THE ATOMIZATION OF TONGAN SOCIETY

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In 1951 Douglas Oliver wrote of Tonga:

> From the decks of a copra steamer pulling in to Nukualofa, this capital of the Kingdom of Tonga looks more like Cape Cod than South Seas. The illusion remains even after stepping ashore, because Tongans learned long ago that the easiest way to remain Tongan is to appear Western. (1961:179)

Oliver's observation rings with considerable truth even today, since Tonga and Tongans project a strong impression of conservatism and traditionalism. Despite Tonga's apparent continuity in life-style, the structure of Tongan society has been profoundly transformed by the processes of state formation, particularly the centralization and institutionalization of power and authority. George Marcus (1978) has described the consolidation of political power and the movement from traditional chieftaincy to constitutional monarchy. These changes, at the societal level, have also transformed local organization by restructuring the social relations of production.

Ethnographers working in Tonga during the last few decades have noted several features of Tongan local organization that suggest a strong trend toward social relations that are individualized, optative, and emphasize horizontal rather than vertical social relations. These observations, presented as absences of expected patterns, have contrasted

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with what ethnographers understood to be traditional social relations. As early as the 1940s it was apparent that lineage or rammage organization was of little significance at the local level. The Beagleholes wrote that "there are no strong lineage-feelings among the villagers, nor any strong lineage-groupings. None of them had any association with, nor any interest in, the classic lineages of Tonga" (1941:71). Twenty-five years later, Aoyagi found a similar situation in another village: "an internal stratified system as the result of ramification . . . cannot be possibly found in this village" (1966: 175). Kaeppler (1971) and Morton (1972) found that commoners were only weakly and occasionally affiliated with titled persons and saw whatever association they had with nobles as a consequence of residence, rather than consanguinity.

Perhaps the most detailed description of Tongan local organization is Decktor-Korn's dissertation, "To Please Oneself: Local Organization in the Tonga Islands" (1977). The author relies on the concept of "loose structure" to help depict the flexible and optative nature of local organization. Decktor-Korn's material suggests that local organization consists of an amorphous association of households and larger, kindred-based residence units that are weakly defined, highly flexible with respect to both structure and membership, and function with a minimum of vertical integration. Beyond kinship are a number of voluntary associations and church-affiliated groups that exhibit even greater structural flexibility and less continuity in membership than do kin-based social groups. Decktor-Korn also notes that the village itself is not an important social unit, but rather an administrative unit within a highly centralized and somewhat remote governmental structure.

A Tongan scholar, 'Epeli Hau'ofa, observes and laments the extent of social change in Tonga. He describes the kinship system as "coming under heavy pressure . . . from overpopulation, increased monetization, and pressure on resources." According to Hau'ofa, the results are a movement toward nuclear family units rather than extended families and less interest in the affairs of kin beyond the household. His general conclusion is that Tonga is currently "in an era of uncertainty and confusion" (1978:16).

There is, then, substantial agreement among ethnographers regarding the general features of modern local organization. These features include the weakened, if not absent, vertical social relations among social strata that were historically present (see Gifford 1929; Goldman 1970; Sahlins 1958). Kin groups larger than nuclear-family households are weakly defined in both structure and function. Local organization is household centered and social relations beyond the household tend to be

optative, temporary, and ad hoc. These characteristics are the emerging form of social relations at the local level and constitute a trend toward atomization. Rubel and Kupferer defined an atomistic society as "a society in which the nuclear family represents the major structural unit and indeed, almost the only formalized social entity." Also included in Rubel's and Kupferer's conception of the atomistic society are several antisocial psychological characteristics: "contentiousness," "suspiciousness," and "invidiousness" (1968: 189). These psychological traits are not generally characteristic of Tongan peasants, and the use here of the term "atomistic" is limited to its structural aspect.

Atomization is a widespread, if not a worldwide, phenomenon that has usually been associated with industrialization. Weber (1950:111) suggested that both the size of the family and its cohesiveness were reduced by industrialization. Goode (1963:6) also notes that the nuclear family usually becomes independent of more inclusive social groups as industrialization expands. At the most general level, the atomization process in Tonga is possibly due to the incorporation and institutionalization of many aspects of Western culture, including Christianity, a Western educational system, and a political system that has greatly reduced the privileges of the traditional elite (Marcus 1978). Despite the potential influence of the variety of Western institutions that have been incorporated into Tongan society, I argue in this paper that the primary cause of atomization is the change in the social relations of production -specifically, the adoption of individualized land tenure. Individualized land tenure has established the economic conditions necessary for independent, nuclear-family households by functionally replacing traditional social relations in the production process.

The social implications of Tonga's individualized land-tenure system have been variously portrayed by authors dealing with the subject. Nayacakalou (1959) noted the predominance of nuclear-family households, but did not connect this phenomenon with individualized land tenure. Instead, he interpreted modern land-tenure arrangements to be only a regularized and codified version of traditional land tenure. However, this view can only be sustained by limiting the evidence to the immediate relationship between the commoner and the land; that is, in both traditional and modern circumstances individuals were ultimately assigned to work one piece of land. In a later study of land tenure, Maude noted the breakdown of the extended family and the role of modern economic circumstances in causing that process: "The main factors in this change in household form have been the change in the system of land tenure, the development of cash production, and a

weakening in the ties which formerly bound the members of the extended family together" (1965:50).

Joining the influence of the land-tenure system are population growth and internal migration, which result in village populations largely consisting of households with relatively few kin ties to one another. Villages themselves are relatively new features of Tongan social life and were originally established as fortresses in the first half of the nineteenth century, a period of internecine warfare. With the cessation of warfare after 1852, fortifications were no longer necessary, but the population remained clustered in villages (Kennedy 1958:163-165). Because villages were not part of traditional social organization and have few functions as social units in modern Tonga, their internal characteristics vary markedly in accord with local histories.

In a previous article (Morton 1978) I described Tonga's economy as monetized but not commercialized. The limited development of a commercial economy is a significant constraint on the potential for economically independent households and on the atomization process. Without the expectation of consistent or adequate income from participation in a commercial economy, Tongan peasant households rely on their social ties with other households to ameliorate temporary or long-term shortages of subsistence goods. More generally, household interdependence results from the impossibility of long-term household survival by exclusive reliance on its own resources. Together, these conditions constrain and contradict the process of atomization by forcing interdependence and integration of households at the level of exchange. It is this phenomenon that I previously referred to as the communal economy (Morton 1978).

Tongan local organization, thus, consists of households that are potentially independent at the level of production but necessarily linked at the level of exchange by the impossibility of long-term economic independence. Furthermore, the social relations relied upon as links between households are not the social relations of traditional Tongan society, but social relations that conform to the modern circumstance of individualized production. The following analysis of production, kinship, and exchange is intended as further elucidation of this view of Tongan local organization.

Tradition and Transformation

The political transformation of Tonga began in the first half of the nineteenth century with the ascendancy of Taufa'ahau to the position of Tu'i

Kanokupolu, the most politically powerful of ancient Tu‘i lines. By 1875, with the aid of Wesleyan missionaries, Taufa‘ahau was able to fully consolidate his political power, and in that year he became Tonga’s first constitutional monarch. Taufa‘ahau deprived most traditional chiefs of their power over commoners and sharply limited the power of those he retained as a hereditary nobility. After 1875 the nobility was economically dependent on the Crown rather than on their traditional authority over commoners, and commoners were emancipated from their traditional duties to chiefs. Marcus (1978) fully describes the nineteenth-century events that led, in the twentieth century, to the restructuring of Tongan society.

Prior to the political events of 1826-1875, Tongan society exhibited the general characteristics of Polynesian society: ranked social strata with genealogical position rationalizing differential access to political, economic, and religious power. While there is some ambiguity and disagreement concerning exact numbers of strata and the nature of rank within strata, the general structure of precontact Tongan society is reasonably evident and has been described by Gifford (1929), Goldman (1970), Sahlins (1958), and Mariner (Martin 1817). Uppermost in honor and sanctity was a line of paramounts, *tu‘i;* a second stratum consisted of chiefs, *‘eiki;* and a third elite stratum, *matāpule,* acted as chiefs’ assistants and attendants. The fourth major stratum, *tu‘a,* or commoners, made up the bulk of the population. Gifford (1929) and Goldman (1970) give detailed accounts of the relationship among the elite strata. Here, it need only be said that Tonga’s history from about 1450 to the modern postcontact period reveals a pattern of competition for power manifested in warfare, political assassination, and apparent manipulation of genealogical traditions in order to capture and consolidate political hegemony. The trend in this four-hundred-year period was a gradual reduction in the number of elite, titled lineages and the absorption of the power and property of weaker lines by more successful ones.

The great division in Tongan society was between commoners and all chiefly strata. Every major aspect of Tongan culture manifested this division in qualitative and absolute terms. In religious thought the souls of all elite persons were immortal, leaving the body at death and existing forever in *Pulotu,* the place of the dead. Commoners were thought to possess only a life force that deteriorated with the body after death (Mariner, in Martin 1817:100). Politics and warfare were strictly the prerogative of titled persons, with commoners acting as soldiers of the lowest rank. Materially, commoners were probably reasonably well-off, but they could not hold rights in objects of wealth and held no rights in

resources beyond those assigned or allowed by chiefs. In the social sphere, commoners were not people of little honor, they were people of no honor. Commoners served chiefs as laborers and warriors, and lived as tenants on land controlled by their more socially esteemed and politically powerful kin.

> Power flowed down the line of hierarchy, and in principle each superior down to head of household had great powers over the life and property of his subordinates. In practice, it was the commoner who was the universal subject of all powers, and it was the upper ranks who had the forcefulness to evade subordination. In the system which had established the crude pattern of master and victim as a relationship akin to that between awesome god and a human being, the commoner was the victim. (Goldman 1970:303).

Drawing on the work of Rousseau (1978), Gailey (1981) has applied the concept of estate to Tongan stratification. "If the Tongan kin groups were stratified, but the strata were determined through kinship relations common to both strata, they were not classes" (Gailey 1981:40). Estate systems are "a form of social stratification in which the strata are jurally defined, and where strata present a significant homology with the system of relations of production. The ideology of the system legitimizes inequality" (Rousseau 1978:87). The concept of estate predates the idea of class and is associated with an organic rather than a layered model of society (Fallers 1973:9). While separated by cultural differences and hereditary status, estates are vertically integrated through shared rather than opposing ideologies. In Tonga, kinship provided the social linkage between estates and a shared ideology that supported status differences.

At the local level, traditional Tongan society consisted of homesteads, *'api,* dispersed on the lands of a chief. Homesteads may have been occupied by patrilineally extended families (Maude 1965:50). Or, according to Lātūkefu (1967:3), the homestead consisted of a more loosely constructed association of close kin, linked generationally through either patrilineal or matrilineal ties. In either case the social relations within the homestead and among closely related homesteads were structured by three principles of rank. Ego's patrilateral kin were *'eiki* to him, that is, they outranked him and he owed them social respect. Matrilateral kin were of lower rank than ego and from them he could expect respect and material support. Within the sibling group, sisters outranked their

brothers, and brothers owed both respect and material assistance to their sisters. Finally, there was a principle of seniority that ranked siblings of the same sex. These relations are described in greater detail by Lātūkefu (1967:4-7).

I am more concerned here with the economic implications of ranking. Homesteads were under the authority of the *ʻulu,* head, who controlled labor within the homestead and oversaw the organization of production at the lowest level. Besides overseeing production on his homestead, the *ʻulu* was the social link between the homestead and the next higher level of organization, the *faʻahinga* or *matakali.* The *faʼahinga* consisted of a number of neighboring homesteads connected through common kinship. According to Lātūkefu (1967:8), "this was a named, exogamous group embracing several *ʻapi* headed by the *ʻulumotuʻa.*" The *ʻulumotuʻa,* principal head, was probably from the chiefly estate and had to be at least of *matāpule* status. Like the *ʻulu,* the *ʻulumotuʻa* controlled production by distributing land among his homesteads, overseeing cultivation, and organizing labor. The *ʻulumotuʻa* was either a close kinsman of a major chief, or the assistant, *matāpule,* of a major chief. In turn several *faʻahinga,* through common descent from the original title-holder, formed the *kainga* and were under the authority of the current title-holder, *ʻeiki.* The *kainga* was the largest social unit associated with a discrete territory and the largest unit of local organization. It was the *ʻeiki* of the *kainga* who received a grant of land from the Tuʻi Tonga; an individual *ʻeiki* might lose control of his land through the misfortunes of war or politics. Like the *ʻulumotuʻa* and *ʻulu* below him, the *ʻeiki* took a direct interest in production, but at a more distant administrative level. For commoners, access to land depended on kinship links between the *ʻulu* at the lowest organizational level and the *ʻulumotuʻa* and *ʻeiki* at higher levels.

While most of this construction is borrowed from Lātūkefu, I question his opinion that residence rather than kinship bound commoners to chiefs (1967: 11). It is quite probable that most commoners did not know their genealogical connection to chiefs, but they did know their connection to their *ʻulu* and their *ʻulumotuʻa.* In a system of hierarchical relations, it is only necessary for the participants to be aware of their relations with those immediately above and immediately below them. Since the commoner was at the bottom of the genealogical scale, specific kin connections beyond the homestead and the *faʻahinga* were not relevant to him. However, this lack of relevance for the commoner, participating at the lowest level of the society, does not imply that kinship did not provide the overall structure of social relations.

Production, distribution, and consumption were all organized by the rammage-like structure of traditional social relations. The territorial equivalent of the sociopolitical hierarchy was what Sahlins (1958:6-7) termed "overlapping stewardship." All land was first vested in the Tu'i Tonga, who granted *tofia,* estates, to principal chiefs, and they in turn granted use rights to their *'ulumotu'a;* final allocation was made to heads of *'api* by the *'ulumotu'a.* The tenure rights of commoners were minimal since they could be evicted without recourse. In return for allowing access to his land, the chief demanded both goods and services from his tenants. A variety of goods were reserved exclusively for chiefly consumption, including certain types of yams, fish, turtles, and shellfish. First fruits from all harvests were also for the use of chiefs. Goods produced at the local level moved up the hierarchy of statuses and supported public works, warfare, craft production, and the lavish life-style of the chiefly estates. Labor for public works and for warfare was organized by the *'ulumotu'a* and chiefs and either used locally or contributed for use at higher levels.

The *'ulumotu'a* exerted considerable influence over what crops were produced and what quantities were necessary for tribute and ceremonial offerings. Due to the abundance of resources and the general ease of production, it is doubtful that the material demands of the chiefs ever threatened the basic welfare of commoners. But commoners could not possess the prestige goods associated with chiefly status. Wealth was distinguished from subsistence goods and consisted of *ngatu* (tapa cloth), fine mats, canoes, items of personal adornment, special architecture, and some food items, for example, pigs and certain yam varieties. Gailey (1981) maintains that *kaloa,* wealth, was produced exclusively by women, but this is doubtful since a variety of goods produced by male labor were also prestige goods, for example, yams, whales teeth, canoes, and houses. There was an emphasis on the circulation of goods as it relates to status and power, that is, status was manifest in the power to give and to demand goods. Thus the commoner was stigmatized both in his role as provider and as receiver (Goldman 1970:301-302).

Historically, Tonga's political economy was structured and dominated by the asymmetrical relationship between commoner and chiefly estates. Kinship served both to connect the estates materially and ideologically and to socially rationalize differential access to economic and political power.

Of all the social and political changes that occurred in the establishment of Tonga's monarchy, the adoption of individualized land tenure

was most significant in shaping modern local organization. As Marcus states, "It was the land arrangements, envisioned by the constitution, which were to give real substance to other clauses concerning individual rights and emancipation" (1978:516). Subsequent to 1875, land laws were enacted that granted usufruct directly to individual males, so that under the present land system every Tongan male, age sixteen and over, is entitled to 8¼ acres of agricultural land, plus a small lot, ⅖ of an acre, on which to live within a village or town. This system is not completely instituted and cannot be because of land scarcity (Maude 1973:171-172).

Besides materially freeing commoners from their dependency on chiefs for access to land, the land laws have several significant social consequences. The modern land-tenure system not only frees the commoner from the chief but also from the entire social hierarchy that previously linked commoner and chief and defined social groups at the local level. The *'ulumotu'a* no longer directs production, and a high proportion of households do not recognize any association with an *'ulumotu'a* or a broader residence group. By emphasizing inheritance of land through primogeniture and allocating land only to males, the law undermines the traditional claim of women, as sisters, on the labor and resources of their brothers. It also depreciates the value of female links in establishing claims to land. Consequently, the land-tenure system exerts pressure on traditional forms of kin relations to transform themselves into something approximating a Western model of kin relations, that is, households consisting of independent nuclear families dominated by males as husbands and fathers.

Tonga's adopted land-use policy has also transformed social relations by clustering the population into villages. Prior to the modern period Tonga's population was dispersed in homesteads. It was only during periods of intense warfare in the nineteenth century that fortified villages were temporarily established for protection. During the twentieth century villages became administrative units that could be overseen by a town officer, an elected official responsible to the central government. Internal migration and rapid population growth have created village communities in which kinship cannot function as the single, or even the dominant, mode of interaction. Mutual aid, cooperation, and other interactions generally are based as much on coresidence.

Taken together, all aspects of Tonga's land-tenure system constitute an attempt to establish self-sufficient households, each with its own access to the means of production and each responsible for its own material welfare. This arrangement of the means of production and labor

would, if achieved, approximate what Marshall Sahlins has termed the domestic mode of production, the D. M. P. However, the D. M. P. is only a logical possibility, an underlying structure; it cannot, in fact, be achieved.

> Clearly the domestic mode of production can only be a disarray lurking in the background, always present and never happening. It never really happens that the household by itself manages the economy, for by itself the domestic stranglehold on production could only arrange for the expiration of society. Almost every family living solely by its own means, sooner or later, discovers it has no means to live. (Sahlins 1972: 101)

The long-term fragility of the D.M.P. constitutes a major constraint on the full development of economically independent households. In the case of Tonga there are other important constraints on the development of independent households. The lack of sufficient land to fully institute the system means that many households must rely on informal and extralegal methods to gain access to land.

Tonga's marginal participation in the market economy also influences the nature of local organization and forces reliance on noncommercial forms of distribution and exchange. Several linked conditions have prevented the rapid development of a commercial economy in Tonga. Perhaps most significant is that land has not been commoditized; it cannot be legally transferred by sale. The nonexistent land market, combined with other government policies that discourage or prevent the intrusion of foreign capital, have largely prevented the establishment of large-scale enterprises. Commercial development has been limited to the service sector, retailing, and, to an even more limited extent, commercial farming.

During the period of this study (1970-1971), about 90 percent of Tonga's export income was derived from the sale of coconut products and bananas; the remainder was from the sale of other agricultural products and handicrafts. The 1966 census also reveals the predominance of agricultural production in Tonga's economy. Sixty-seven percent of all adult males were engaged in agriculture while less than 3 percent worked in manufacturing and processing; services ranked as the second largest category of employment at just under 10 percent (Fiefia 1968:28). Total exports for 1970 averaged about T$33[1] per person. These data reveal a commercial economy of small proportions dominated by agricultural production with minimal participation in com-

mercial exchange. Obviously, Tongans do not rely on the production of cash crops or on the availability of wage labor to meet most of their material needs. Reproduction of the system at every level depends on subsistence needs being met through local production and distribution.

Thus, as argued here, local organization in modern Tonga is more the result of accommodations to modern political and economic circumstances than to conservation of traditional social relations. Maintenance of traditional social relations was not a viable twentieth-century alternative because of changes in the political structure, particularly the reduction in chiefly authority. A more complete transition to a market economy and Western social relations was also not an option in the face of government policy that largely prevented investment by foreign capital and limited development of commodity production within Tonga. The result has been a reformulation of local organization in terms of subsistence-oriented production carried on by household units disassociated from traditional social relations.

Local Organization and Production

Despite their lack of easily discernible structure or function, Tongan villages provide a pragmatic reference point to describe local organization. The village I selected for study, Matolu,[2] is located on the main island of Tongatapu. Matolu is distinctive in that the noble holding the estate on which the village is located resides in the village. All families in Matolu were members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the village. In most villages, religious affiliation is diverse and changes rapidly (Decktor-Korn 1977: 170-195).

Because of its proximity to Nuku‘alofa and the fact that land is still available, Matolu has experienced very rapid population growth. Between 1956 and 1971 the population grew from 91 to 261, an increase of 287 percent. Mean household size grew from 4.8 to 6.2, and the number of households increased from 19 to 42. This rate of growth is atypical since Tonga’s overall population grew by approximately 40 percent during the same period (Fiefia 1968:6). Only 7 of the 42 household heads were born in Matolu; 18 were born in other villages on Tongatapu, and the other 17 were born in villages located in other island groups. All of these men explained their change in residence by the availability of land and Matolu’s proximity to schools and medical services. With the exception of one household, all of the “immigrant” families have some attachment to earlier residents of the village, either through kinship or marriage. However, there was no pattern to the type

of relationship utilized to establish residence by the immigrants. The one exception is the church steward, who is assigned to his position by the church administration.

Matolu's rapid growth and the influx of immigrants resulted in some political and social tension. "Native" residents who can trace a long family association with the village are known as the "real Matolu people." More recent arrivals, even though they may have resided in the village for twenty years or more, are considered newcomers. This division is represented symbolically by the separation of the two groups in different graveyards. The division also appears in some local jokes, but there is no discernible effect on the quality of relationships between individuals or households, or on the organization of the village itself.

The availability of agricultural land is the main material concern of all families. First, they are concerned with immediate availability: Will they have land to use for subsistence gardening? Second is a long-term concern: Is land available for legal allotment? Other considerations are whether there are opportunities for wage labor, and whether there is ready access to health care and educational services. Because of the complexity of the decision-making process, it is difficult to classify residence choices. With that in mind, 57 percent of the households were residing virilocally, 29 percent were neolocal, and 14 percent were uxorilocal. On the surface this distribution might be understood as consistent with traditional residence patterns. However, the primary concern is with access to land, and since transfer of land under the current land-tenure system gives strong preference to inheritance through primogeniture, eldest sons would prefer to remain in close association with their father.

After considering the origin of household heads, their residence choices, and their stated motives for selecting a particular village, it is apparent that kinship is playing only a limited role in determining village composition. Instead, access to land--which may be obtained in several ways, including use of kin relationships--is the primary concern in selecting the postmarital residence. All household heads in Matolu have access to gardening land, but only 13 hold legally registered allotments; 14 hold plots pending final approval by the noble, and 15 have temporary access to land through a kinsman or friend. Like most nobles, the noble holding the Matolu estate has been very slow to approve final allotment of land. Reluctance in this matter provides the noble with some control over peasant families vying for legal access to land. This manipulation by the noble is extralegal, but it is grudgingly accepted as his traditional right.

Villagers express a preference for living in nuclear-family households, and of the 42 households in Matolu, 41 consist of nuclear families. Eight of these households include an adult, unmarried relative of either the household head or his wife. One household includes three conjugal pairs, but two of the couples are only recently married and, although intending to establish separate households, have not yet done so.

All households engage in some cash-producing activities. These activities vary over time within the same household and between households. Cash-crop production, mostly coconuts and bananas, fishing, production of handicrafts, and wage labor are the main sources of income. No households engage in any of these activities continuously; income-producing activities are always linked to specific targets of a nonsubsistence nature. Decktor-Korn (1977) found the same orientation to production for exchange. This pattern of intermittent involvement in the market economy can be explained by the small amount of income generated relative to time input plus the intermittent nature of income sources themselves: wage-labor jobs are likely to be temporary and the markets for agricultural products are sporadic.

Of the 42 household heads in Matolu, 25 identified themselves as farmers, 6 as wage laborers, and 5 as fishermen; 2 others were working in New Zealand as wage laborers. The remaining 4 household heads consisted of minor church and government officials. This information suggests more specialization than actually exists, since all household heads, with the exception of the two absent from the village, gardened and relied on gardening to meet household subsistence needs. Strict occupational specialization in the market economy is impractical for most because most income sources are temporary; this is true of both wage-labor jobs and the production of cash crops.

Production is carried out by households operating independently of one another. Household heads make their own decisions on such matters as the use of horticultural land, crop selection and rotation, and whether to plant cash or subsistence crops. Their decisions are not subject to review or control by any higher social or political authority. For farmers who do not have their own allotments and rely on kin or nobles for access to land, this statement must be modified. These farmers are less likely to grow cash crops or to invest as much labor in the land as farmers working their own allotments, because their rights to the land are temporary.

Labor is largely supplied by the household head working alone, occasionally assisted by other males in his household--sons or visiting kinsmen. More rarely, wives will assist their husbands. Labor is often

pooled for tasks that require large labor input in short periods, or for tasks that are extensive and considered boring. Most formally, labor pooling is organized as a *kautaha toungāue,* an association in which the participants agree to work for one another, as a group, in rotation. One individual is selected as timekeeper to help enforce the principle of equal contribution. During 1971 Matolu had two such groups, one having a membership of ten and the other a membership of seven. The tasks undertaken as a group were planting and hoeing. On the days the association was to work, each member had one hour in the morning to work on his own garden plot; the remainder of the day the entire membership worked on the garden of one member. The order of rotation was established by the proximity of each garden to the village, group work beginning at the closest garden and ending at the most distant.

Kinship was not a criterion for membership; instead the groups were formed on the basis of residence. All members of one group resided in the northern half of the village, and the members of the other group resided in the southern half. It is also important to note that these groups functioned without a leader. The timekeeper was selected because he was thought to be honest and sufficiently literate to keep records. Less than half the men chose to belong to a formal gardening association, However, there are less formal, smaller groups of friends and neighbors that work together. In these cases, the labor input of each should balance out but is not strictly accounted since companionship is the dominant concern.

In contrast to traditional circumstances, kin groups, or even dyadic relationships with kin outside the households, play virtually no role in organizing production. The only kin group larger than the household is the *matakali,* and it is both corporately weak and structurally ambiguous. In the village of Matolu there are four recognized *matakali.* Of the 42 households in the village, only 21 claim affiliation with a *matakali.* In each household claiming affiliation, either the household head or his wife is a consanguine of the *ʻulumotuʻa.* The position of the *ʻulumotuʻa* is not strictly determined by kinship or descent. Instead, the position seems to result from the merging of a consideration of village history and current political realities. Recognized *ʻulumotuʻa* claim relatively long ancestral associations with the village and have some claim to status through seniority, title, or control of some official position such as town officer. These men tend to be the foci of status rivalry within the village, not because they are *ʻulumotuʻa,* but by virtue of holding other political or social positions. Economically, they are sometimes significant in mobilizing goods and labor for ceremonial occasions and/or

feasting, but they do not have the authority or personal power to do more than request contributions and cooperation.

Historically both the *matakali* and the *'ulumotu'a* were more socially significant and were apparently critical in organizing production at the local level. Lātūkefu (1967:8) states that in the past only titled persons could hold the position of *'ulumotu'a;* this suggests that historically *matakali* were segments of ramages, *ha'a.* The *'ulumotu'a* of precontact Tonga were quite powerful since they held the final rights to land in the system of overlapping stewardship. Under that system, the land of the *matakali* was distributed and cultivated under the supervision of the *'ulumotu'a.*

The modern system of land tenure has altered the chain of stewardship so that the *'ulumotu'a* no longer receives land to administer and no longer supervises production. The modern *matakali,* to the extent that it exists, has weakened and changed in both structure and function. Gifford (1929) and Lātūkefu (1967) both describe *matakali* as segments of larger lineal units, *ha'a.* Today the *matakali* are not segments of larger units, nor do they function directly in the production process. Also, the power of the *'ulumotu'a* over members of the *matakali* has been significantly reduced, since they no longer rely on the *'ulumotu'a* for access to land.

In modern Tonga kinship has a limited and peripheral role in organizing production, particularly in organizing labor and allocating access to land, the primary means of production. Consequently, its role in establishing and defining local organization has also been significantly reduced. Kinship groups larger than the nuclear family and the household are poorly defined and functionally ambiguous. Villages themselves lack structure related to kinship. None of the foregoing is meant to claim that kinship is not an important aspect of modern Tongan social life; it clearly is. However, in removing traditional kin relations from production their material constraints on the community and the individual have been altered.

Local Organization and Exchange

Tongan local organization roughly approximates the household type of peasant political-economy described by Halperin (1977:291). In this type of peasant system, households are relatively autonomous at the local level, political power is a function of the traditional sociocultural system, and the local elite exert economic controls through taxation and authority over the distributive system. In the two other types of peasant

systems defined by Halperin, administered community and commercial plantations, elites exert much more direct control over production itself. More significantly for this analysis, in a household-type peasant economy the reproduction of the local community is left to the local community. This is the case in Tonga where the state provides little economic protection. Tongan households are left to their own social devices to protect themselves from short-term or long-term economic difficulties. The disadvantages of household independence are apparent to Tongan peasants. Illness, family discord, separation, and/or old age may seriously disrupt production and threaten the ability of the family to provision itself. Besides obvious material circumstances that slow or stop household production, there are a variety of social activities and religious duties that also disrupt production for varying amounts of time.

The long-term unreliability of the domestic mode of production, combined with the limited development of a commercial economy, necessitates and produces the communal economy. The communal economy is not a total economy; it does not have its own form of production. Goods that enter the communal economy are goods produced for use by households; they are not produced specifically for exchange. The communal economy is a sphere of exchange in which goods move from household to household through the social linkages of kinship, friendship, and neighborliness.

The ideology of the communal economy contrasts with the individualistic nature of production. Its widest principle is *fetakoni'aki,* the spirit and reality of cooperation. More specifically, this ideology prevails upon individuals to materially assist kin, neighbors, and friends, particularly those who need assistance. It also calls upon the able individual to assist others who are socially close before using resources in other ways--for example, sharing food surpluses with neighbors rather than selling them. Tongan attitudes toward food are perhaps the best example of this ideology. Tongans view food as almost a free good. No one should be deprived of food; "come and eat" is probably the most frequent greeting in Tonga and is extended to strangers as well as close kin and friends. There is also a pervasive attitude that the selling of food is a breach in custom and borders on immorality.

To determine the characteristics of Tonga's communal economy, I collected data on 604 transactions. The data were obtained from 40 households in Matolu over a ten-week period. The sampling procedure was to visit each household at two-week intervals and elicit information on the last four transactions in which the household had been involved. Dupli-

cate reports of the same transaction were removed from the sample. Collecting information from both principals involved in a transaction provided an opportunity to evaluate the validity of the data. The few discrepancies I found were minor and were probably due to honest differences of opinion or memory. There was some difficulty in collecting this information since Tongans considered it uninteresting to discuss the details of everyday exchange. Their interest focused on those transactions they considered socially significant. It was easier for an informant to remember the details of his gift of a large pig for his brother's wedding feast several years earlier than the basket of taro he gave to his neighbor two days before. By focusing my informants' attention on one- and two-day periods preceding the interviews, I obtained a sample more closely reflecting the general characteristics of the communal economy. Reliance on informants' selection of transactions would undoubtedly have skewed the sample toward transactions involving prestige items in a ceremonial context. In this sample only 7 percent of the cases were associated with a ceremonial context. Social contexts that do require gifts are life-crisis events--births, certain birthdays, weddings, and funerals. Guests attending feasts also provide their hosts with gifts of prestige foods or traditional craft items, particularly tapa and mats. However, the emphasis here is on more mundane transactions and their role in the communal economy. The great preponderance of these transactions, 93 percent, occurred in the course of daily patterns of interaction rather than during extraordinary ceremonial events.

Virtually all of these transactions would be classified as generalized reciprocity (Sahlins 1965: 147). Their two-sided quality is not apparent in a single transaction. At the moment of transfer there is, of course, a giver and a receiver, but over time this distinction is dissolved. The community's expectation is that individuals will be involved in the communal economy as both givers and receivers. There is some prestige attached to being a giver, and individuals who seem to consistently be receiving without good reason, such as physical disability, are the subject of some gossip and may be subjected to mild public ridicule through joking.

Initiation of transactions is often subtle because "gifts" may be elicited by admiring a desired object or by mentioning a need. With this in mind, 26 percent of the transactions were initiated by a request and the remaining 74 percent were initiated by the giver.

The types of material exchanged further suggest the importance of the communal economy in the day-to-day provisioning of households. Foodstuffs are the largest category and constitute 63 percent of the sam-

ple. Nearly all of the foods exchanged were produced at the local level. Horticultural products made up 37 percent of the sample, fish and meat totaled 25 percent. Since there is no refrigeration in the village and no other preservation methods are used, meat and fish have to be consumed soon after they are obtained. Consequently, they are overrepresented in the sample relative to their actual frequency in the typical villager's diet. In many households meat and/or fish is only consumed once or twice a week.

The separation of the communal and commercial economies is manifest in the types of goods exchanged, the form of transactions, and their distinctiveness in social function. A variety of imported commodities have become necessities in household consumption patterns, for example kerosene, matches, salt, spices, cloth, and a variety of household utensils. These goods are treated differently than locally produced goods within the communal economy. Only 20 percent of the goods transferred were imported and, if tobacco products are excluded, only 10 percent of the goods exchanged originated in the commercial sector. These commodities are usually given in very small quantities and are intended to tide the receiver over until supplies can be replenished through purchase. Expensive commodities such as radios, bicycles, and fine dishware are loaned with considerable frequency, but are rarely given freely.

Money was exchanged in 11 percent of the transactions. These were small quantities, generally less than T$1. A request for money was always accompanied with a statement regarding its intended use. While difficult to quantify, exchanges involving money seemed to be treated with more specificity regarding use and conditions of repayment than did transactions involving goods. However, no transactions by sale were observed between co-villagers except those that occurred at the one village store.

Production is organized and accomplished by households working independently. I argue here that this model of production as social policy and as a system for allocating the means of production--land--has an atomistic effect on Tongan social life. In particular, it has to a large extent dissolved the material basis for hierarchical social relations. However, the inherent impossibility of production and reproduction based strictly on autonomous households necessitates socioeconomic ties among households. This necessity is made more pronounced by the limited development of the commercial economy and the similarly limited development of social welfare policy and institutions at the society level. Reproduction of the community and the households themselves depends on a vigorous communal economy.

TABLE 1 **Transactions according to Kinship and Geographic Distance**

Geographic Proximity	Kin	Non- Kin	Total
Exchange parties reside in same village	150 (a)	236 (b)	386
Exchange parties reside in different villages	160 (c)	58 (d)	218
Total	310	294	604

Note: λa (kinship is dependent variable) = .29, λa (location is dependent variable) = .05, λ = .17, Chi-square = 66.48 ($p < .001$).

Kinship and coresidence, together, are the social relations that structure the communal economy. Table 1 categorizes transactions as to whether the principals were kin and whether they were coresidents. Lambda a (λa), [3] Guttman's coefficient of predictability (Freeman 1965:71-78), was used to examine the relationship between proximity and kinship. When λa is calculated with kinship as the dependent variable (i.e., kinship status is guessed with knowledge of residence), 29 percent of guessing errors are eliminated; when location is guessed with knowledge of kinship status, λa is only 5 percent. This implies that shared kinship overrides distance and that coresidence overrides lack of kinship (compare cells b and c). The low frequency in cell d, less than 10 percent of the sample, further confirms the significance of both coresidence and kinship as important determinants of exchange.

Obviously, close proximity is likely to promote relationships of cooperation and mutual assistance, and to a large extent villagers expect to rely on neighbors for material assistance. Interdependence of neighboring households is symbolically recognized in the distribution of Sunday feast foods. Food for Sunday is usually prepared the day before since cooking and other forms of work are illegal on Sundays. Households prepare large quantities of one or two dishes and then a child is sent to deliver portions to several neighboring households. At the practical level this allows each household to have a variety of foods without the extra effort of preparing several different dishes.

Fifty-one percent of the sample consisted of exchanges between kin, so in general it can safely be concluded that kinship is playing an active role in determining with whom one exchanges. The strongest tendency revealed in table 1 is that when exchange occurs between principals residing in different villages they are likely to be kin. Within the village

kinship plays a much stronger role than the data suggest because the non-kin to kin ratio is quite high. Village demographics are such that relatively few kin are available within the village.

The proportion of transactions that involve kin, however, only tell us that kinship is a significant feature in the communal economy and local organization. The exact kin relations involved and their relative proportions are much more revealing about the material role of kinship. Fifty percent of the exchanges occurring among kin are between parents and children or between siblings, that is, persons that once resided together in the same household and constituted a nuclear family. The frequency of exchange falls off dramatically with increasing degrees of consanguinity. Overall, the pattern of exchange among kin is one in which the household organized around nuclear families emerges as the socially significant unit. Exchange within the communal economy both contradicts and reaffirms the atomistic influence of the organization of production. While it links households together in recognition of the interdependency of households, it is itself organized in terms of households rather than more inclusive kin groups.

Tongans have a strong conscious model of exchange that for them should be both prescriptive and descriptive. The model is based on kinship rank within the bilateral kindred, *kainga,* and specifies the direction of the flow of goods, that is, goods should move from persons of lesser rank to persons of greater rank. Relative rank within the bilateral kindred is established by three criteria applied in the following order: agnates are of higher rank than ego and uterines are of lower rank; females occupying the same genealogical position as males are of higher rank than their male counterparts; and age outranks youth. So the eldest female in a sibling group outranks all of her siblings. In the parental generation father's sister is of particularly high rank because of her position as both agnate and female. Mother's brother, because of his position as both uterine and male, is the epitome of low rank within the kindred. Traditionally, the relationship between mother's brother and sister's son was known as the *fahu* relationship, meaning "above the law." In this relationship ego was allowed to exact unlimited goods and services from mother's brother.

This model of exchange is understood by virtually all adult Tongans and is thought to characterize exchange behavior. It is discussed by E. W. Gifford (1929:17-19) and by Ernest and Pearl Beaglehole (1941:76-78), and finally by Adrienne Kaeppler. After describing kinship rank, Kaeppler states, "The economic implications of status within the system of exchanges among the Kainga can be characterized as indi-

rect reciprocity, i.e. goods and services go from ego and his siblings to his patrilateral relatives, while he exacts goods and services from his matrilateral relatives" (1971: 179). Whether Kaeppler's statement is correct or not is not really at issue. It is certainly correct in that it represents the way Tongans themselves view exchange between kin. However, the actual pattern of transactions in my sample contradicts this view because, first, exchange with kin outside the first degree of collaterality is relatively infrequent and, second, because there is not a one-way flow of goods within kin dyads involving differences in rank. The actual direction in which goods moved only conformed to the ideology of kin ranking in 37 percent of the transactions. Clearly, kinship rank is not significantly influencing the direction in which goods move within the communal economy.

The ideology of kin rank is, of course, associated with traditional relations of production in which access to the means of production was defined by kinship status. Under modern circumstances it contradicts the actual organization of production and the atomistic character of local organization. Its survival and Tongans' belief in its efficacy possibly lies in its ideological-political function rather than its economic role. Tonga's modern government, although quite different from the traditional political system, is largely rationalized in terms of traditional kin ranking and the associated system of stratification. "Former relations of production and other social relations do not disappear suddenly from history, but they are changed; they influence the *forms* and *places* which will assume and manifest the effects of the new conditions in material life, within the former social structure" (Godelier 1977:5).

The shift in the economic functions of kinship are critical to understanding the direction of social change in Tonga. All forms of kin relations, beyond those within the nuclear family, have been disassociated from production, and it is this disassociation that produces the atomistic character of local organization. To a large extent kinship maintains its integrative function by facilitating mutual assistance between economically interdependent households, but this is, at base, the limited kinship of the nuclear family. The social character of exchange within the communal economy disguises significant structural change in local organization.

Conclusions

That traditional forms of social relations are transformed by the intrusion of Western social models and a capitalist market economy is already

well established in social science. The goal of this paper has been to more closely examine the dynamic relations among production, social organization, and exchange in the reorganization of Tongan local organization. At the broadest level it can be concluded that local organization little resembles its historic and traditional counterpart. By individualizing production, Tonga's modern land-tenure system has been central in weakening and dissolving not only relations between traditional strata, but all relations that previously linked individuals into hierarchically organized, corporate, kin groups. Internal migration, stimulated by the search for land under the modern system, plus population growth, have also contributed as atomizing influences.

Completion of the atomizing process has been forestalled by the economic impossibility of a domestic mode of production and by the limited development of the commercial economy. The presence and vigor of a communal economy attests to the economic interdependence of households and provides data that demonstrate the importance of social relations based on coresidence and kinship defined in terms of nuclear families. Because exchange within the communal economy is facilitated by social relations rather than by commercial motives, it appears as a traditional feature of local organization. However, these are not the same social relations that traditionally organized production and exchange.

Local organization in Tonga is the result of the specific way in which Tongan society responded to its domination by Western culture and capitalist economic relations. In Tonga's case indigenous political control was maintained, but only by adopting Western social and political models. Most relevant to the argument advanced here is the adoption of the concept of a freeholding peasantry tied directly to a centralized state bureaucracy. As proposed by Lingenfelter (1977:114), "The superordinate variable in change is the domination of the colonial power which restructures the indigenous societies to extract from them a surplus, which is politically defined, and idiosyncratic to each historical time and place." Despite the enigmatic character of colonialism, an examination of the way in which colonialism reorganized indigenous labor and consequently the way in which it impinged on traditional social relations provides some comparison. In Tonga labor was removed from the control of traditional social relations by providing individual males with legal rights in the means of production through the authority of a state. Despite the continued emphasis on production for use instead of production for exchange, traditional social relations have largely been dissolved.

Finney's analysis of socioeconomic change in Tahiti (1973) suggests that local organization in Tahiti and Tonga are broadly similar in the weakening or destruction of traditional social relations and their atomistic character in the modern period. In his examination of food exchange in Tahiti, Finney found that 80 pecent of these exchanges occurred between siblings or between parents and children. In Tonga, the comparable figure is 50 percent. Social change in Tahiti has, of course, been more dramatic and thorough than in Tonga, but this general state of affairs does not account directly for the atomistic character of Tahitian local organization. Tahitians have experienced a more direct intrusion of capitalism than Tongans by the thorough commercialization of their internal economy. Finney's Tahitian peasants are oriented primarily to the production of cash crops and have attempted to individualize production themselves since the rewards of commercial production are distributed in terms of individual effort. Tahitian proletarians have lost their rights in the means of production and sell their labor directly in the labor market. Permanent social relations beyond the nuclear family become materially irrelevant where the commercial rewards for labor are continuous and meet subsistence needs. Unlike Tonga, Tahitian social organization is atomized by direct participation in a commercial economy, that is, subsistence needs are met by selling products or labor.

Samoa, in contrast to both Tonga and Tahiti, is known for its cultural conservatism and social stability. Holmes (1971:101-104) notes a trend toward individualized land use. Increasingly, untitled men are allowed to use sections of family-held lands, move inland beyond the control of *matai,* and rely on wage labor. *Matai* are also finding it increasingly difficult to control family lands. Despite these trends, 98 percent of the land in American Samoa, and 86 percent in Western Samoa, remains under the control of the *matai* (ibid.:99). As concluded by Holmes (ibid.:103), "land and social organization remain closely linked." Thus, in Samoa traditional social relations have remained central to production and continue to dominate local organization.

The strength of traditional social relations in Samoa and their weakness in Tonga lends support to the hypothesis that the social relations of production, whether stable as in Samoa, or transformed as in Tonga, are central to the process of social atomization. Samoa has experienced more commercialization and industrialization than Tonga. It has also been exposed to the influences of Christianity, Western education, and tourism, yet has experienced less change at the level of local organization. The contrast between Samoan and Tongan local organization is

starkly revealed in a comparison of extra-household local organization and its role in production. In Samoa, kin groups, *'ainga,* rather than individuals hold land, and control of production is vested first in the *matai* of the *'ainga* and finally in the village *fono* that establishes production goals for the *matai(s).* Further, the *matai* directly organizes labor within his *'ainga* (Lockwood 1971:32-33). In Samoa, the village is a significant, if not central, level of organization in the production process. Through its hierarchy of kin relations the Samoan village organizes production by allocating land and labor and monitoring consumption. The Tongan village lacks any function directly related to production and, other than its passive role in establishing association through proximity, contributes nothing to the organization of labor.

Tongan local organization is not a chaotic mixture of traditional and Western culture nor is it the result of Tongan attempts to remain traditional; rather it is a result of the specific way in which Tonga has responded to its peripheral status in broader political and economic systems.

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1. The basic unit of Tongan currency is the *pa'anga,* dollar, which was valued at T$1.00 = U.S.$1.14 during this study.

2. Matolu is a pseudonym for a village located on Tongatapu.

3. Lambda a (λa) is a measure of accuracy in guessing the value of one variable from knowledge of the value of another variable. Thus λa reflects asymmetrical associations. Lambda (λ) reflects symmetrical associations, that is, the result of guessing both ways.

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