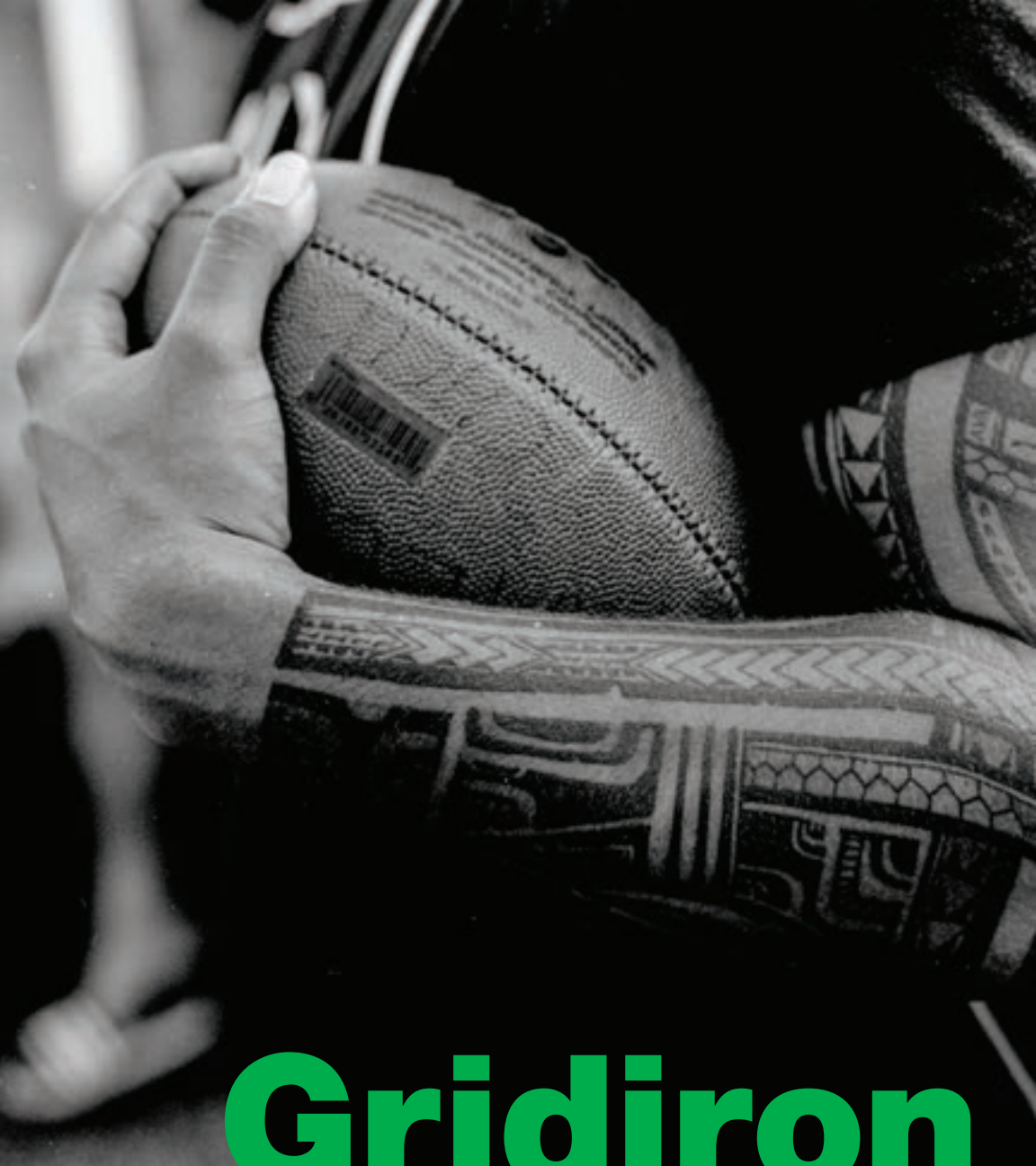




Gridiron Capital

HOW AMERICAN FOOTBALL
BECAME A SAMOAN GAME [LISA UPERESA](#)

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HOW AMERICAN FOOTBALL
BECAME A SAMOAN GAME **LISA UPERESA**

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Preface

In the picture we stand smiling at the camera and bundled in jackets, with me in a yellow beanie cap and scarf and my brother Derek in uniform, shivering in the cold after the game. The stadium lights are still on in the background, and it is long past sunset in autumn on the US East Coast. It was October 2004 and we had just finished watching his school team, St. Francis University (PA), play Stony Brook on Long Island, New York. From the bleachers of the small stadium our small group had cheered for him and the other players from Sāmoa, who gave all they had on the field. Our brief reunion far outshined the incidental outcome of the game. It was my second year of graduate school in New York City, and with no family on the East Coast, I was overjoyed to see one of my siblings there. The picture captures the excitement of our short visit, crossing paths on an island far from the one we called home.

We were both part of the legacy of Samoan migration and mobility in the United States, even if our paths were different. Both wound through the educational institutions and networks that connect the islands with Hawai'i and the continental United States through an elaborate K-12 and college system headed by the US Department of Education and underpinned by longstanding political agreements and structures of US empire. Like many young

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women, my path stayed firmly on the academic route, but his intersected with the burgeoning football industry that was drawing student-athletes from the islands, thousands of miles away, as part of a growing network of sport migration. In that moment, smiling into the flash of the camera, our only concern was the excitement of reunion, far from family and “the rock.” At that point I could not have predicted the path this research would take; this was long before the questions about sport in Sāmoa emerged during research at the National Archives and gave me new direction. The photo, however, captures a snapshot in time in which shifting pathways of movement, infrastructures, and mobilities are woven together, and so is an apt point of departure for unraveling this larger story of Samoan pasts, presents, and futures.

This book is about Samoan involvement in American football—its history, its appeal, its economies, and its social impact. I chose this focus not just because it is a major phenomenon (as the numbers of NFL players and the quotes from US media indicate) or because it is linked to so many aspects of Samoan social, economic, and imaginative life, as well as my own, but because as someone for whom American Sāmoa will always be home, how it is represented matters. It is important that these narratives reflect its complexity: as a multifaceted society with a proud history and distinct culture, as a site of American colonial intervention, as transformed by transnational migration and networks and contending with the pressures of underdevelopment, and as a society in which new forms of labor and new symbolic economies have become linked with local institutions and cultural values. As a critical Pacific scholar trained in anthropology, this also allows me to address the exotic representations of Sāmoa that have been central to the anthropological literature beginning with Margaret Mead but which persist in the sensational media coverage of contemporary football.

Wayfinding and Navigating Research

Ancient and contemporary navigators in Polynesia use their knowledge of the sun, stars, ocean swells, and bird sightings to find their way between and among the islands and across the globe. While navigation implies a concise process of moving from one place to another (such as through detailed measurement, maps, and directions), wayfinding signals a more organic unfolding of one’s journey in a way that draws on a variety of conceptions and understandings of space, place, and relationships. It builds embodied knowledge through all the senses, relations, and ongoing experiences. Research

is often conceptualized as a process of charting and navigating, from research design to human subject reviews, to interview schedules and/or set surveys, to collation of data and analysis of findings. While this project has drawn on those methodologies, they were insufficient to the task at hand. As a researcher working in and with communities to whom I am connected, I have found my way by trying, and sometimes failing, to locate and navigate my position in different spaces, in place and in relation to others.

Shifting from the larger context of sport and empire to focus on the history and evolution of gridiron football in American Sāmoa as part of an examination of “development” and local transformation in the islands, this project became shaped by my own family history with the sport, the network of contacts accessible to me, its importance in contemporary local public culture, and my study of gender in the Pacific (and elsewhere). Finding my way through this process reinforced the reality that research is always embodied and enmeshed in particular sets of relationships. Football has been part of my family life since before I was born, and no doubt some supported my work in recognition of my extended family’s long-standing involvement. I am grateful for the many ways, big and small, that a variety of people supported this work, and especially to all who shared their stories with me.

Over a two-year period (2007–2008), I spent seven months doing focused research (“homework”) on the island of Tutuila (K. M. Teaiwa 2005, Uperesa 2010a). During that time I carried out archival research in the Territorial Archives and at the Feleti Barstow Library while living in my family home in the village of Fagatogo; I also attended practices at the local high schools and attended weekly games during the football season. While I was on island I attended and observed three football clinic/camps run by US-based coaches and conducted formal and informal interviews with coaches and player participants at each; I attended meetings of the Samoa Bowl Committee; and I collected basic survey information on recruitment trends for players. As part of the research more broadly, I carried out formal and informal interviews with players (former and current), coaches (local and US college), players’ family members, sport administrators and other key stakeholders, matai (those who hold customary family titles), and government officials. In the months preceding and following my trips to Sāmoa I carried out archival and online research as part of my dissertation project, and continued this research as a faculty member at University of Hawai‘i (with additional trips in 2012 and 2015, as well as to California in 2014 and local research at camps, combines, games, and related events in Hawai‘i). The bulk of the material for this book was brought together over the past decade,

but some insights are drawn from my time growing up on the sidelines in Tutuila, attending Samoana High School, and learning from my extended family's ongoing commitment to the game.

I spent my formative years in Tutuila, with a sense of place suffused with a distinctive culture intertwined with the global and visions of the modern. In those days, it was seen largely through commodities and media flows like weekly broadcasts of Casey Kasem's Top 40, Friday Night Videos, and nightly episodes of the *Days of Our Lives* soap opera; American fashions sold at Tedi of Sāmoa; and imported food items like Bongos and UFOs snacks from Fiji, Tim Tam cookies and pisupo from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, and kimchee and hot and spicy saimin noodles from Korea. Along with the excitement of trips to the airport to pick up incoming relatives bringing large bags of McDonald's and chocolate-covered macadamia nuts from Hawai'i, these things coexisted with village life and riding the 'āiga bus to school every day, buying panikeke from the market, and eating to'ona'i with my family after church on Sundays. At the same time, periodic travel took us to Hawai'i, the West Coast, the Pacific Northwest, and Big Sky country to visit family, close relations, and my father's former players who had gone off island for school and football. The early experience of living in Tutuila shaped my sense of the island as a highly localized place that was also dynamic, complex, and multiply situated in currents of international movement. This book aims to capture some of the complexities of contemporary social life in Sāmoa, and the historical experience that mixes the disjunctures of modernity and transnational flows with the "indigenous *longue duree*" (Clifford 2001, 482).

The terms "Indigenous" and "Native" have been reclaimed by scholars as part of a worldwide movement for Indigenous rights against the dispossession of settler colonialism and empire. They index a prior claim to landed area and resources; serve as a historical, political, and ethical analytic; and reference political identities connected to sovereignty activism. In the Pacific, they have gained the most traction in settler colonial nations with ongoing and historical sovereignty struggles (Hawai'i, Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Aotearoa New Zealand) and less so in other places like Sāmoa and Tonga where settler colonialism did not take hold. However, the Indigenous or Native Pacific also connects through the concepts of tangata whenua, kānaka maoli, and tagata o le moana as part of Moana-nui-a-kea, which in the postcolonial moment draw a distinction between that which has its roots in the Pacific and that which has been introduced or imposed, and marks deep histories and genealogies of connection. In this book, I draw

on an expanded sense of “Native” as both rooted and mobile, connected to homelands and overseas, as part of transnational communities (Diaz and Kauanui 2001; Tengan 2005). The terms “Indigenous” and “Native” are used interchangeably to refer to practices, ideals, and institutions rooted in long island histories, while remaining attentive to the nuances of articulation and the constructedness of “tradition” and “modernity.” These elements have been woven together in complex ways to shape how we have come to understand American football in Sāmoa and Samoans in American football.



Acknowledgments

While I was in living and working in Hawai‘i, I heard many Indigenous scholars say that the research finds you, and this was true in the way this project unfolded. This book belongs to the collective: to all who took part and whose stories are featured here. There were unexpected delights in learning about community connections across time and space, and different parts of our family history. Through it all my family was my foundation, my strength, and my accountability. Mom and Dad, Duke, Fele, Bal, Derek, Dart, Eirenee, and Sia have all been part of this over the past fifteen years, whether offering support, sharing knowledge, good food, or cracking jokes. Uncle Misi and Auntie Shauna’s “Uperesa Inn” hosted me on many trips and was a favorite destination with ‘ono grinds and warm alofa. The Uperesa and Tu‘ufuli uncles, aunties, and cousins have kept me grounded and in good spirits. Special appreciation to Corabelle for support during the research, feedback, and for always believing, even when I doubted. Uncle Keith, it was fun being at UH and many of the football events with you.

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Finally, I recognize moana Pasefika scholars past and present, and I hope this humble contribution lives up to the measina you all have created. Any faults remain my responsibility alone.

Introduction

FABLED FUTURES AND GRIDIRON DREAMS

WE ARRIVED AT THE BISHOP MUSEUM on a bright, sunny morning to find some of the members of the Royal Order of Kamehameha (ROK) setting up the area for the formal ‘awa (‘ava/kava)¹ ceremony to welcome the inaugural class of the Polynesian Football Hall of Fame (PFHOF).² This first class enshrined in Honolulu included Kurt Keola Gouveia, Olin George Kreutz, Jack “The Throwin’ Samoan” Thompson, Kevin James Mawae, Ken Niumatalolo, Tiaina Baul “Junior” Seau Jr., Vai Sikahema, and Herman John Wedermeyer, with weekend events including the induction dinner held at the convention center and a public event at the Polynesian Cultural Center (the permanent site of the PFHOF).³ Prior to the ceremony, attendees greeted each other and their hosts enthusiastically as the mini-reunion brought many in the Polynesian fraternity back together.⁴ They were presented with a kihei and would be arrayed on lauhala/laufala (woven mats) arranged in a half-moon shape facing those who were mixing and serving ‘awa, with chairs behind them for family members and friends in attendance. The ceremony would be led by Leighton Tseu, representative of the Royal Order, and performed by J. Keawe‘aimoku Kaholokua and Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, who were there as part

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of the Hale Mua o Kūali‘i and ‘Aha Kāne.⁵ One of the ROK members outlined how the ceremony was going to work and expressed his appreciation for their role in honoring the inductees. He also warned them, “The longer you talk [in the optional individual speeches], the longer we will be sitting in the sun!” to laughter from the crowd.

After they assembled, Keawe began chanting as the inductees were led down a set of steps to the grassy area underneath a large, shady tree. Although it was only approaching midmorning, the air was already thickening with humidity. Once the inductees were in their places on the lauhala, Ty chanted as he mixed the ‘awa; when it was time to serve, Keawe spoke, highlighting each honoree’s accomplishments before a young man with Hawaiian kakau/tatau down his left leg and clothed in a malo served the ‘awa to each one, who in turn said a few words of acknowledgement and appreciation. After the ‘awa ceremony for the inductees was completed Leighton explained, “The significance of being on these grounds are that . . . about fifty yards from us are the artifacts and the stories that come from the ancestral lands, the lands of all of our ancestors. The capes that the kings and chiefs wore, the ornaments, the traditional tools—every Polynesian island is represented here in the collection. So today’s ceremony and the selection of this place is intentional. It is an opportunity not only for us to share this moment with our ancestors but also with our descendants.” He invited anyone in attendance who wanted to partake of ‘awa and say a few words to come forward. Several people spoke, including chairman and founder Seiuli Jesse Sapolu and vice chairman and founder Ma’a Tanuvasa, as well as board members June Jones and Reno Mahe, inductee Vai Sikahema, and State Representative Richard Fale.

The private ceremony consecrated the mission with Hawaiian protocols of welcome and acknowledged the genealogical and cultural connections between the islands in recognition of shared histories and ancestry. That groundedness set it apart from the large, lavish induction dinner and floor-show production and the open public event with speeches and autograph signings later that weekend. In its launch the PFHOF established an identity distinct from the Pro Football Hall of Fame and at the same time was inclusive of players with ties across the Polynesian triangle and others who had played important supporting roles in Polynesian football success. It was an expansive effort to include some who (as I was told) were taking this opportunity to reconnect after many years of living in US cities without Polynesian communities.



I.1 PFHOF 'Awa ceremony, Bishop Museum. PHOTO CREDIT: AUTHOR.

While the enshrinement and subsequent establishment of a permanent home at the Polynesian Cultural Center honored significant achievements and signaled support of football success, the vast majority of Polynesian representation in the sport to date are players of Samoan, Tongan, and Hawaiian descent, with Samoans constituting a critical mass. Focusing on one strand of this success with roots in Sāmoa, this book steps away from the celebrations of achievement to ask how we got here, what these achievements mean for players and in broader contexts, and how they are woven into larger community histories. Drawing on years of ethnographic and archival research, interviews, media analysis, and personal experience, this book weaves a narrative that winds backward and forward across the moana,

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connecting part of Turtle Island (the continental United States), Hawai‘i, and Sāmoa.

New Voyages: Expanding Routes of Mobility

Gridiron football has become an important part of life in Samoan communities in the islands and in linked urban and suburban areas of the United States. In American Sāmoa, the sport’s visibility and vibrancy are powered by its connection to the changing market of the American football industry, which for several decades now has opened new opportunities for Samoan youth at the collegiate and professional levels. Polynesian players have been racialized in ways that help them enter this line of work but restrict them from others: they are stereotyped as genetically gifted with size, girth, and quickness suitable for football as well as with a violent impulse that can be channeled into success on the field by virtue of their respect for authority, instilled by discipline and socialization in hierarchical Samoan society (see chapter 3). While this is often highlighted to explain the affinity for the game, this book argues for a more complex understanding—against the backdrop of US imperial legacies in Sāmoa and restricted economic opportunity, community histories and cultural sensibilities shape how Samoan men, most younger and some older, navigate the transnational sporting opportunities presented by American football. They are part of a global story of expanding sporting infrastructure, labor, and movement, comprising particular histories, conjunctures, and contingencies.⁶

For many, playing football is a response to limited structures of opportunity both in the archipelago and in the United States, although each context is distinct. Further developed in chapter 4 but important to mark here, I argue that the sport’s rise in Samoan communities is closely tied to the recognition and forms of capital it offers players, families, and wider communities: *economic* capital in the form of college scholarships, professional salaries, and endorsements; *cultural* or symbolic capital in the form of prestige, educational credentials, and expertise; and *social* capital in the form of expanded social and professional networks (Bourdieu 1984; 1986). Capital, in Pierre Bourdieu’s articulation, is “accumulated labor” in a “materialized form” that is appropriated by people or groups of people. How the different types of capital are distributed in a society reveals the “immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which governs its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices” (Bourdieu

1986, 241–242). In this way, social privilege, access, and inequality shape one's future possibilities.

While Bourdieu's theory of capital emerges from specific historical contexts, assumptions, and preoccupations distinct from the those of transnational Sāmoa, it remains a useful lens through which to view the dreams of upward mobility and the themes of opportunity and college access shared with me by many players, their families, and their communities.⁷ Still, it is a partial explanation: while the sport's rise is closely tied to the forms of capital it offers, Samoan players themselves articulate a variety of motivations for participation that are not fully determined or even encompassed by market principles and the logic of capitalist accumulation. Other elements also influence agentive decision making; for instance, cultural sensibilities shape some players' and communities' engagement with the sport beyond the market aspect (explored more fully in the chapters 2 and 4). At the same time, forward-looking imaginaries of "fabled futures" that are rooted in, and framed by, legendary sporting exploits of the past and present exert a powerful pull. Sports like football have become a new locus of fantasies of the future that are firmly linked to transnational movement and the mastery of modern institutions of education and sport in places like American Sāmoa and beyond. Exploring how the material, social, and imaginative dimensions of football are woven together in ways that draw in young players and their communities helps us to understand how football-related movement has emerged as an important gendered path of transnational mobility.

TRANSNATIONAL FUTURES

Discussions of "global sport" invoke "the global" and "globalization" with the whirring sense of high-velocity movement and connection. From intensified media linkages and ever-expanding commodity pathways to capital and labor migration capillaries that power the global economy, there is an understanding that we are living in a time with unprecedented "interactions of a new order and intensity" (Appadurai 1996, 27; see also 1990, 1991). As a concept, globalization has come to signify both a material change in social life and a shift in our awareness about the wider global context in which we live.⁸ While most scholars agree that a fundamental shift in frequency, scope, and volume of economic, cultural, and social interactions across different scales (local, regional, national, transnational, and global) has taken place,⁹ many questions remain about how to understand the processes and implications of this new order of movement, interaction, and blending.¹⁰

How do we understand the local and global as distinct, but also entangled with each other and co-constituted?

In the context of contemporary movement often driven by corporations and capital, “transnationalism” refers to the efforts by individuals and communities to forge and maintain connections irrespective of national boundaries. In this process, they “build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders” (Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994, 7).¹¹ Activities are shaped by, but not oriented toward, state structures and policies. Beyond the focus on migrant remittances,¹² this large-scale movement of people, currency, and products has raised important questions about impacts of local–global connections, changing cultural practices, diasporic identities and experience, and the durability of transnational connections in the Pacific and elsewhere.¹³

Across the Pacific, everyday people living abroad create and invigorate vital links to Pacific Island homes and sister communities in other countries when we visit, send money and goods, share photos and stories on social media, exchange information over calls and chats, make business linkages, and so on. These transnational practices, actualized in individual and communal practices by nonstate actors, link home islands with a vibrant and expanding diaspora that crosses national, political, and social boundaries. How, then, are local politics, economies, social practices, and cultural sensibilities changing in relation to different kinds of transnational movements? How do we account for specific dynamics in particular localities while holding in tension the importance of shifting transnational geopolitical formations that shape these local articulations, and still interrogate common dynamics across different localities? In line with a push to more specificity, scholars are questioning whether globalization is more ideology than actuality—that is, in capturing aggregate shifts it obscures important particularities that attention to specific transnational histories and currents may illuminate (see Carter 2011). This book tacks between examining football as a global industry and following particular pathways taken, aiming for a deeper understanding of “roots and routes” together with critical evaluations of aspects of industry, mobility, and transformation (Diaz and Kauanui 2001).¹⁴

SPORT AND MIGRATION

In some areas of the world, sport has been a migration pathway for nearly a century; it has emerged in force in the Pacific since the 1970s and intensified in the last three decades with professionalization and intensive capital investment.¹⁵ Like other transnational athletic migration streams from the

twentieth century, legacies of empire and colonialism fundamentally shaped Samoan presence in American football as part of the broader history of US imperial expansion that have enabled and continue to make these paths of mobility possible. However, its vibrant growth in recent decades can be linked to the broader globalization and commercialization of elite-level sports since the late twentieth century (Andrews and Ritzer 2007; Bale and Maguire 1994; Maguire 1999; Miller et al. 1999; Miller et al. 2001). With the rise of precarious labor on a global scale, new routes of investment for future returns have emerged; sport is one of these pathways whose scope and importance has proliferated in recent decades.

Sport migration is a distinct experience built on gender-specific pathways and ideologies of class mobility and open opportunity. Young men (primarily) and their communities are increasingly drawn to this high-stakes lottery with promises of prestigious rewards and the opportunity to bring their families honor and esteem, even as the odds are not always in their favor. Unlike other forms of migrant labor, elite athletes perform a kind of specialty labor (Castells 2000 [1996]; Elliot and Maguire 2008); they are seen as national treasures and deserving recipients of the praise, adulation, and wealth showered upon them. In some sports, like rugby, they are also seen as national possessions. As anthropologist Thomas Carter has noted, this “veneer of celebrity actually obscures the processes of transnational capital, the structures of labour in a transnational industry, and how states are complicit in structuring this industry” (2011, 6). In the Pacific, for example, the emergence of a “Pasifika rugby-playing diaspora” builds on historically contingent labor migration schemes to former or existing colonial powers (Horton 2012; see also Grainger 2006, 2011; Zakus and Horton 2009), as well as a dispersed system of sport scholarships and club contracts (Besnier 2012, 2014; Schieder and Presterustuen 2014).

The critical mass of players entering the top levels of American football in the early 2000s had sportswriters declaring American Sāmoa “The Dominican Republic of the NFL,”¹⁶ and in broad strokes, there are some similarities. Sport scholar Alan Klein’s early work (1991) adopted a core-periphery framework to understand Dominican Republic history and economics, paralleling the trade in Major League Baseball players with the sugar trade, and examining how Dominican players enter American baseball as a source of cheap labor.¹⁷ Escalating salaries underwritten by lucrative TV contracts were luring baseball hopefuls and convincing swaths of young Dominican men to turn their energy to the sport even if the actual opportunities were limited. As Thomas Carter (2007) notes, much of the sport migration litera-

ture has historically been shaped by the scholarship on the Caribbean. Yet even within the Caribbean other patterns developed that were distinct from the North–South movement framed by historical colonial relations detailed by Klein (see Carter 2008, 2011; Echevarria 2001). Carter (2007) notes, “Migration patterns vary with each sport and depend on a sport’s historical circumstances in the country of origin and the destination country as well as the contemporary political economic relationships between those two countries” (377; see also Besnier 2014). Details matter, and transnational migration routes—sport included—have specific histories seeding new lifeworlds, created by people moving and connecting across borders (Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994; Carter 2013).

In illuminating this route, marking key distinctions for American football is useful, particularly in the sport’s infrastructure and connections abroad. Firstly, the NFL has not invested in international academies in the way that baseball or other sports such as rugby or soccer have (see Darby 2012, 2013; Esson 2013; Klein 2006, 2009). The league is pushing to develop global markets, encouraging and underwriting youth programs and expanding into new media markets, but the road to the pros is built differently. Unlike in other countries, football’s entrenchment within the American school system facilitates engagement with education rather than maintaining a parallel system focused primarily on sports development. Culturally, football has become a key feature in high school and college life, inspiring dedicated fandom and providing a platform for alumni connection and continued support that is so valuable that many schools are loathe to cut their programs even in the face of economic or health complications.¹⁸ Entities like the NFL have not had to establish “farm” systems or academies because US colleges and universities fill that space; they play a key role in developing players and situating them to connect to professional opportunities.¹⁹ The (continental) United States remains the center of the game geographically, but continues to draw from communities abroad.

What people call the “Polynesian Pipeline” is today an elaborate network with multiple points of entry (largely though not exclusively) in the United States and US-affiliated Pacific communities; destinations include high schools, military prep academies, junior colleges, and four-year colleges and universities across the nation. This Polynesian network is constantly evolving to expand its reach, with nodes emerging deliberately and by chance, intended to connect Pacific communities to the college football system. Across the country, 73,660 athletes play football at NCAA member schools, with 48,314 eligible for scholarship support.²⁰ At the top level of

this system, NCAA Division I²¹ schools in the United States generated \$9.15 billion in athletic revenue according to 2016 calculations, with their football programs averaging \$31.9 million in revenue annually.²² Football draws just over a quarter of all NCAA athletes, and remains the number one high school sport in the United States with over a million players annually.²³ In the professional realm, the NFL generated \$14 billion in revenue in 2017, with roster spots for 1,696 players across the league;²⁴ by 2019 that revenue had climbed to \$15.26 billion.²⁵ While many Samoan players cite family, faith, and culture as motivating factors for their entry into sport careers, their increasing numbers are made possible by an expanding sporting infrastructure (for gridiron football see Ruck 2018 and Uperesa 2010b, 2014a; for rugby league see Lakisa, Adair, and Taylor 2014).

Sport is a historical formation, and there is nothing universal about the highly commercialized US sport industry (Sage 1998, 131). Rather, American professional football is historically contingent and particular; it was developed with specific efforts aimed at growing market share and profit margins, particularly through media revenues.²⁶ In the battle for the nation's most watched sport it emerged victorious, dethroning baseball by the end of the 1960s (Yost 2006, 66). Daniel Grano (2014) writes, "After the NFL merged with the American Football League in 1970, earnings for national broadcasting rights grew exponentially, from \$63 million in 1974 to a 2005 deal that secured about \$3.75 billion a year in broadcasting rights through 2011" (25; see also Yost 2006, 75–79). With new marketing strategies designed to enhance profits and game changes aimed at making TV viewing more exciting, along with new stadium seating schemes, rising ticket prices, and merchandizing deals, the NFL has become the most successful sports league in history. Record profits and a championship game that drew over 100 million viewers in 2020 shows American gridiron football is a force to reckon with. An expanding global infrastructure in the International Federation of American Football (IFAF) and the International Pathway Program, among other formal and informal efforts, means the sport will continue to grow by attracting players and fans from places like Sāmoa and across the globe.

Yet while the story of infrastructure and pathways helps to shed light on shifting opportunities, it doesn't give a full picture of why people take them. With increasing numbers of young Pacific Islanders finding career paths through various professional sports in and around the region, it is ever more important that, rather than remain at the level of macroeconomic demographic analysis (or "the global"), we puzzle out the meanings that individuals, families, and communities attach to these movements. While many

studies of sport migration focus on large-scale transfers of players from the Global South to the Global North, this book combines focused ethnography and personal experience with an analysis of the historically constituted structural constraints within which athletes move. In parsing Samoan football movement, this book approaches football as a “serious game” that illuminates changing sensibilities in American Sāmoa and US-linked communities by tracing how local agendas, orientations, and actions engage, shape, and are shaped by these larger dynamics, processes and frameworks.²⁷ This reveals sporting pursuits to be deeply personal journeys that resonate with family attachments, hope, and imaginaries of the future in ways that both carry and transcend cultural sensibilities in new contexts.

PACIFIC MOVEMENT AND MOBILITY

While frameworks for understanding migration have historically been dominated by macroeconomic analyses or focused on specific push/pull factors, Oceanic worldviews focused on the movement of people and goods pre-viewed the kind of approach many scholars of transnationalism would take up.²⁸ For example, Epeli Hau'ofa (2008 [1994]) invoked a longer history of movement and connection among Pacific peoples whose lands are joined by massive sea thoroughfares in response to the many political-economic analyses that framed the islands as small, isolated, and without resources. Contrary to the proclamation of diplomats, bureaucrats, and various other “experts,” Hau'ofa's attention to the histories, myths, legends, and cosmologies of Oceania, as well as to the movement of ordinary people, led him to proclaim that “The world of Oceania is not small; it is huge and growing every day” (30).

Decades of movement have transformed the Pacific region (Connell and Rapaport 2013, 275). The post–World War II movement of ordinary people “by the tens of thousands, doing what their ancestors did in earlier times: enlarging their world as they go, on a scale not possible before . . . expanding kinship networks through which they circulate themselves, their relatives, their material goods, and their stories all across their ocean” (Hau'ofa 2008 [1994], 34) has brought new realities into being. We continue to reckon with the legacies of empire and globalization that shape the transnational flows of people, ideas, and commodities through nodes and networks that organize movement across Oceania, and the impact of these flows on home islands and host nations.²⁹ As discussed in chapter 1, the movement of this post–WWII “migration generation” from Sāmoa shows how the long-standing practice of movement, concern for kinship obligations, and economic shifts intersect with local and international policy changes.³⁰

Although specific pathways may be directed by national boundaries, Oceanic peoples are moving, often empowered by the social centrality of reciprocity and connection. Sa'iliemanu Lilomaiaava-Doktor (2009a) argues that the focus on the migration from periphery to core or rural to urban or island to metropole casts movement as primarily economically motivated and always already disempowered when in fact it is dynamic and multi-valent in practice. She reminds us that "Cultural meanings of mobility, place, and identity influence people's interpretations of migration, transnationality, and development" (19; see also Small 2011 [1997] and Salesa 2003). Likewise, Indigenous ontologies structure how these capital formations are shaped; they also mold strategies of engagement and the different meanings attached to them (Linnekin 1991; Sahlins 1988). These cultural sensibilities have historically played a large role in shaping Samoan migration, intersecting with the dynamics of globalization and transnational migration as well as American Sāmoa's territorial status to structure the kinds of pathways available.

Sāmoa at Home and Abroad

Classically imagined as an isolated culture in the sepia tones of past ethnography, Sāmoa is, rather, exemplary of the global condition in places often thought to be out-of-the-way. Movement and circulation within and beyond the Pacific has been a central part of Samoan history, contrary to curious depictions of early twentieth-century eastern Sāmoa as a chain of "remote and beautiful islands" existing in "isolation from the modern busy world," and "cut off from the history and literature of their neighbors" (Embree 1934, 51, 53). Connected to metropolitan centers and other parts of the Pacific by plane and ship today rather than 'ālia or va'a of days past, it stands (together with independent Sāmoa) at the center of a transnational diaspora dispersed across the Pacific to New Zealand, Australia, the United States, United Kingdom, and beyond. Today it is not an isolated society (if indeed it ever was).

This book presents contemporary American Sāmoa as a locality made transnationally. In one way, the Samoan nation respects no formal state boundaries—it encompasses communities in the islands as well as diasporic nodes in several countries including Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and the United States that are connected by an ever-expanding web of 'āiga actively maintained by movement within and across borders. Local leaders speak of American Sāmoa as a nation unto itself, as part of the larger Samoan nation that encompasses neighboring independent Sāmoa and overseas communities, and as part of the United States. Its location 8,000 miles

from the continental United States serves to further emphasize the distance from the States, and the experience of foreign crossing (via international flights, with necessary documents, and through US Customs) is shaped by borders and migration regimes.³¹ The movement between the islands and the incorporated United States is one strand of global mobility that is unfolding in uneven ways worldwide.

TRANSFORMED (ECONOMIC) CONTEXTS AND SPORT OPPORTUNITIES

Comprising the larger island of Tutuila, and including the Manu'a group (Ta'u, Ofu, and Olosega), Swains Island, and Rose Atoll, American Sāmoa is a small-scale Pacific island state with a population of more than 55,000 (US Census 2010). The state motto, "Sāmoa Muamua Le Atua," or "[In] Sāmoa, God is First" reflects a widespread Christian influence and practice across the archipelago. Whereas the church has come to serve as a new kind of village abroad, anchoring Samoan communities and serving as a site for cultural practice, in the islands it permeates most aspects of daily life from the evening family lotu to weekday church events and weekend church preparations and services. With the indigenization of Christianity in Sāmoa, cultural practices have become closely intertwined with religious ones. For example, the role of the faifeau has been integrated into Samoan cultural protocols and is highly valued. Some religious practices have grown beyond the reach of the church and include daily prayer, hymns in schools, and honorific prayer openings and closings to many secular events. Moreover, church congregations draw on and forge local and transnational networks. While not a focus in this book, it remains significant that many of the athletic service activities have been mobilized through religious networks and/or have a strong sense of calling and pastoral care that is spiritual or religious in nature (such as the Christian Athletes in Action and Gridiron Ministries, church-volunteer sport camps, and a strong network of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or Mormon sport leagues and organizers). These contemporary efforts connect to a much longer history of muscular Christianity (see MacAloon 2013) incorporated and transformed in the sociocentric orientation of Sāmoa to family, village, nation, and God. Sporting connections to spirituality and religious infrastructure and doctrine in the Pacific is an area that deserves further study.

Politically, American Sāmoa is often described as a model hybrid, combining the bureaucratic institutions of the US American state and a chiefly hierarchy and communal land tenure system, the long-standing indigenous

sociopolitical organization known as the fa'amatai. It is unique in the constellation of US overseas empire, as it remains an unincorporated, unorganized territory. Local residents are designated as US nationals rather than citizens who may travel, work, and reside in the United States but do not pay federal income taxes and cannot vote in US elections. US territorial status in which the "foreign" and "domestic" overlap has spun a web of ties to the United States but has also maintained a precarious buffer against full application of the US Constitution, for better or worse.³² Territorial status has provided a conduit for flows of consumer items and media programming, federal aid, and normalized movement and migration as a feature of everyday life.

In the islands from the 1950s on, American policy developed an economy largely based on cheap labor (for tuna processing and canning), bureaucracy, aid, and tourism (although the latter has never been very successful). Elsewhere I detail how the concentrated federal investment in the islands, particularly aimed at expanding infrastructure, helped to stimulate the local economy throughout the 1960s (see Uperesa 2014b). "But these projects only lasted until 1967 and focused on upgrading public infrastructure and social services. None of these programs aimed to diversify the economic base or industries in the region" (Poblete-Cross 2010, 509). The post-World War II economy was built primarily on a dependent development model of exploiting low-wage labor and territorial status to avoid import tariffs (with intermittent initiatives aimed at developing tourism, export agriculture, and local entrepreneurship over the years).

Today's economy reflects this historical legacy. From 1975 to 2000, the economy stagnated, with the tuna canneries and federal financial aid accounting for virtually all growth. Entrepreneurs power a small private sector, but turnover can be high; some businesses have been able to prosper over generations while others are short-lived. In the meantime, the federally funded bureaucracy, military enlistment, and outmigration have become the important employment options for local residents. During the same period, Samoan participation in American gridiron football has grown steadily.

While our Samoan communities are thriving through the vibrancy of local organization, work, and church activity, there are real structural challenges on the economic front, both in the islands and in the States. In 2010, the average household income in American Samoa was \$23,892.³³ Over half (54 percent) of all families fell below the federal poverty threshold, with the percentage going up if there were children in the family, and particularly if there were children under five (64.8 percent). While income figures do not tell the whole story (for example, many residents do not pay rent or hold a

mortgage because they live on communally held land), the figures are useful in the context of other rising costs like electricity, communications and transportation (mobile bills, import car purchase and maintenance, or fuel costs), building materials for homes and repair, imported food prices, rising medical fees, and so on.

Up until the fall of 2009, the two major employers of the working population had been the local government and two American canneries (StarKist Foods and Van Camp Seafood Company).³⁴ The canneries have supplied up to 50 percent of the US tuna market, drawing largely on nonresident labor (Poblete-Cross 2010; see also Gillett, McCoy, and Itano 2002).³⁵ A smaller proportion of workers were employed by the private sector or engaged in subsistence activity. Access to communal land or small-scale subsistence agriculture helps many families who might otherwise struggle in the cash economy since under half (47 percent) of all adults aged 16 and older are active in the workforce (United States Census Bureau 2013). However, because available arable land is much smaller in comparison to independent Sāmoa, agricultural ventures remain limited. Today's territorial economy is a legacy of past developmentalist approaches and the uneven integration of marginalized areas into the global economy.

Across the moana, Samoans in the United States report a median family income that is among the lowest of Pacific Islanders in the United States, with the poverty rate among the highest (Harris and Jones 2005). For those who have made their homes in Hawai'i, Alaska, or the continental United States, the 2011–2015 ACS estimates report the median family income for Samoans stood at \$55,685 as compared to \$62,136 for Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI) more widely. More Samoans than any other group of NHOPI reported income that fell below the federal poverty rate for the previous year (20.3 percent vs 18.3 percent for other NHOPI).³⁶ These demographic statistics are somewhat improved over the 1980 US census, which found that the population as a whole was young and highly urbanized, with 27 percent of families below the federal poverty level (Franco 1991; Hayes and Levin 1983), although they do not take account of the later shifts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many have clustered with family in high-cost markets, while others have moved to areas with lower costs of living like Texas and Alaska.³⁷ In the United States, Samoans and other Pacific Islanders more generally are fighting to hold on to any gains made by the previous generation and to ward off downward mobility in a transformed economic context.

A central pillar of the promotional ideology of sport is that success in athletics can and often does lead to career success off the field (Melnick and

Sabo 1994), whether in the form of life lessons (teamwork, perseverance, preparation, sweat equity, and so on) or using athletics to access academic opportunities that can shape one's future career and life chances. Because it is tied to individual effort and performance, sport often is said to represent a "level playing field" that does not exist in the real world; it is seen to provide a fair chance to those ready to capitalize on the opportunity. Drawing on what has become common sense about mobility, sport can be the subject of outsized expectations for deliverance from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In US-based Samoan communities and in the islands, football and the military are seen as prominent avenues to a better life (and some enlist in the military if the college football opportunity sours or does not materialize).³⁸ Many players I have spoken with believe that success in football can open the door to higher education, which in turn paves the way for professional opportunities. And it is not simply propaganda: our calculations for the *In Football We Trust* film based on the 2013–2014 NFL season rosters and available demographic data found Samoan and Tongans to be 28 times more likely to make it to the NFL than other ethnic groups in the United States.³⁹ Island-born Samoan players together with an even larger group of US-born players in the collegiate and professional ranks have come to constitute a critical mass that has raised the sport's profile in Sāmoa and among Samoan communities more broadly.

A series of high-profile firsts mark recent Samoan achievements in the game: at the college level, one of the first games of the 2008 season featured two Pacific-10 Conference teams led by quarterbacks of Samoan descent (Lyle Moevao for Oregon State and Tavita Pritchard for Stanford). The following year Jeremiah Masoli, a graduate of St. Louis High School in Honolulu, Hawai'i, and whose grandparents resided in the village of Taputimu in Tutuila, led his University of Oregon team to the Pac-10 championship. He became the first Samoan quarterback to play in the Rose Bowl and played alongside teammate Simi Toeaina, who graduated from Samoana High School, also in Tutuila. In the time since, Marcus Mariota won the Heisman Trophy as quarterback for Oregon in 2014 and his fellow St. Louis High School alum, Tua Tagovailoa, would also be considered for the honor. Tagovailoa joined the University of Alabama team as a freshman quarterback in 2017 and led the Crimson Tide to a national championship at the end of that season, accomplishing a feat no Samoan player had before him. He was made the fifth overall pick in the 2020 NFL Draft, signing a four-year rookie contract worth over \$30 million. Among linemen, in 2019 Penei Sewell became the first Polynesian and first University of Oregon player to

win the Outland Trophy, awarded to the nation's best interior lineman. He shared the 2020 PFHOF Polynesian College Football Player of the Year award with Tua Tagovailoa; like him, Sewell was a first-round pick in the NFL Draft. Sporting a pendant with the American Sāmoa flag on draft day in 2021, he was selected seventh overall by the Detroit Lions, later signing a fully guaranteed contract worth over \$24 million. An increasing number of local players have successfully navigated their way through the college football system and to spots on NFL rosters or practice squads.⁴⁰ Building on the successes of those who came before them who are now being recognized by entities like the PFHOF, these young players have taken up the mantle of a community tradition, finding opportunities in the growing sportscape of football.

Navigating and Indigenizing Sport Labor Prospects

In line with broader trends in US society, the common sense about sport mobility has helped to orient the youth more and more toward sport as a lifeline to college access and professional opportunities. In talking with many Samoan players and community members over the years about football's attraction, it is clear that the various kinds of capital it affords have become foundational (see chapters 2 and 4). As sport constitutes a new field of labor, how then is it placed within larger genealogies of labor (local, regional, transnational), and how are players and communities negotiating sport as a new (raced, classed, gendered) labor route?⁴¹

In contrast to profit-oriented work toward endless productivity promoted by colonial agents of the early twentieth century, historically Samoans (and other Pacific peoples) had different drivers for when and how to work that articulated with seasonal production and family and village contributions.⁴² Under colonial and territorial governments, agricultural export (copra) and military service were central to the incorporation of local people into waged work; meanwhile, local residents in turn made the most of their possibilities in a growing cash economy (see Fa'aleava 2003; O'Meara 1990; Pitt 1970). By midcentury, the military remained key to the expanding capitalist economy in American Sāmoa, and was joined by cannery and bureaucratic employment (Franco 1991). Starting in earnest during the post-World War II period, waves of emigration tied to military service helped establish Samoan communities in the United States. Cold War-era developmentalism pushed infrastructure expansion and the formal education system increasingly positioned students to continue their studies off-island; at the same time key personnel mobilized networks and local resources to expand the local

sportscape and broker sport scholarship opportunities (Uperesa 2014b). By century's end cannery work and military enlistment remained two conspicuous local occupations; they were joined increasingly by an emerging pattern of emigration for education and sport at American colleges (Holmes 1992). In the rise of football movement, we see everyday people adapting and transforming the structure of politics and economy that shape the contours of their movement. For those who have the right mix of abilities, fortune, and discipline, football has become an important opportunity because it allows some to transcend the limited opportunities available locally—not to escape the capitalist economy, but rather to become better positioned within it.

Today, as players young and mature navigate the enmeshed logics and pathways connecting transnational sport industries and their home communities, they are entrepreneurs in bodily capital negotiating processes of commodification to better position themselves to ascend the interlinked football sporting circuits. Seeking out new opportunities for development and improvement, such as speed camps, summer passing camps, and other specialized training in addition to off-season “voluntary” workouts, becomes more important every year to get the edge on the competition. By undertaking a process of subjective and corporeal transformation—remaking not only their outlook, but their bodies as well—with training to ever higher-capacity standards (better times on the forty-yard dash, more weight on the bench press, higher jumps, quicker footwork, mobilizing greater power for rushing, running crisper routes, throwing more accurate passes, executing better technique getting off the line, and so on) players enhance their worth and accumulate what I call gridiron capital within the context of football (see chapter 4).

At the professional level, players are selling both their labor power (capacity to produce a socially valuable commodity in performance) and their labor (in their performance as the commodity itself). But in the neoliberal capitalist context where individuals are expected to manifest their futures through hustle and the person is increasingly leveraged into a brand, the commodity is multiplied with value inhering in the brand itself. The commodity then is not only gameday performance and merchandising, but includes brand following (which today may include social media reach) that generates value as well. Today's sporting cultures articulate very well with contemporary grind culture, which preaches constant production focused on creation of value for exchange, and appropriating other aspects (such as culture) to enhance that value.

The catch is that mobility and submission to racializing and commoditizing processes are often preconditions for realizing the unbridled potential of

gridiron football for personal advancement, familial prestige, and cultural and national recognition. For players from Pacific Island communities, geographic movement is a requirement for accessing gridiron football circuits. More broadly, this very structure of movement sustains inequalities in the global sporting industry. While highly beneficial for those who are able to carve out a career, professional sport is a fickle and precarious business. The few high-profile successes obscure the narrow chances of success, the disappointing realities for many sports migrants, and the wider conditions that channel increasing numbers of young men into this enterprise. Still, many are willing to take that risk and pay the cost for the chance of playing the game at its highest levels.

For many Pacific Islander players, what makes the cost worth paying is not just the narrow potential economic payout, but the potential for one's achievements to reverberate in waves: in self-confidence, brotherhood, and social standing; access to college opportunities or winning the contract lottery; or enhancing the honor and esteem of one's family and being able to contribute to one's family, church, village, and/or nation in tangible and material ways. Among many Samoan players, the perspectives on and strategies of engagement with the game (and here speaking specifically to the professional or proto-professional levels as well as the way they trickle down to high school and earlier) have come to be shaped in part by cultural sensibilities around *tautua*, which has at its foundation fulfilling deeply significant cultural expectations around contribution.

As I discuss in chapter 2, the intertwining of football and *fa'asāmoa* through the concept and practice of *tautua* within Samoan cultural frameworks is an important aspect that articulates with the expanding sport infrastructure to produce the Polynesian Pipeline of the past and the Polynesian Network today. Successful players and key stakeholders have been able to take advantage of the network's sporting infrastructure provided by personal connections, travel and communications technologies, and program development, but for some the movement is powered by practices that are central to Samoan culture and sustaining family bonds sometimes across great distances. Football participation may have started as a foray into a foreign game, but with successive generations entering, it has become a Samoan game, increasingly situated within changing structures of labor and cultural scripts about service.

As migration has taken the Samoan world global, many new kinds of activities that bring prestige and honor are being recognized as *tautua*, invoking the *alagā'upu* or proverb “‘E sui faiga ‘ae tumau fa’avae,” which is often

translated as “practices may change but the foundations remain.” Chapter 2 shows how within the larger expansion of *tautua*, sport has taken its place more prominently. Sporting prowess is one of the activities that have gained in recognition as new national and international opportunities have taken Samoans onto the world stage, and the accolades and spoils of sport contests are reintegrated in different ways into the prestige and exchange economy of *fa’asāmoa*. This story is therefore distinct from American cultural scripts like the individualized “rags-to-riches” tales often highlighted by sport media; here Indigenous cultural sensibilities shape the meaning of sport participation even as they intersect with the logic of upward mobility and the changing infrastructure of migration and movement.

CHASING THE AMERICAN/SAMOAN DREAM

The alliance with the premier global superpower of the twentieth century is a source of pride for American Sāmoa. With mythologized national narratives about justice, freedom, opportunity, and diversity, American exceptionalism has stood as a beacon for decades. Marking the raising of the American flag in the islands, Flag Day is the largest annual celebration, and Samoans proudly wear the badge of highest per capita enlistment in the US military as a mark of respected service.⁴³ Just as in the choice to serve a powerful *matai* realizes reciprocal benefit, the ability to proudly serve as part of the American family is an honor for many.⁴⁴

By conquering the fabled fields of American football, Samoan players achieve both the American and the Samoan dream. With football’s status as the (highly capitalized) national sport, players get paid and achieve respect. When one of the first things many NFL draftees do is buy their family a car or a house, they signal they have arrived.⁴⁵ Through hard work, grit, and perseverance materialized in their efforts on and off the field, they fulfill the imaginary of American individualism. The rugged masculine achievement makes one a breadwinner, able to secure a high standard of living for them and their family: they are living the American Dream. But football success has become a Samoan dream as well—not just as evidence of individual achievement or for conspicuous consumption but because for some it provides for valued ways of being Samoan.⁴⁶ Generally, honoring one’s lineage, representing the family name, and being able to materially contribute together fulfill *tautua* or ideal forms of service. Specifically, sport provides a respected way of achieving markers of Samoan manhood: demonstrating valued masculinity in physical strength and prowess, obtaining prestigious stature commanding respect, and earning through hard work the

resources with which to perform tautua (whether supporting one's family, matai, church, village, or wider Samoan and Pacific communities). Football success is therefore one representative of the American/Samoan dream.

Charting Our Course

The beginning of the book follows a genealogical approach to the present, asking how we got here and how significant shifts are reflected in changing sensibilities about the future. It begins to disentangle the historical conditions of possibility for the emergence of football as a route of migration and mobility. In chapter 1, "Malaga," I trace the emergence of football in American Sāmoa in the context of mid-twentieth-century US development initiatives and changing relationships to the market economy and standards of living in the islands, as well as the islands' territorial status and new cultures of migration. This chapter combines ethnography and oral history with archival research to examine the growing presence of Samoans in American football and American football in Sāmoa. It explores how individual and community desires shape and are shaped by larger (trans)national, political, and economic projects of varying scales. Woven around individual journeys, it illustrates the evolution of structures of opportunity within which local people increasingly see football as an important route of geographic and social mobility, and places it in the context of histories of Samoan transnational movement and migration intersecting with the expansion of the football industry at the professional and college levels.

"Football, Tautua, and Fa'asāmoa," the second chapter, draws on ethnographic research at selected football camps and experience in Sāmoa to trace how elements of Samoan culture are being linked to the American game of football. It examines the ways in which alternative sources of status and prestige, such as that associated with football success, have articulated with important shifts in the constituent concepts and recognized practices of tautua over time. In this indigenization of sport, we see sport being used to refract community histories, agendas, and bids for recognition (see Uperesa 2021). It also marks tensions whereby for some football success is, like many foreign imports before it, reincorporated by the powerful logic of the fa'asāmoa and the matai system, whereas for others it provides distance from social obligations and allows them to circumvent existing social hierarchies and the relations of power that structure them.

The second half of the book focuses on capital and commoditization; media narratives and the body; and cultural constructions of strength and

injury to illustrate and theorize how structural pathways and material realities, together with cultural transformations and persistence, help us understand the intersection of social worlds traversed by transnational sport migrants. Chapter 3, “Producing the Gridiron Warrior,” examines media constructions of Samoan (and other Polynesian) bodies in football to tease out the ways in which bodily performance and representation are infused with ideas about race, ethnographic imaginations of culture, and visions of the gendered body to together articulate a contemporary indigenous Polynesian masculinity. Turning from external representations, it then considers how some players and filmmakers are mediating these images and producing new narratives in an era of branding and social media.

“Gridiron Capital,” the fourth chapter, analyzes the processes of commodification associated with the sport of football, and how Samoan players maneuver within and beyond institutional parameters. In this they negotiate a labor context of escalating expectations where the stakes have never been higher. I argue that the accumulation of gridiron capital is crucial to their success in the football environment, but through their connection to family and community, many rely on other measures of worth that allow them to resist further commodification driven by the capitalist logic that permeates the sport. The last chapter, “Fa’amālosi!” draws on recent research on traumatic brain injuries (TBIs), the high-profile debate around football’s “concussion crisis,” and ethnographic research to explore what legacies of players like Junior Seau mean for the way we view football and how we measure “risk” and “reward.” In this analysis, I ask how Samoan cultural concepts and views on masculinity are being articulated with the hypermasculine culture of American football, and to what potential ends.

Sāmoa stands as part of the cradle of Polynesia, and as homeland to a widely dispersed diaspora. Yet as a polity, American Sāmoa has long been relegated to the margins of regional and global geopolitical power relations. A United States territory since 1900, we know little about the place of Tutuila ma Manu’a in the larger narratives of American history and globalization. Today, the islands enter the US national imaginary primarily through gridiron football; this hypervisibility works to erase Samoan history and the fullness of Samoan experience outside of sport. Moreover, it obscures a century of US imperialism and the reality of asymmetrical integration in the global economy, as well as a clear view of migration pathways that brought the players to American fields. The following chapters aim to illuminate these histories and present contexts; they also ask, in different ways, about the future and about the long-term effects of the rising dominance of institutions like football.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

- 1 A note on diacritics: In some Pacific Island communities a move to adopt diacritic use has been settled (for example, in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i or te reo Māori), while among Samoans it remains contested. Recognizing that this book is not only published abroad but also is likely to have an audience of Samoan language learners and non-Samoans, and following some of the arguments made by Tualalelei, Mayer, and Hunkin (2015), I have chosen to use diacritics for Samoan words to support correct pronunciation, and to also use them for words in other languages where they would normally appear. (For example, I have used them in “Sāmoa” but not “Samoa,” because the latter is an English word.) These follow Milner (1966 [2001]) and Allardice (1995), with assistance from Lemoa Henry Fesulua‘i. However, given that diacritic use is contested and in order to respect decisions made by others, I have not imposed them in all cases. Noted exceptions are people’s names, proper titles (programs, government agencies), or in material that has been directly quoted from another source that uses a different spelling.
- 2 I attended along with a group of Māori and Pacific colleagues who were visiting from Aotearoa New Zealand as part of efforts to establish an indigenous Pacific research collaboration between universities in Aotearoa and University of Hawai‘i. Mahalo to the Royal Order of Kamehameha for permitting for me

to film the 'awa ceremony and to take pictures, and to Ty P. K. Tengan for the invitation.

- 3 Established as a 501c3, the organization's stated purpose is to recognize and honor players, coaches, and contributors to Polynesian success in football. It awards a limited number of scholarships to graduating seniors (male or female) who played high school sports and are headed to Division II and III schools, and in 2015 it incorporated an award for the Polynesian college player of the year. The organization's website (<http://www.polynesianfootballhof.org/>) notes that it hosts educational programs for Polynesian youth.
- 4 A note on terminology: "Polynesian" has become a widely used term in the United States to differentiate ties to a specific part of the Pacific (usually Sāmoa, Tonga, and Hawai'i) within the wider Pacific Islander category (used in census disaggregation since 2000). Pacific Islander (or PI) is used to differentiate from Pacific, a term that includes Pacific Rim countries and heritage. Because Pacific Islanders have significantly lower population numbers relative to groups included under the banner of the Pacific Rim, "Pacific" often functions to erase Islanders/Oceania. Across the moana in Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific or Pasifika (as an amalgamation of Pasefika/Pasifiki, transliterations of the English word *Pacific*) was adopted by the New Zealand government to categorize all Pacific peoples in the country and has become the preferred and institutionally supported term. Although Pasifika is theoretically inclusive of all Oceania, in practice the view of Pasifika tends to be near Polynesia since the largest non-Māori resident Pacific peoples are Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Cook Islander, and Niuean because of what has historically been claimed as the New Zealand "realm." I use these different terms as relevant to the local contexts to which they refer.
- 5 Both are also associate professors at the University of Hawai'i–Mānoa. Tengan's book *Native Men Remade* (2008) thoughtfully examines and critiques the efforts to remake Hawaiian men and masculinities in and through gendered Indigenous decolonization and revitalization efforts in Hale Mua o Kūali'i and 'Aha Kāne.
- 6 On sporting movement and labor, see also Besnier (2012, 2015); Besnier, Brownell, and Carter (2018); Carter (2007, 2011, 2013); Darby (2000, 2002); Darby and Solberg (2010); Esson (2013); Kanemasu and Molnar (2012); Klein (1991, 2006, 2009); Lanfranchi and Taylor (2001); Maguire (2001); Maguire and Bale (1994); Maguire and Falcous (2011); and Poli (2010).
- 7 See LiPuma (1993) on culture and the specificity of French society in Bourdieu's theory of capital.
- 8 James and Steger describe this as "the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-space and world-time" (2014, 425). They go on to explain: "The discursive explosion of 'globalization' in the 1990s" marked a shift in a "sensibility of global interdependence," even if there was a longer-standing global imaginary long before the term came into widespread use (2014, 422; see also Steger 2008 and Robertson 1990 and 1992).

- 9 In contrast to the recent proliferation of the term in academic and public discourses, global connection and movement is not a new phenomenon; it has been a world practice for centuries (see Clossey 2006; Foner 1997; Vertovec 1997). Still, there has been a marked increase in frequency and volume of these flows, in response to “time-space compression” and a “changing era of flexible accumulation” in which a variety of technological innovations have made the continuous movement of people, ideas, and commodities an entrenched practice (Harvey 1987, 1990; Mintz 1998, 128).
- 10 A number of models and metaphors have been suggested to begin to describe, analyze, and explain the contemporary social reality with which we are faced, including *creolization* (Hannerz 1987, 1992), *flows* (Appadurai 1990), *hybridization* (Bhaba 1994), and *articulation* (Clifford 2001). For some, the slightly unwieldy term *glocalization* captured the both/and reality of localized phenomenon nonetheless being part of a larger global context or system (Robertson 1994, 1995).
- 11 See also Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc (1992a; 1992b); Hannerz (1996).
- 12 Helen Lee (2009, 23) notes that the literature on migrants and their transnational practices has largely been dominated by analyses of remittances, particularly in the Pacific. See also Connell (2005) for an overview of the literature on Pacific remittances.
- 13 See Anae (1997), Lee (2003), (2004), Kallen (1982), and Small (1997); see also Antoun (2005); Malkki (1995); and Miles (2004) on the migrant experience. Sociologist Cluny Macpherson’s long-term work with Samoan communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, for example, examines how Samoan migrants and successive generations transform practices of fa’asāmoa in their active maintenance of ties to home communities in the Samoan islands (e.g., Macpherson 1985, 1991, 2004; Macpherson and Macpherson 2009a, 2009b).
- 14 This project builds on the provocation by Marcus (1995, 1998) to follow the subject through multisited ethnography (see also Hannerz 2003). “The conceptualisation of the interrogative boundary, that is to say, the questions that impel the ethnographer, overarch geographic considerations and tie diffuse, loose, separate, mobile or distant places together in a single ethnographic field of inquiry” (Madden 2017, 52). This together with work illuminating transnational linkages and global chains, the currents and afterlives of empire, movement, and migration, and efforts to understand how localities are connected provide a conceptual framework for this project. Here I am interested in specificity of place and how individual and collective decision making shape contingent histories, as well as how relationships and infrastructure shape how, when, and why people move. In practice, the research was less like following a clearly mapped journey along defined routes and coordinates and more akin to Oceanic wayfinding, navigating short- and long-distance journeys using landmarks, currents, skylscapes, and emerging embodied knowledge.

- 15 For work on sport migration see Alegi (2010), Agergaard and Tiesler (2014), Besnier (2015), Elliot and Harris (2014), James (1963), Lanfranchi and Taylor (2001, 2014), and Taylor (2006), among many others; see Dewey (2008) on professionalization of rugby in the Pacific, and Grainger and Falcous (2012), and Heptonstall (2011) on rising Pacific participation in New Zealand rugby.
- 16 Garber, Greg. 2002. "The Dominican Republic of the NFL." *ESPN: The Magazine*, May 28. See also Garber, Greg. 2002. "They Might be Giants." *ESPN: The Magazine*, May 28; Feldman, Bruce. 2001. "Buy a Vowel?" *ESPN: The Magazine*, November 19; Feldman, Bruce. 2001. "Rock Star." *ESPN: The Magazine*, November 19; Feldman, Bruce. 2002. "Where Football Really is a Religion." *ESPN: The Magazine*, May 28; Miller, Ted. 2002. "American Football, Samoan Style." *ESPN.com*, May 28; and Syken, Bill. 2003. "Football in Paradise." *Sports Illustrated*, November 3.
- 17 Later work turned to theories of global value chains as frameworks for understanding sport migration (Klein 2011, 2012).
- 18 Many schools have continued with football even as the programs were costly and operated at a deficit. On the health front, while some may have anticipated that college football would be significantly impacted by the concussion crisis (discussed in chapter 5), we have seen that even a global pandemic with a highly contagious and lethal disease (COVID-19) has not stopped the popular and highly profitable machine that is college football.
- 19 Most successful international players have gone through the college football system; the opportunity to "code-switch" in the way that Jordan Mailata has done (from Under-20s rugby in Sydney to the Philadelphia Eagles) is extremely rare.
- 20 The FBS teams offer 85 scholarships per team for 127 teams, while the FCS offers 63 scholarships per team for 124 teams in the 2015–2016 season. Division II gave the equivalent of 36 scholarships per team in 2016. Overall participation in NCAA football has grown, from 40,733 players across 497 teams total in the 1981–1982 season to 45,263 players across 672 teams in the 2015–2016 season. Division I has also grown from 187 teams and 17,842 players ending the 1981 season to 251 teams and 28,830 players ending the 2015 season. Meanwhile, Division II included 173 teams and 9,796 players ending the 2015 season. See <http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/PR1516.pdf>.
- 21 Division I refers to the schools in the NCAA with most elaborate sports programs. In order to qualify for membership, schools must sponsor an equivalent minimum of at least seven sports for women and seven for men, with two team sports per gender. There are additional minimum attendance, financial aid awards, and scheduling requirements. For football, the division is split into the top range that participates in the Football Bowl Subdivision (formerly Division I-A), those that participate in smaller NCAA-run Football Championship Subdivision (formerly Division I-AA), and those that do not field football teams. See <http://www.ncaa.org/about/who-we-are/membership/divisional-differences-and-history-multidivision-classification>.

- 22 Gaines, Cork. 2016. "The Difference in How Much Money Schools Make Off of College Sports Is Jarring." *Business Insider Australia*. Gaines, Cork, and Mark Nudelman. 2017. "The Average College Football Team Makes More Money Than the Next 35 College Sports Combined." *Business Insider Australia*.
- 23 2016–17. Annual Report. Indianapolis, Indiana: National Federation of State High School Associations. <https://www.nfhs.org/>.
- 24 Florio, Mike. 2017. "NFL Will Reach \$14 Billion in 2017 Revenue." March 6. Pro Football Talk, accessed June 19, 2018, <https://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com>.
- 25 Gough, Christina. 2020. "Total revenue of the National Football League 2001–2019." [statista.com](https://www.statista.com), accessed November 25, 2020. Since the 1980s, the Arena Football League was also an option for players, but the league declared bankruptcy in late 2019; the new XFL, whose 2020 launch was derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, is said to be returning in 2023, with Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson listed as an owner. Historically the Canadian Football League has also provided a home for some players, but the contracts are far less lucrative than those in the NFL, making it a less attractive option: the 2018 salary minimum was \$54,000 for the regular season.
- 26 The 1958 Baltimore Colts–New York Giants championship game at Yankee Stadium is often touted as the point of origin for setting professional football fortunes on the path to where they stand today. The televised excitement of "The Greatest Game Ever Played" at a moment when television was taking over American households meant the largest ever viewership of a football contest at that point—45 million people (Grano 2014, 14). An antitrust exemption in the Sports Broadcasting Bill was passed in 1961 and the next year Commissioner Pete Rozelle spearheaded the beginning of the NFL's commercial rise with a two-year television contract valued at \$4.65 million that instituted an enduring national revenue-sharing model (Yost 2006, 75).
- 27 Building on Pierre Bourdieu, Marshall Sahlins, and Anthony Giddens's elaboration of practice theory, Sherry Ortner suggests serious games as a way to approach the "people-in-(power)-relationships-in-projects as the relatively irreducible unit of 'practice'" (1996, 13). Here football is part of the games of mobility, status, and gender that hold particular kinds of opportunities for those who play it and the communities that support them.
- 28 For example, the body of literature around the MiRAB model starting with Bertram and Watters (1985), or the focus on labor recruitment policies like the Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 29 Recent work traces this kind of transformation; see Katerina Teaiwa's exploration of phosphate mining on Banaba (2014), Macpherson and Macpherson's discussion of the *Warm Winds of Change* (2009) in Sāmoa, Niko Besnier's analysis of modernity in Tonga (2011), and Paige West's work on the transformation of coffee as a commodity in and beyond PNG highlands (2012), for example.
- 30 For American Sāmoa these were implemented at the US federal and appointed local administration levels to enable further movement; for Western

Sāmoa these included scholarships for study and labor and migration schemes in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia.

- 31 Without another term to recognize the liminal position of American Sāmoa as an unincorporated territory—both within and outside of US national frameworks—“transnational” most accurately expresses the physical, geographic, and cultural borders that separate the two locations.
- 32 Some have denounced inequality before the US Constitution, particularly around access to citizenship and rightly critiquing the racist and patronizing reasoning in the *Insular Cases*, a set of US Supreme Court rulings that undergird the jurisprudence around the unincorporated territory category. However, the case law has also been used to preserve and maintain important aspects of Samoan cultural practice including the fa’amatai and the communal land tenure system. See Hall (2001).
- 33 The wage rates as of September 30, 2015, for the three sectors are \$5.16, \$4.81, and \$5.00, respectively. USDOL Wage and Rates Division, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.dol.gov/whd/minwage/americanSamoa/retail.htm>.
- 34 In 2015 StarKist was acquired by a South Korean conglomerate, and Van Camp has since ceased operations in the territory.
- 35 Data from 2000 showed that over 43 percent of the local population was born outside American Sāmoa—three-quarters of which were from independent Sāmoa and Tonga (American Sāmoa Statistical Yearbook 2009, 25); Filipinos also constitute a growing demographic working in the canneries and elsewhere.
- 36 This may be linked to labor force participation patterns and educational attainment: just 11 percent of Samoans had attained a bachelor’s degree, and of those in the workforce 43 percent were in sales, office, or service occupations that tend to earn less, compared with 23 percent in managerial or professional occupations and 24.5 percent in manufacturing, production, or construction occupations. Moreover, these occupation patterns are strongly gendered: 66.6 percent of Samoan women were found in sales, office, or service occupations compared to 22.2 percent of men; and 39.6 of men worked in manufacturing, production, or construction jobs, compared to 0.72 percent of women; 26 percent of women were in managerial or professional occupations compared to 20 percent of men (2011–2015 ACS Selected Population Tables <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>).
- 37 Over half of the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population lives in Hawai‘i and California; the next largest populations reside in Washington, Texas, Florida, Utah, New York, Nevada, Oregon, and Arizona. See the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, “Profile: Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders,” accessed February 20, 2021, at <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=65>. Also see Hixson, Hepler, and Kim (2012).
- 38 For example, Kane (2005) reported that Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders are highly overrepresented, making up 249 percent more of the army recruits than the general population.

- 39 These calculations were part of a collaboration between Christina Kwauk, Jesse Markham, and me at the directors' invitation.
- 40 Isaako Aaitui, Tait Afualo, Matt Elisara, Pita Elisara, Daniel Ekuale, William Falakiseni, Joey Iosefa, Shalom Luani, Frankie Luvu, Lene Maiava, Frederick Mauigoa, Keiki Misipeka, Shaun Nua, Aiulua Fanene, Jonathan Fanene, Domata Peko, Melila Purcell Jr., Gabe Reid, Spencer Reid, Okland Salave'a, Manuia Savea, Junior Siavi'i, Iosua Siliva, Paul Soliai, Isaac Sopoaga, Logan Tago, Kurt Taufasau, Matt Toeaina, Simi Toeaina, Isaiah Tuiasosopo, Kasmili Uitalia, and Destiny Vaeao are among those who attended Tutuila high schools and made it to training camp of a professional league, if not further. Scores more played college football.
- 41 *Labor* is used here as opposed to *work* or the Samoan counterpoint *gālua* intentionally because conceptually it has a particular genealogy tied to capital, value, and the body.
- 42 In the early colonial period, American and German efforts focused on transforming Samoan patterns of labor and agricultural work to align with capitalist production and encapsulated the effort of modernizing and civilizing through inculcating new values of work (see Moses 1972; Meleisea 1987).
- 43 See the short documentary *Warriors Born* (Taylor 2010).
- 44 In many ways it builds on an exceptionalist narrative that has emerged for American Sāmoa as well; this narrative sets the islands apart from others within the constellation of US empire by showcasing Samoan culture (including the fa'amatai and the land tenure system)—and US fascination with and legal protection of it—as exceptional (Uperesa and Garriga-López 2018). In direct ways it is then shared to encompass others within it, for example, in bestowing titles upon visiting DOI officials during an 'ava ceremony. Together the exceptionalism narratives reinforce the value of territorial status and work against decolonization discussions (see Uperesa 2018).
- 45 For example, in 2020 Juju Smith-Schuster made headlines by buying his parents a house; in the same year Tua Tagovailoa gifted a car to his mother and bought a house in Miami.
- 46 See also Besnier (2014), Horton (2014), and Schieder and Presterudstuen (2014).

ONE. MALAGA

- 1 Missoula is located on the western edge of Montana, near the Idaho border, and the name is said to be an alteration of the Salish word for the Clark Fork River (nmisuletkw). Rose, Juliana. 2013. "Uncover Missoula Fails to Recognize the True History of Missoula." *YWCAofMissoula.org*, October 16. The Missoula Valley is at the convergence of five mountain ranges and several rivers, and attracted early traders, missionaries, and settlers. It was the traditional home of the Bitterroot Salish (Séliš) before the land was appropriated by the United States through the Treaty of Hell's Gate in 1855 and the Flathead Indian