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READING THE LEAVES: THE ROLE OF TONGAN WOMEN'S TRADITIONAL WEALTH AND OTHER "CONTRAFLOWS" IN THE PROCESSES OF MODERN MIGRATION AND REMITTANCE

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A recent Pacific migration study has covered in detail the economic implications of remittances but has dismissed the transfers of huge "contraflows" of goods that are sent from the island states to migrant communities overseas as being "merely symbolic." In the Tongan case, the exchange of mats and bark-cloth, traditional wealth items produced by women, is pivotal to the remittance process. It reinforces sets of hierarchical kinship relations that are so dominant within the Tongan community that they function internally as relations of production in the modem remittance economy. In overseas communities, the increasingly numerous and abundant exchanges of such items signal migrant families' ability to prosper. They may be used to secure or improve economic class position and social status for givers. Thus, the contraflows of goods can reveal the nature of relationships that promote the current high rate of remittances.

Migration and Remittance

THE LATE 1960s saw the beginning of a wave of Tongan overseas migration. Before then, small numbers of comparatively privileged Tongans had left the country, in pursuit of education and training overseas. By the early 1970s, however, many thousands of ordinary commoners had set out for Pacific Rim countries in search of waged work in order to improve the living conditions of family members left in Tonga. The migrants gradually established sizable communities, mainly in Auckland, Sydney, Honolulu, and towns and cities on the mainland U.S. West Coast.

It is difficult to determine precisely the number of expatriate Tongans.' Estimates of migrants based on official statistics provided by the sending

and receiving countries and estimates of "illegals," who enter the host country without permission or overstay their visas, vary from between forty and fifty thousand (see Ahlburg 1991:15). Local studies in selected urban areas in Tonga, however, have shown that over 60 percent of the adult population were presently overseas or had returned from being overseas (Gailey 1992:52).

Marcus has made a much higher estimate, based on observations of migrant communities. He suggests that almost one hundred thousand Tongans, a number that exceeds the current population of Tonga, now live temporarily or permanently overseas (Marcus 1993:27). Since he last investigated the situation in 1978, the figure may have increased, especially if the children born overseas to Tongan parents were to be included, despite the overseas nationality or residency status they might have. The figures suggest considerable diaspora and that there is a Tongan nation of perhaps two hundred thousand people, less than half of whom are resident at any one time in the Tongan state.

A considerable proportion of the people overseas remit money and goods to close relatives in Tonga. The most generous remitters are people who were born in Tonga and have retained close ties with people there. They send money through banks, in transactions that are recorded officially as transfers, or hand carry cash, the amount of which can only be estimated. Much of the money remitted will be given by the recipients to the church, particularly in the highly socially visible annual free-gifting by families to the Free Wesleyan Church, the premier or "state" church in Tonga, to which 40 percent of the population nominally belongs. Migrants also send goods, such as clothing, food, cosmetics, vehicles, kitchenware, mechanical tools, and agricultural equipment, for use or resale.

The flow of foreign exchange to Tonga provided by personal remittances has balanced Tonga's payment of trade over the last decade or more and, in local terms, provided people with money to buy goods in domestic and overseas markets. The crucial question that arises is how long this vital but uncertain process can or will continue: what factors can sustain remittance and under what circumstances is the focus of family networks' activities likely to transfer from Tonga overseas?

The relevant factors in the case of neighboring Western Samoa, which has similarly high rates of migration and remittance, have been well canvased by Macpherson (1992, 1994). Tonga, however, differs significantly from Western Samoa in at least one important aspect: it lacks the formal local organization provided in Samoa by the village and *matai* systems. Possibly as a result of overseas Tongans' greater "use of kinship and genealogical categories to locate themselves culturally in space and time," informal family

networks rather than village-oriented organizations have become the main conduits of goods and people between home and overseas (Marcus 1993: 33). Tongans are more individuated or "atomized" (Morton 1987), by virtue of the land-tenure system of individual allotments, and promote the status of their family rather than a village.

Remittances flow to Tonga, and the Tonga-based relatives send in return root crops, seafoods and other local delicacies, kava, and the items of traditional wealth (finely woven mats of pandanus leaf and decorated painted bark-cloth) that are made exclusively by women. The items sent have both economic and social value for the people who remit. The contraflows of goods continually remind migrants of their economic and social obligations toward the home-based members of family networks.

There is evidence that goods from Tonga obtained as part of a mutually understood labor "investment" contract between relatives (see Ahlburg 1991:5-7), are used increasingly because of their cultural significance to forge personal, quasi-kinship relations within the migrant population. The newer relations include patronage and requests for favors, which accompany gifts. Presentations of Tongan valuables to distant kin or nonkinsfolk frequently represent attempts to bind them in webs of personal obligation that may widen the migrants' support network and employment opportunities and help to secure their financial status in the foreign country. A diverse set of social relations is required to meet migrants' needs in a highly competitive, economically insecure, and culturally alien environment. The contraflows of Tongan goods have received less attention in migration literature, however, than remittance flows into the country, although they are an integral part of the whole migration-remittance complex and embody the kinship relations that underpin the remittances.

The Migration and Remittance Debate

The literature on Pacific Islander migration and remittance is important because it meshes with more general questions and ongoing debates related to Pacific Island development and the world economy. It addresses the apparent lack of economic self-sufficiency and the increasing dependence of island nations on remittances to bolster their foreign-exchange reserves, service their balance-of-trade deficits, and materially raise standards of living. It also provides data on remittances' possible contributions to domestic savings, investment, and overall economic development (Ahlburg 1991; Brown and Foster 1994).

Pacific Island migration has also become part of the study of international population movements and has produced findings comparable with

migrant-worker studies reported from other parts of the world (Ahlburg 1991; Bedford 1985, 1987; Bedford and Gibson 1986; Bedford and Lamer 1992; Connell 1980, 1988; Chapman 1991; Bertram and Watters 1985, 1986; Pitt and Macpherson 1974). Migration issues have increasingly become a focus for Pacific research centers and international conferences (McCall and Connell 1993).

The studies have become more sharply focused and more detailed, and include local studies as well as more general, abstract formulations of the issues. These developments are shown to advantage in the volume recently edited by Brown and Connell (1995). The editors' own contributions make considerable use of three brief surveys they conducted in 1993 and 1994--among Tongan flea-market vendors in Nuku'alofa, Tongan and Western Samoan migrant households in Brisbane, and households receiving remittances in Tonga and Western Samoa. The volume includes a study of Fijian remittance from Sydney (Stanwix and Connell 1995) and two studies by Tongan social scientists, one of which examines Tongan remittance from Auckland (Vete 1995) and the other, the impact of remittances in four Tongan villages (Faeamani 1995).

The volume is a significant and welcome contribution to the literature. Its focus on the economic aspects of remittances, however, neglects other vital areas of inquiry, notably, the large "contraflows" of goods, which are noted but whose significance is not understood. Connell and Brown write, "The extent to which remittances in kind from the Pacific island states are merely symbolic transfers, are stimuli for further remittances, or are part of an import-export system is variable and largely unknown" (1995:23).

This openly acknowledged lack of understanding points up the desirability of cooperation between economists and anthropologists to achieve a more rounded analysis. Economists produce good data on the patterns and volumes of remittance over time and, as Ahlburg has done (1991), postulate the most probable social factors underlying the patterns. Anthropologists can provide insights into the sociocultural forces that underpin, drive, and shape the remittance flows but are, by their nature, not amenable to economic analysis. Both kinds of data are needed by the agencies that seek to contribute to development in the Pacific.[1]

The discussion that follows attempts to open up the current theoretical debate. It supports the contract theory of remittance argued by Ahlburg (1991:5-6), among others, for the Pacific, as opposed to a primary motivation of altruism. It shows that hierarchical family and church ideologies prevailing in Tongan culture morally enforce the obligation to remit. Alterations in the exchange of gifts, especially the goods handcrafted by women, would very likely indicate a change in the nature of the kinship that stimulates most remittances.

The transfers of traditional Tongan goods, far from being "merely symbolic," provide a key to understanding the whole dynamic of remittance behavior. To neglect them analytically distorts the views of the migration experience presented in the volume by islanders and only marginalizes further the role of the remittance receivers, making them appear more passive and "dependent" on hand-outs from people overseas than they appear to themselves.

The goods referred to generally as "handicrafts" bear historical and cultural meaning that enables them to play a special role in Pacific Island societies and among migrants. Certain types of mats and decorated bark-cloth, made exclusively by women, are know as *koloa fakatonga* (Tongan wealth). The formal presentation and exchange of these items is instrumental in the creation of relationships that link people and *ngaahi kāinga* (extended family groupings), and direct the flow of goods and services between them. The role of the exchange of these articles in the reproduction of Tongan society is directly comparable to the production of children, who also are known as the *koloa* (wealth) of their family and nation (James 1988:34). Gifts of traditional ceremonial wealth to people overseas promote cohesion between migrants and the members of their families at home in ways that have rarely been noted in migration literature.

The Social Context of Remittance

Brown and Connell are mostly concerned with the implications on development of the monetary value of remittances. Their focus, though important, tends to isolate the economic implications of remittances from the wider social configuration in which they occur. For example, the "massive social significance" of remittances, which they acknowledge, is scarcely illuminated by its division into parts; and the claim that their study is the first to examine "the specific rationale" (Connell and Brown 1995:13) of remittance is supported by little more than a list of the intended or actual *uses* of remittances.

Indeed, judging from what Pacific Islanders themselves say, the use of remittances may not be at all the "rationale" for sending them. Islanders stress repeatedly that the rationale for sending remittances is to "help the family." It matters less to them how the remittances are used than that they have fulfilled their family duty. Fulfillment of this obligation represents a far more important social investment than any economically productive investment could be (Vete 1995167; see also Stanwix and Connell 1995:79). Thus, the monetary or use value and the social meaning and value of remittances are "thoroughly intertwined" (Vete 199566; see also Fuka 198590; Tongamoa 1987; Vete 1995:55; Faeamani 1995:142; Stanwix and Connell 1995:73,

74). Remittances *are* increasingly used for monetary savings and investments (James 1991:3; Walker and Brown 1995; Faeamani 1995); but a functionalist view of the uses of remittances, such as that provided by survey techniques, will neither explain their occurrence nor provide clues to the likelihood of their continuance.

In Connell and Brown's list, the "social uses" of remittance are mentioned last; but 79 percent of Tongan households and 63 percent of Western Samoan households surveyed mentioned them as the *main* use of remittances, although such uses account for only about 10 percent of the remittances received (1995:24). In addition, the authors see "social uses" solely in terms of expenditures on education, weddings, funerals, and other ceremonies in the homeland. Their overly Eurocentric and economistic analysis conflates the specific forms of "social expenditure" with the otherwise neglected issue of "their massive social significance," and the matter is put aside (ibid.:23).

In at least two instances, Connell and Brown's list of uses has led them into misleading inferences. For example, they note from their recent surveys, "The second substantial category of remittances was for church donations" and that "approximately half the Tongan remitters in Auckland and 76 percent in Sydney sent remittances to be used for church donations" (ibid.: 13). This finding is not surprising, but the inference drawn from it, that "both the religious use and the significance of institutional remittances are unusual" for the Pacific (ibid.:16; Brown 1995:51), needs elaboration and clarification in order to reflect the social facts. Indeed, in much remittance literature the discussion of what remittances do has become so close to reification that one could be forgiven for thinking that remittances themselves have become the principal agents of change instead of the people who send and receive them.

Remittance for Church Donations

In the first instance, the term "institutional" appears to refer to the church. However, Brown elaborates in a later chapter: "It is well known that a significant part of remittances in the South Pacific are sent directly to churches and other institutions, community organizations, sports clubs, cyclone relief funds, and so on. These amounts represent . . . 18 percent and 41 percent of the remittances sent to Tongan and Western Samoan households," respectively (1995:51). The conclusion that large amounts of money are sent by migrants directly to church institutions and other organizations is, however, quite misleading in the case of Tonga.

Proportionally, only very little money overall goes directly to such organizations. Usually, it is sent to family members to enable them to make a

good showing in their annual donation to the church. Increasingly, also, church ministers go on fund-raising tours overseas to gather donations for churches and schools, not all of which find their way to church funds. At the Free Wesleyan Church conference in 1996, HRH Princess Pilolevu, the king's only daughter, asked that ministers time their visits with more consideration for the people overseas, because several fund-raising tours following closely upon one another often left the migrant families in a state of severe want. When money is remitted directly to church funds, the amounts are not usually large.

Large amounts of money might be sent to the church and other village-based organizations in Western Samoa (see Macpherson 1994:106). The high proportion of remittances reported in the surveys as traveling to Samoan households for these combined purposes suggests, however, that they were sent in response to appeals following the recent serious impact of cyclones Val and Ofa on that country rather than as regular remittances.

Remittances of many hundreds of dollars are most certainly used *for* church donations in Tonga and are specifically requested or sent for that purpose. But most of the gifts for the church are sent to parents or close relatives to be given to the church in the annual, highly competitive "free-gifting" ceremony, the *misinale.* Brown and Connell do not mention the *misinale* as being the vital link in the process or the importance of the local status it confers. The amount of the donation is announced in church and the whole family derives prestige (or, alternatively, some measure of notoriety and shame) from its extremely visible public presentation (James 1991: 5; Faeamani 1995: 149- 150).

Similarly, contributions that are reportedly sent to sports organizations, youth clubs, women's development groups, or schools are also usually sent to family members "for" the institution (see Brown 1995:51). The intervening step of first sending the money to the family, particularly to one's parents, followed by its public presentation is not an insignificant point, because the aim of the exercise is primarily to give the family status in the community as being pious, generous, prosperous, and properly Tongan, and only secondarily to support the institution or group. If these well-established, publicly recognized patterns of behavior were to alter, the flow of remittances might be expected also to alter in some way.

The Recipients of Remittances

A further issue revolves around the identity of the remittance receivers. Connell and Brown report that their survey data show that migrants support "family," "kin," and "relatives" within the "transnational corporation of kin" (1995:15, 27). The range of people that these terms denote, however, is

extremely wide. It is possible to be more specific about the relatives who are most likely to be sent remittances and to dispel any lingering impression that remittance offers diffuse support for a large number of largely undefined relatives.

Most remittances occur, in fact, between a narrow range of family members. They are given, first and foremost, to the remitter's parents and, second, to brothers and sisters (Tongamoa 1987:97-99; James 1991:3, 13; Vete 1995:66). The ideology of sacrifice and service due to parents is buttressed both by the traditional hierarchical emphasis in Tongan culture and by Christian church teaching (Vete 1995:62; cf. Macpherson 1994:103). Gailey adds that women are also likely to remit to their adult daughters, in addition to their parents, and to remit more to their sisters than to their brothers (1992:63).

In Tongan classificatory kinship terms, a woman's sister is a "mother" to her children. When parents migrate, the mother's sister may help the grandparents to look after dependent children left behind. Much of the money sent is specifically for the provision of such children or to thank and honor the caregivers, who may also include migrants' brothers and their families. Remittances sent "for the children's sake" help to explain the continuing high receipts that, in 1994, were estimated at around T$51 million ('A. Taufe'ulungaki, pers. com., 1994; James 1995:167).[2]

Current remittances do not represent diffuse benevolence to an undefined set of people; they are very specific. Thus, correlations of the stagnation of remittance flows with the income the migrant earns overseas or the length of time the migrant stays away should also consider that remittances may decline markedly or cease after remitters' parents emigrate or die (see Macpherson 1994:104). To whom then would remitters remit? In this context, note that second-generation remitters may not remit simply "because they have no-one special at home to remit to" (Fuka 1985:42).

Gendered Remittance Behavior

Gender differentials in remittance appear also to have been overlooked in the surveys of Tongan and Western Samoan households published in 1995. Yet, in 1985, Vete (Fuka and Vete are the same person) observed that Tongan women tend to be better remitters than Tongan men and Gailey has claimed women remit more to women than to men (Gailey 1992:62-63). Tongan women in Auckland showed a higher propensity to remit, a greater sensitivity toward the domesticneeds of the households and individuals to whom they remitted, and, frequently, sent a higher proportion of their (usually lower) wages home than did Tongan men (Fuka 1985; Vete 1995:59-61).

Women seem to have a warmer and stronger, more affectionate and sentimental, commitment to their parents than do men, because the traditional upbringing largely confines girls to the house and prizes docility and obedience as feminine virtues (Vete 1995:66). The ancient belief in the passage of "blood-rank" through the mother may also create a sense that females are closer to female forebears than males are to either females or males. Men in their old age tend to look to their daughters rather than their sons for affectionate care (James 1983:240).

This is not to say that women are more active in or take greater responsibility than men for Tongan kinship transactions, although this claim has been made by others (Gailey 1992:67; see also Small 1995:255 n. 32). Men simply play a different role. Similarly, migration and remittance are gendered processes in which men and women have roles that are both central and different. Men produce, prepare, and send traditional food items and kava to migrant kin and friends, and male migrants probably remit a greater sum in cash than do women (James 1991:3, 15; see also Stanwix and Connell 1995: 73). Additionally, men's wages often maintain the migrant household as part of their duty as the primary providers for the family, enabling women, especially single women, to remit a greater part of their wages home.

In the survey of remittance senders in Brisbane, however, it is not apparent whether women were interviewed separately, or at all, although their remittance behavior was likely to have been significantly different from that of migrant men. The sample, we are told, "included families in which the head of household was born in Tonga or Western Samoa" (Brown 1995:38). Perhaps only the head of the household was interviewed. In any event, gender does not emerge as an analytical factor in the findings, although evidence has been available for at least a decade that "gender is a primary influence on remittance" (Vete 1995:59; see also Fuka 1985; James 1991:3, 8).

The Unity of Thought and Action in Tongan Remittance Behavior

Connell and Brown have attempted to extract the economic aspects of remittances from the social context in which they are embedded in a way that Tongans do not. The "epistemological break" they have made between cultural, social, and economic functions, which is required by Western forms of inquiry (Godelier 1978:765), is not perfectly adhered to even within capitalist social formations. This inconsistency has become clear in several contexts, perhaps the most critical of which is the highlighting of the role of women and unpaid domestic labor in the reproduction of the workforce. Similarly, the informal patterns of aid among the women of poor, unemployed, or working-class households have enabled them to survive in situations in which the individual household income derived from wages has

been insufficient to sustain, let alone reproduce, the labor force (see Bott 1957; Sacks 1993). The editors' imposition on their survey data of categories stemming from the separate and distinct institutions that dominate capitalism obscures the fundamental unity of thought and action expressed by most Pacific Islander remittance behavior that relates to a worldview not yet dominated by market relations.

Kinship As a Relation of Production

In its crudest and most materialist versions, Marxian theory postulates that economic factors are the most basic. Accordingly, the social "base" comprises the relations of production, which I take to mean the sets of social relations that must be entered into in order to gain access to the means of production, that is, the natural elements and the techniques and tools that are used to exploit them. According to this view, the symbolic, political, and kinship systems form part of the "superstructure," whose form varies according to the base on which it depends.

In a cogent argument, Godelier has concluded that, in certain societies, relations of kinship, politics, and religion may be so dominant as to function internally as relations of production (1978:765). In such cases, "base" and "superstructure" are fused into one, and there is no opposition between them as has commonly been posed in Marxist thought. He further distinguishes base and superstructure as distinct functions, rather than "layers" or "levels" of action in society. Thus, kinship may play its role in the organization of marriage and descent, and function simultaneously as a relation of production (ibid. : 763).

Godelier's revisionist linking of base and superstructure illuminates the Tongan materials. Indeed, the insight had already been comprehended in Halapua's study in the mid-1970s of small-scale village-based Tongan fishermen. He concluded that financial investment in improved technology alone would not increase the catch, because it was constrained not only by technological factors but, more important, by the social relations between crew members. The obligations of reciprocity between them had to be fulfilled before each gained access to the means of production: a place in the boat, the use of the fishing gear, and part of the distribution of the catch (Halapua 1982:77). The catch was limited by the demand perceived by the fishermen, which included cultural sanctions against "greediness." In this case, the kin- and village-based social relationships, or "superstructure," in the "traditional enterprise" were not subjugated to the demands of the marketplace.[3] Instead, they functioned internally as the "base," the relations of production, that controlled access to the means of production and limited the catch.

The specificity of most Tongan remittances, from children to parents, is sufficiently pervasive to suggest that these kinship relations constitute relations of production (see also van der Grijp 1993:10).[4] The tie between Tongan parents and children is such that adult children will put aside their own interests and those of their children in order to provide material support for their parents and siblings. As Helen Morton, who has made the Tongan parent-child relationship her particular subject of study, puts it, "The high value of children is . . . the contribution they can make to the household through their labor and, as they get older, their financial, material, and emotional support of their parents" (1996:44).[5]

The notion of labor-debt provides theoretical underpinning for the obligation of parental support from Tongan children. Godelier has observed that kinship will likely operate as a relation of production in societies in which the "*living* labour force counts for more than labour accumulated in the form of tools, domesticated resources, etc.," and where there is "some *relation* between living' (present) labour and 'dead' (past) labour" (1978:766). In Tonga, there is a specific labor-debt relation between the younger and older generations. The debt consists of the parents' sacrificial effort to raise and educate the children and, perhaps, to leave them an inheritance; the children's repayment consists of the material care of the parents and contributions on behalf of the family at feasts, church, and other ceremonies (Morton 1996:86). The duty of migrant children, in words they repeat, is "to repay my parents for all the work they did in bringing me up."

Relations of Hierarchy in Tongan Kinship

Tongan kinship remains strongly hierarchical and political, in the sense that no two *kainga* (extended family) members have the same status: each is simultaneously inferior *(tu'a)* to some people and superior *('eiki)* to others. The senior man in a household, the father of a family, has considerable authority over his wife and children, and a sanctity attaches to his person and personal belongings (Lātūkefu 1975:7). The senior male as "father" or *'eiki* (chief) of the family has the duty of providing its food, and senior women are obliged to provide mats and barkcloth for household use and *koloa* (wealth) for gift exchange. Family relationships must be honored in appropriate ways, which involve the material demonstration of the bond with contributions of labor and goods (see also Lātūkefu 19758).

The unity of Tongan thought, emotions, and action is shown in the lavishing of time, energy, money, and goods on the categories of people to whom respect and obedience are due. The "chiefs" in the most immediate relationship of affection, duty, and blood are parents, or people who stand in the

same relation, who control the distribution of the wealth they receive. The money that has been sent for house improvements may be spent on a funeral, an amount sent for a younger sibling's school fees may be spent on another child, and so on. Migrant children do not seriously question such decisions. Obedience is regarded as great a duty as love.

Fatongia, the term now used generally for duty, including familial duty, formerly described the enforced labor of commoners for chiefs (Latukefu 1974:173). Tongans in Auckland in the mid-1980s justified their efforts by saying, *"Kuo lava atu hoko fatongia"* (I have made my tribute, done my duty) (Vete 199567). Their *kavenga* (burden, responsibility) is to get together the money for siblings' school fees, the family's church donations, or other requests their parents might make of them, such as providing dresses for a wedding, first birthday, or funeral; and their *fatongia* is to give it. In other words, they present their "living" labor in exchange for their parents' past "dead" labor (Godelier 1978:766). Ideally, *fatongia* is reciprocal, so that the parents should also uphold the relationship of material and emotional interdependence with their children. This reciprocity lends warmth to the otherwise "unchallengeable authority and unquestioning subservience" that characterize hierarchical status relations (Morton 1996:92).

The items of traditional wealth produced exclusively by women occupy a special place in these intergenerational relations. Originally associated with deities and high-ranking godlike chiefs, the items themselves took on spiritual and aristocratic properties that are still associated with the oldest and most valuable of them, which are in the Palace Collection. It is a logical step to see mats and tapa as standing in for people, as do fine mats *('ie toga)* in Samoa (see Weiner 1989:38) or whale's teeth *(tabua)* in Fijian culture (James 1992:91). Women were seen as the guardians of the mystical heritage, looking after the gods by weaving for them (Taufe'ulungaki 1992). Following constitutional reforms of the late-nineteenth century, ordinary commoners assumed many customs that belonged formerly to the chiefs, among them being the presentation of *koloa* (wealth items) at family occasions. Mats and barkcloth are believed still to possess life-enhancing and life-protecting qualities, and married women feel great shame if they have not a mat and a length of tapa ready in their home for a life crisis. Wives of bureaucrats and professional women must all have these items; if too busy to make them, they must either buy them or barter to obtain them.

The shame and the gossip elicited by a failure to meet one's social obligations is so great that people go into debt to acquire Tongan valuables. In 1996, the Tonga Development Bank's personal loan portfolio was overrun by, people seeking loans for family ceremonies. Nothing actually "happens" to people who fail to meet social expectations, but the feeling of shame is in-

tensely painful; the status of the family is diminished, which might, just conceivably, prevent another family from marrying into the disgraced family or persuade a respectable school, business, or the government not to hire an employee from that family.

Weiner has observed of Samoan cloth that its cosmological connection "reveals a person's right to claim the prerogatives and powers evoked by the conjunction of past and present" (1989:36, 62). It embodies both the "cosmological referents" of the political world and the "economic necessities" embedded in kinship and gender relations (ibid.:36). In the context of modern Tongan migration, Weiner's influential argument applies, albeit in a modified form, to the exchange of mats and barkcloth that undoubtedly embody the hierarchical relations and economic contracts embedded in kinship and gender relations. Weiner was speaking primarily of the symbolic power of ancient Samoan fine mats to transcend the decay over time of the glory and power of Samoan chiefly titles and to render them "timeless," together with the events they commemorate and the people they celebrate. Nowadays, the popularization of an ancient aristocratic tradition among ordinary commoner Tongans sees *koloa* produced and exchanged to confirm the continuity of their hierarchical family relationships not only over generations, but also over vast geographical distances.

Widely Shared Values

Kinship relations, embodied in the exchange of *koloa,* are able to dominate Tongan belief, attitudes, and behavior and function as relations of production because their basic meanings are widely *shared* (see Godelier 1978: 767). To be Tongan is to respect social superiors and to care for one's parents. Socialization practices, which can involve harsh discipline and the insistence upon instant, unquestioning obedience on the part of children, ensure that these ideas remain dominant for the present generation. In an equation of the exercise of parental authority with love and care, a wife once cited to me the scars on her husbands body from his father's frequent beatings as proof of the deep love his parents had borne him. The hierarchical state structure reinforces these ideas, as does the hierarchical organization of the major churches. Quite humble people, should they acquire a particularly fine piece of *koloa,* will seek to present it to a person of high status in order "to get their face known" to one who can dispense favors. High-ranking people who accept the gifts without making any return are, in a sense, profiteering from traditional patterns of respect and *fatongia*. People will occasionally name nobles and people of high aristocratic blood whom they believe to be behaving badly in this respect.

Many people still believe that generous gifts to church ministers, as Gods representatives on earth, and to the annual *misinale* will induce God to give material blessings and long life in return. A senior government bureaucrat told me, "The uneducated people believe the minister has the power to pronounce a blessing or a curse. This is reinforced because he is the one to provide a personal reference for a visa application!" The goods sent as remittance contraflows from Tonga to relatives overseas are, similarly, Tongan thought in action: a life-enhancing blessing and part of the *fatongia* to mark a relationship from which certain material returns are expected.

The Flow of *Koloa* Overseas

In Tonga, women familiar with the handicraft markets estimate that a greater amount of *koloa* than previously is being sent overseas. This increase is due to the greater absolute number of people in migrant communities but also because there is a higher demand from them for *koloa.*[6] The goods have considerable economic value. In 1991, an exporter estimated that the annual handicraft turnover was probably about T$2 million, of which only T$200,000 was officially recorded as exports. The rest of the trade consisted of barter and gift-giving with relatives and others living overseas. It may be assumed that this market has grown and that women's handicraft production now returns between T$3 million and T$4 million annually in value (James 1993: 145, 146).[7]

Most of the *koloa* sent overseas is not destined for the tourist market but for use and exchange within Tongan migrant communities. Some women in Tonga have curtailed their production of tourist items in order to make traditional wealth for sale, exchange, and gifts to relatives and friends overseas (Small 1995246). Women's work groups *(kautaha)* take out development bank loans to purchase raw materials for the production of *koloa.* Only a few Tongan women, however, regularly sell *koloa,* and when they do, it is rarely in order to repay the bank loans. They may sell for special purchases, such as an airfare or to pay school fees. Clearly, the items can be traded as commodities, because a small number of women in Nuku'alofa have begun to speculate. Women who have ready cash buy cheaply from women who need money quickly but have been unable to sell the articles in the Tongan market. They hold the items for sale when the demand goes up, for example, on the occasion of a church conference or university graduation day or when there are people wishing to take a gift overseas. A few women are themselves flying overseas with bundles of *koloa* for the express purpose of selling or exchanging them for Western goods and money.

The wealth items accompany dance troupes, church and school concert

and band tours, the Tongan canoe-rowing teams on their visits to Samoa and New Zealand, and groups visiting relatives who, frequently, give thousands of dollars in money and hospitality and receive mats and barkcloth in exchange (Koenig 1993). Rotumans (Rensel 1993) and Fijians (Stanwix and Connell 1995:79) go on "fund-raiser" trips overseas; and Samoans also make *malaga* (traveling visits), taking kava, mats, and food delicacies to relatives overseas for weddings, funerals, or the dedication of church buildings (Franco 1985; Yamamoto 1993).

Barter and Exchange

To acquire *koloa,* women overseas are prepared to go to the considerable expense and trouble of arranging exchanges with women at home. In return for money and Western goods, women in Tonga give mats and barkcloth. In 1995, I observed a weeklong *katoanga* (festive exchange) on a small island off the main island, in Vava'u, Tonga's main northern group of islands. A young married woman from the island, who had moved to San Francisco some years previously, asked her mother to organize an exchange. Ten women participated from each side. The Tongans living in the United States brought generous quantities of household goods to give as presents together with US$1,500 each, sufficient for six good-quality mats.

The daughter brought her mother a ship's container full of housewares and kitchenware, which included a large gas stove and gas cylinder. The island women all belonged to the mother's *kautaha;* some were her maternal relatives, and others were her immediate neighbors. The local women, in fact, had trouble meeting the demand of the U.S.-based women; many could not offer six mats of their own, but combined with others to make up the number. One household that participated through the combined efforts of a mother, her sister, and her daughter received US$2,000 as well as clothing and gifts of other goods. Dances, informal concerts, feasts, boat trips, and picnics were prepared for the visit by the participants' male and female relatives who lived on the island.

The degree of commoditization was masked as gift exchange. Both parties were able to perceive the transactions of goods and money as gifts stemming from affection *(me'a 'ofa).* The relationship between the makers and the receivers as well as the situations in which they are presented remain vital to the meaning and value of the particular mats exchanged. Nevertheless, the value of the goods is carefully reckoned on a scale: four mats (one of ten feet, one of twelve feet, and two of fifteen feet) are equal in trade, or barter to one *launima* of barkcloth, a length of about seventy-five feet, calculated as fifty *langanga* pieces, of which each is a handspan and a half, or

about eighteen inches in length, and of a standard width. In 1996, each side of this equation of mats and cloth was worth approximately T$1,000 in Tonga and US$l,000 overseas, the amount varying slightly according to the demand and the quality of detailed workmanship. A businesswoman in Neiafu with whom I discussed the exchange boasted that she could have gotten more money for the island women's mats had she taken them to Nuku'alofa for sale to overseas groups or people shortly going overseas. My friend on the outer island remarked that was all very well, but the island women could not afford the fare or the time away from their families and chores to travel to Nuku'alofa to barter, and, in any case, the businesswoman would have kept the profit for herself for her trouble. My friend was looking forward to Christmastime, when she was to exchange four mats of the dimensions already given for US$2,000 with Tongan women in Pago Pago through a contact made for her by her husbands niece, who was working in the fish cannery there. The money she expected for her mats was above the scale, but, as in the case of the exchange on the island, the extra given constituted the migrant women's affection for their relatives and their desire to help the cash-poor women at home.

In the mid-1980s Small documented the extensive exchanges of *kautaha* located on the eastern seaboard of Tongatapu (1987). In the past, she noted, most exchanges had taken place between kinswomen, but, increasingly, they were taking place with groups from overseas and between groups of unrelated women or, as in the case I described, between home-based and overseas groups in which the kin relationship between only one or two members provided the connecting link. Thus, Gailey's assertion that migrant women must purchase mats and barkcloth overseas remains only partly true, and it further loses credence when it is combined with her strong implication that overseas women are somehow prevented from buying *koloa* because men have greater access to cash owing to a gendered capitalist labor market (1992: 61). Women can be sent *koloa* as gifts or barter Western goods to obtain it. In any case, the implication that they cannot obtain money from their husbands and families overseas is immediately contradicted by Gailey's observation that mothers are the most adept at "managing family finances" (1992:62). Women overseas often work for wages and may also be able to count on their husbands' wages for support of the overseas households. In any event, Tongan women living overseas have poured thousands of dollars back into Tonga in the purchase and barter-exchange of *koloa.*

The Use of *Koloa* Overseas

The use of mats and barkcloth in the home and the *ta'ovala* (waist mat) as part of formal dress is a mark of national identity and a statement of fellow-

ship with other Tongans. Church and local migrant communities reinforce and elaborate the traditions. In the United States, for example, Tongans now exchange *koloa* to mark both school and college graduations, as well as births and sixteenth birthdays, which are not usually celebrated in Tonga. Also, more categories of people than is usual in Tonga are given *koloa*. In Honolulu, at a girl's sixteenth birthday, for example, her schoolteacher, her best friend, the person who sewed her dress, the person who made the birthday cake, and several others received *koloa,* in addition to the church minister and her father's sister, who are traditionally due this form of respect.

Traditional Show and Display

Many Tongans have remarked that the conspicuous amounts of wealth items that are presented at ceremonies overseas are far in excess of those in ceremonies at home, even among noble households. They attribute this discrepancy to three major factors: First, the people overseas have to pay money for these items, so that huge presentations represent their wealth within the migrant communities. "It is all part of the near fatal Tongan trait of 'show and display,' to look better than others and than you really are!" I was told. Second, the people overseas might be insecure in their position in the new country but publicly make the claim that they are successful by brave shows of traditional goods. Third, they use the goods to reaffirm their identity and solidarity with Tongan communities everywhere.

Tongan church leaders overseas are among those who play upon the competitive element between individuals and congregations. Not infrequently, they direct the wealth items toward their own churches, schools, and personal ministries to a degree that is rarely exhibited, or quickly checked, in Tonga (see also Faeamani 1995:145; Koenig 1993). As the Tu'i Tonga makes an annual presentation to his deity of the "first fruits" of the land, many people pass their first pay packet to their father or to the "chief" of the family--who, perhaps, is the father's sister--or to the church minister as an act of respect. The relations between Tongans and their social superiors, whether titled chiefs, government and church leaders, or members of the family, are neither purely secular nor matters of temporal power but have, ultimately, a spiritual component (Tamahori 1963:133). The locus and form of the remittance economy reveal the simultaneous function of relations of kinship and of religion as relations of production (Godelier 1978:764).

Forging New Relations

Essential as these wealth items are for family ceremonial, the sheer quantity of *koloa* being exported, the proliferation of ceremonies, and the amount of

koloa being presented overseas suggest that something else is also occurring. Women in Sydney, for example, hold periodic shows of different kinds of koloa for the benefit of other Tongans and the general public; and, in 1995, a Tonga Development Bank officer, exploring the possibilities of the trade export of koloa to Auckland, reported that up to fifteen pieces of barkcloth at a time were being offered as prizes in a lottery. She was amazed to see that the articles were in great demand even among second-generation Tongans. "I thought they would be leaving the Tongan things," she said, "but not at all; instead, they are going for the best ones, the special ta'ovala and so on." This observation suggests that, among some sections of the migrant population, a market for koloa is developing along the lines of the Western market for valuable antiques or collector's items.

Observations from other overseas migrant communities suggest that, in some cases, valuables are being exchanged to create personal ties that may secure migrants' economic and social survival and upward mobility through mutual aid. Tongan migrants living in the more expensive cities of the mainland U.S. West Coast, for example, require assistance to find jobs, visas, accommodation, and friends in their new surroundings (Small 1995: 246). According to Small, the solidarity among Tongan migrants is not due solely to their commitment to Tongan culture and tradition. It is also a function of capitalism and "the U.S. class structure, racism, ethnocentricism, and language barriers that, for many Tongan immigrants, have resulted in their limited mobility, strained relationships with non-Tongans, and cultural misunderstandings that invite social distance from other Californian residents" (ibid.).

These features are characteristic of other immigrant "underclasses" composed mostly of unskilled or semiskilled workers, whose mutual aid enables them to live at a less-than-living wage in enclaves in capitalist societies. Thus, Tongan migrants claim solidarity with one another as part of a strategy of economic survival, as other Pacific Islanders do (Pitt and Macpherson 1974; Franco 1985; Macpherson 1992:119), as rural migrants have done in ethnically diverse cities in other parts of the world (Little 1957, 1962; Meillassoux 1968), and as women in urban working-class communities do to enable their families to survive when men are out of work (Bott 1957; Sacks 1993). As newcomers in alien social settings, for generations Tongans have commonly forged links with members of other family networks--through gifts of food and valuables, children given in fosterage and adoption, and people exchanged in marriage--as a way of creating fictive kinship, which brings the unfamiliar into a recognizable pattern of hierarchical relations that are at once more amenable to habitual adjustment and manipulation.

The exchange of wealth items forges or strengthens social relations that enable some families and individuals to gain advantages over others in the

job market. The control and distribution of precious *koloa* at Tongan ceremonial occasions enables successful "big-men" families, who have achieved a higher standing overseas than their families warrant in Tonga, to confirm their ethnic identity and claim a legitimacy for their patronage or employment of less well-off Tongans (cf. Peace 1979:29). Adroit women can exploit the opportunities for status advancement with mats and barkcloth, the status markers that are their special province (see also James 1979).

The exchanges that are made among migrants to ensure their productivity and make it possible for them to remit may involve adjustments of family and jobs within and between communities, metropolitan centers, and countries. The complex movements of people and goods that take place overseas are parts of the migration-remittance process that, like the role of women's production and exchange of traditional Tongan valuables, are rarely noted in the migration literature (James 1993:143-144; Macpherson 1994:100). The use of traditional wealth is apt in the alien modem processes, because its cultural associations lend it a value "that is greater than the owners themselves" (Weiner 1989:36). *Koloa* has value and meaning that comprehends both the semisubsistence sphere and the capitalist sphere. It conjures up the past--it is the essence of tradition--and has thoroughly modem applications. Its social currency is worth money and is still far greater than money. While the moral community that exists among core groups of migrants endures, gifts of mats and barkcloth will continue to have profound meaning and serve preeminently in "caring for" *(takanga'i)* relationships and creating new ones.

The role of women in the production of traditional items used primarily in ceremony is usually relegated to "the economy of affection," which, nevertheless, has been shown to be an important component of small business enterprise and other commercial transactions in modem private-sector development (Rutz 1987; Ritterbush 1988; Hooper 1993). Migration, employment opportunities for those at home and overseas, and improved living standards made possible by flows of goods and cash remitted by overseas migrants have opened a new range of roles and functions in the development process for women and their production of *koloa*. Nowadays, women's material culture, an aspect of their traditional power and social status, is being used to integrate aspects of Tonga's culture, modem development economy, and kinship with the cohesion of a population that is widely spread throughout the world as a result of the process of migration.

Future Directions

Contraflows of goods from the islands to migrant populations overseas are not "merely symbolic" (Connell and Brown 1995:11) or expressive spin-offs

from economic realities; nor should they be marginalized and neglected in analyses of the migration-remittance process. Survey techniques alone will not reveal their "massive social significance." This article has shown that contraflows of goods are integral to the duties implied in the hierarchical relationships between parents and children, between social superiors *('eiki)* and inferiors *(tu'a).* The ideas are so dominant and widely shared among migrants that kinship functions as a relation of production in the remittance economy. It stimulates the pursuit of wage labor and the return of money and goods to Tonga. In parallel, the sending of money to parents for the church is seen as a *fatongia* (duty) to parents and to God. In the latter case, religion buttresses kinship's functions as internal relations of production within the migrant communities.

Hierarchical Relations under Threat

The possibility always exists that people who consent to perform a service will withdraw their consent or that the internal contradictions within a system will transform or destroy it. Western modes of thought and action have become increasingly intrusive in Tonga and in overseas migrant communities. Many of the hierarchical relations of kinship are becoming increasingly problematic among members of the younger generation and, more particularly, among second-generation Tongans living overseas.

In Tonga, most young people who have acquired Western education accept the fact that its goals and orientation conflict with the Tongan way *(angafakatonga)* in more ways than are commonly acknowledged. A young, unmarried Ph.D. who had spent some years in Brisbane recently explained,

> Parents overseas push the children to fulfil the cultural roles but they do not find it meaningful. They have *koloa,* but the mother values it differently from the daughter. People who were born here and went to school here send remittances. People born there? No way! Even helping their own parents is going; they spend their money on makeup, fashionable clothes and to go to entertainment; they are very Australian in their ways. But for us it is our main goal; we give to parents to help with food, obligations to the church, feasting, to lift [i.e., help] the younger brothers and sisters. That is how we are brought up here, to look after one another. Even though I need the money for myself, my family takes priority, that is why people send remittances to the parents. (Pers. com., Nuku'alofa, 28 April 1996)

A general feeling of *fetokoni'aki* (helping one another and particularly relatives) remains integral to Tongan identity in overseas communities (see also Fuka 1985; Vete 1995). To the extent that it does, there may still be said to exist a moral community overseas. *Koloa* represents the established social claims of those at home and will continue to do so as long as family and *kainga* relationships mean the same in Tongan migrant experience as they do in Tonga.

To secure the loyalty and obedience of the next generation, other measures are sought. The children of migrants may be returned to Tonga to live with their grandparents or other relatives (James 1991:2, 17-18). This arrangement enables the migrant parents each to engage in two or three jobs overseas, which they need to support themselves and send money back for the children and parents. It may also enable the children to grow up in healthier conditions than their parents can afford overseas.

An additional reason, however, is increasingly given, namely, "to give them Tongan relatives" or "so they will grow up to have relatives in Tonga." Over the years, I have known of many women who traveled overseas to attend a daughter's childbed and bring the baby back, at the tender age of one or two weeks, to be raised by the grandmother or other relatives in Tonga. Is this an attempt to ensure that "second-generation migrants" will have "someone special to remit to" when they grow up (Fuka 1985:42)? If so, does it work?

Among the data lacking from studies of Tongans overseas is an estimation of the degree of loyalty to people in Tonga that exists among second-generation migrants who have lived in Tonga for a time. The probable answer is that it all depends on personal circumstances, particularly the nature of the families involved. This answer is likely to prove unsatisfactory to those who seek to predict remittance flows and plan national development. Some migrant parents manage to instill conservative traditional family values into their children, and others manifestly do not.[8] Nowadays, the relations of hierarchy implicit in Tongan kinship have become more problematic, particularly among second-generation migrants in overseas communities. At the same time, the reaffirmation of Tongan identity and *kainga* ties has assumed additional functions that are instrumental in the pursuit and consolidation of economic and social position essential to survival in capitalist economic structures. An increased demand for the traditional valuables suggests that they are taking on wider functions in migrant communities in the assertion of fellowship among a broader social spectrum. As the first-generation primary ties gradually pass away, remittances may dwindle. In their stead, however, Tongan women may find an export market in traditional wealth, as long as the valuables continue to bear aristocratic, family, and "Tongan" associa-

tions and these meanings continue to have value overseas in nontraditional contexts.

In sum, the goods that were formerly presented to ancient gods in an effort to ensure fertility and prosperity for land and people now, through the transformation of a cultural process, tap the economic forces that, like the gods of old, lie beyond the horizon--in Pacific Rim countries--but, this time, through the intermediaries of successful entrepreneurial migrants and other "high priests" of capitalism. Long associated with forms of Tongan social stratification based primarily on rank, *koloa* has found a new role in securing economic class position in the capitalist labor market of more developed countries. With greater hindsight, the role of women and their wealth in the last thirty years or so in Tongan migration and remittance behavior may appear only as a brief moment in Tonga's long and varied migration history. For the moment, however, as a parallel to the biblical parable of the fig tree, a careful reading of the flows of woven pandanus leaves and beaten and painted mulberry bark from Tonga to migrants overseas could well provide a sign of change in the relationships that presently sustain the current high level of remittances to Tonga. Such change may instead introduce an increasing market for the goods that are now sent as gifts.

NOTES

I would like to thank Antony Hooper and two anonymous reviewers, whose comments and ideas have sharpened and improved the arguments presented here.

1. I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for the counterpoise of the two analytical contributions.

2. At the time, the Tongan currency was almost on a par with the U.S. dollar.

3. The concept of the "traditional enterprise" will be introduced in a forthcoming paper, "The Social Dynamics of Aid to Private Sector Development in Pacific Island Economies," by A. Hooper and K. James.

4. Van der Grijp, drawing on the same inspiration in M. Godelier, has emphasized the dominance of kinship in Tongan modes of production (van der Grijp 1993: esp. Introduction). He has not, however, applied the argument to the transfers of *koloa* within the remittance process, as I am attempting to do.

5. Morton notes that Howard has observed a similar "association of affection with material giving" for Rotuma (Morton 1996: 86). Howard suggests that the generosity of parents establishes a social debt that enables them to control and influence their children's lives (1970:33). Macpherson has also observed that Western Samoans are bound to serve the family because of the biblical injunction to care for parents and the Samoan belief that one is obliged to those "whose sweat one has eaten" (1994:92).

6. Folau Vaea, director of the Handicraft Section, Friendly Island Marketing Cooperative, pers. com., March 1996.

7. In July 1996 the Tongan dollar was worth US$0.97.

8. The studies of Tongan migrants conducted by C. A. Small in San Francisco (1997) and H. Morton in Melbourne may help provide answers to these questions.

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