Arne Aleksej Perminow, *The Long Way Home: Dilemmas of Everyday Life in a Tongan Village.* Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture and Scandinavian University Press, 1993. Pp. 166, maps, appendixes, indexes, bibliography.

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While I was staying in a village on Tongatapu, the church youth group *(potungaue talavou)* was presented with the opportunity of traveling to the United States and, by performing traditional dances for Tongan congrega-

tions, collecting donations to finance the construction of a new church hall. The U.S. Immigration Service in Suva, knowing that many of these youth could reckon kin somewhere in Hawai‘i or the U.S. mainland, had little intention of allowing twenty-nine young Tongan men and women an extended visit in ‘Amelika. In point of fact, guessing the number of young people who would actually show up at the Los Angeles airport for the group’s return flight to Tonga had become a bit of a joke in the village even as parents scrambled to collect enough money for their child’s airfare to the States. The active membership of the youth group increased dramatically for a few weeks as they practiced the *ma‘ulu‘ulu, soke,* and other traditional dances, but all hopes were dashed when the U.S. State Department returned visas for only two female schoolteachers and their chaperons.

This episode captured the depths of Tongan youths’ motivation not only to migrate out of their self-confessed circumscribed worlds or to find employment in Nuku‘alofa, but to succeed in some remunerative endeavor and take their place in the social order (Perminow’s term) either directly or from a substantial distance. Perminow’s book sets out to discover the factors that influence Tongan youths’ “process of deciding by which individuals become committed to different sorts of careers in the local community, on other islands in the periphery, in the capital or overseas” (p. 4). He also attempts to demonstrate that it is certain characteristics of the traditional Tongan social order, not population pressure on scarce resources or the allure of the metropolitan centers, that is responsible for the out-migration of youth from the island of Kotu in Ha‘apai.

By saying something about the situation of the youth, who seldom have heritable rights to land (reserved by the constitution, until recently, for widows or eldest sons) and are constrained by their relative powerlessness in the social hierarchy, Perminow hopes to make statements about the process of social reproduction and change. Looking specifically for a small island “conforming to traditional anthropological ideals of creating ‘laboratory conditions’ in which to conduct research” (p. 6), Perminow uses the setting of an *‘apitanga* (a church camp or an evangelical revival) to demonstrate the “process of deciding” and the factors which young people must take into consideration in deciding their life’s course. As part of this revival, three young men are accepted into an evangelist training program. In the end one young man becomes an evangelist; a second one, who wished to marry one of his distant cousins, remained in the evangelist training program but was uncertain about his commitment; and the third *tamasi‘i,* following the wishes of his father, went to work on his father’s *kava* crop on Tofua Island.

The main concern of the *‘apitanga* was not on recruitment per se but on lecturing children and adolescents on the dangers of alcohol. This theme,

says Perminow, highlights the contradictions between the two worlds presented to the Tongan youth as choices for their life's path: the "cognitive world" (p. 28) manifest in the Tongan social order, and the alternative "cognitive world" of life in Babylon (i.e., the capital, Nuku'alofa), where alcohol, sex, and materialism rob the youth of their Tonganness. Perminow cites Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1979) to "throw additional light on the explication of values in the *'apitanga"* (p. 40) and he notes the loss of "doxy" in Tongan culture, the creation of "orthodoxy" through the reconstruction of traditional values in the lessons of the *'apitanga* (epitomized by *kavatonga),* and the countering "heterodoxy" of the alternative values presented by modernization, epitomized in alcohol *(kavapalangi).*

Perminow presents a list of traits associated with *kavatonga* on the one hand and *kavapalangi* on the other (p. 60), but curiously he never mentions the most obvious distinction between them. He discusses the clear association of *kavatonga* with Tonganness, but doesn't mention the clear and obvious association of *kavapalangi* with *palangi* (European) and, therefore, its distinctive, metaphorical manifestation of un-Tonganness.

Perminow also asserts, in contradiction to both Lemert (1967) and Urbanowicz (1975), that there is but one type of *kava* ceremony in Tonga and that, largely because of that, the activities of the youth in *any faikava (kava*-drinking event) reflect traditionally held values of both cross-sex relations (as embodied in the brother-sister relationship) and cross-age relations (as typified in an overly structured rendition of the father-son relationship). His illustrations of how these relational rules impinge on youthful behavior, in and out of the contexts of *faikava,* are nicely done. However, although most *faikava* are ceremonialized to some extent, these rules of authority and power have substantially more significance at a *taumafa kava* (royal *kava* ceremony) than they do at a *kalapu faikava* (a fundraising event) and these differences in ceremonial significance, despite Perminow's assertion, probably do warrant typological distinction of *kava*-drinking events.

Perminow's study joins those that are concerned with understanding the decision-making processes of Tongan youth, largely males, who have been significantly marginalized from the means of production by limited employment opportunities. James (1994), for example, suggests that the appropriation by Tongan males *fakaleiti* (effeminate male) status is secondary to a "male identity crisis" where traditional, largely economic, roles are rendered unavailable to Tongan youth in the process of modernization. Such studies are important in understanding the processes of cultural change and reconstruction and Perminow's focus on the traditional factors that influence this change, and the decision-making processes of youth caught in changing times, is much needed.

However, I found many of Perminow's conclusions puzzling or insufficiently supported by data (genealogies particularly), which, in my experience, are usually available in Tongan villages. For example, in arguing that virilocal postmarital residence and the prohibition of marrying any classificatory kin limit the number of non-kin-related individuals available for marriage, Perminow states, "indications are that some of the sixteen couples where both spouses originated in Kotu were uncomfortably closely related" (p. 107). This supports his contention that the case of the young man who wished to marry his classificatory sister was not an exceptional case because the limited number of available mates over time makes extending marriage prohibitions to all classificatory kin untenable (p. 108). But Perminow gives no genealogical documentation of his belief that distant-cousin marriage was not as rare as Aoyagi (1966) and others have contended. Nor does he present genealogical documentation of the relations between Kotu and other islands in Haʻapai to which Kotu's youth had migrated before economic changes made Nukuʻalofa their destination.

Although not unusual in Tongan studies, Perminow applies a structuralist perspective to Tongan social organization that assumes continuity between commoner and noble forms of social hierarchy. This perspective, in my mind, obscures the complex and discursive nature of decision making that characterizes Tongan households and families. Although Perminow does discuss the importance of family structure and the power of the father's sister *(mehekitanga),* and how these structural relations impinge on decision making, his inattention to historical evidence serves to detract from his argument and from the ethnographic descriptions, presented as narratives, which are the most enjoyable and informative aspects of his text.