

MOTIVES AND METHODS:  
MISSIONARIES IN TONGA IN THE EARLY  
19TH CENTURY<sup>(1)</sup>

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A variety of writers, including Scarr,<sup>(2)</sup> Rutherford,<sup>(3)</sup> Kennedy,<sup>(4)</sup> and Barney<sup>(5)</sup> have presented more than adequate views of selected Tongan political matters after the mid-19th century and into the early part of the 20th century. Decktor Korn's recent exemplary works<sup>(6)</sup> clearly indicate that quite a bit of "re-thinking" is still needed in the realm of interpreting changing and aboriginal Tongan culture. It is the intention of this brief article to place early 19th century Tongan affairs into additional ethnographic perspective by means of ethnohistorical techniques.<sup>(7)</sup>

1. Earlier versions of this paper were prepared for a variety of Symposia sponsored by the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO): the 71st Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, November 29-December 2, 1972; the Second Annual Meeting of the ASAO, March 21-25, 1973; and the Fourth Annual Meeting of the ASAO, March 26-30, 1975. Numerous individuals have commented on my Tongan work, none of whom, of course, is responsible for what is presented. Research was conducted in the Polynesian Kingdom of Tonga from July to October 1970 and again from August to October 1971. In the intervening months archival research was conducted in the major libraries of Fiji, New Zealand, and Australia. Most of the research was done in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, Australia. Permission to work with and cite from the various sources held by the numerous institutions is gratefully acknowledged (see Urbanowicz 1972: vi-viii).
2. Scarr 1968.
3. Rutherford 1971.
4. Kennedy 1972.
5. Barney 1974.
6. Decktor Korn 1974, 1975. Increasing interest is also evident by a forthcoming volume edited by Rutherford, advertised as *The Friendly Islands: A History of Tonga*.
7. The term "ethnohistory" is not synonymous with "culture history" as the distinguished Pacific historian H. E. Maude has written (1971:21). The "-history" in the term refers not to the writing of history, but to the application of historical methods to a given body of data, in order to gather verifiable ethnographic facts of the past. See, for example, Biggs (1960), Maranda (1964), Oppenheim (1973), Oliver (1974), or Urbanowicz (1973 and 1975). Unquestionably, historical processes are discussed in the various presentations, but the emphasis in the term "ethnohistory" is on the elucidation of reputable ethnographic evidence of the past. Oliver's 20-year labour of love, for there is no other way to phrase it adequately, is a clear example of what can be accomplished in the realm of Pacific ethnohistory, given a sufficient amount of time and resources; Maranda's work is a classic indication that some of Sahlins' specifics and generalisations (1958) are unwarranted; and Biggs and Oppenheim have each contributed to a further clarification of Maori life by means of ethnohistorical techniques.

## ABORIGINAL TONGA

Research on Polynesian ethnography, and more specifically, "things Tongan" since 1969, leads me to conclude that traditional Tongan society was based on kinship, and politics in Tonga was literally "kinship writ large". As Tongan society increased in size the number of leaders in society increased. Aboriginal Tongan society was divided into various *ha'a* 'corporate land-holding and property-sharing descent groups,' and every single Tongan was able to trace his or her *ha'a* affiliation for various obligatory reasons in the life cycle (such as marriages, funerals, and wars).

When a Tongan chief dispatched an individual to look after a specific area of land, the individual sent was a kinsman. Consider the following from a Wesleyan missionary who resided in Tonga for over 25 years, from 1826 to 1850 and again from 1855 to 1859:

It may be noticed that all the principal offices of the government, were filled by members of the Hau Family as *Governors of Islands* at a distance as well as those near at hand, *Chiefs of Districts*, and heads of Towns and villages, they were the relations and the professed friends of the King, whom they appeared to wish to live to serve, and to know.<sup>(8)</sup>

Another Wesleyan missionary, Peter Turner, provides corroborating evidence in a journal entry: "The King has sent his eldest son to be the head ruler here [at Vava'u] and may be called a king under him."<sup>(9)</sup>

The Tongan system of apportioning out relatives, with appropriate titles, to rule over certain portions of land unified the "mud and blood" of the *ha'a*.<sup>(10)</sup>

The first leader of all of the Tongans was the Tu'i Tonga 'sovereign of Tonga'. The Tu'i Tonga, as lineal descendant of the gods, was the embodiment of the sacred and secular in aboriginal Tongan life and the leader of all Tongans. In approximately the 15th century, a division was made between the sacred and secular operations of organising society, and a Tu'i Tonga delegated his secular responsibilities to a brother and the title of Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua was created. A manuscript account related how the Tu'i Tonga Kau'ulufonua: "... appointed Maugamotu Tui Haatakalaua, and he was able to reside at Fonuamotu as he was to be protector of the Tuitongas (as the Tuitongas were apt to be assassinated), and the Tuitonga was safe because his younger brother kept guard over him."<sup>(11)</sup>

In approximately the 17th century a Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua delegated some of his secular authority and responsibility to a son, and the title of Tu'i Kanokupolu was created. The individual known as Ngata became the first Tu'i Kanokupolu, and he received "royal estates at the West end of Tonga [tapu] called Hihifo."<sup>(12)</sup> When Anderson, who was with Cook in 1777, visited Tongatapu he wrote of the fact that Tongatapu Island was "divided into many districts" and one of these was "Hee'heefo".<sup>(13)</sup> When

8. Thomas n.d. MS:5.

9. Turner, P. n.d.: entry for Aug. 24, 1851.

10. Silverman 1971:72.

11. Collocott n.d. vol. II:21.

12. Thomas n.d. MS:1.

13. Beaglehole 1967:951.

the first of the Wesleyan missionaries arrived in 1822, this district was still intact, and Lawry recommended to London that: "The next District Proper for a Mission Station is that of Heefo."<sup>(14)</sup>

When the first Tu'i Tonga divided his lands among his kinsmen, his kinsmen established their own *ha'a* and received their own titles indicative of their leadership.<sup>(15)</sup> It was the title of an individual that was passed on to another leader when the first titled individual was no longer capable of performing his or her duties. The title could pass to a son of the previous holder, or it could be passed to a brother. The title could go to the son of a sister or an adopted son. In aboriginal Tongan society, succession to title (and chieftainship) depended on a variety of factors, especially the decision of the corporate group. Any individual who had a position of authority and power in aboriginal Tongan society and held a particular title as evidence of rank *did not have* that particular title because of any inherent rights to the title. The individual held the title and any authority vested in the title only because he or she had the consensus of the governed group. The title-holder operated within a system that had checks and balances. Such balances, along with consensus and flexibility, ensured that the governed were willing to be influenced and led by the governing individuals.

The three titles of Tu'i Tonga, Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua, and Tu'i Kanokupolu (along with the titled individual known as the Tamahā) thus represented the core of aboriginal Tongan society. All other titled and non-titled individuals were ranked against these major title-holders, and it is from these first three titles that all of the 'corporate land-holding and property-sharing descent groups' developed.

With the arrival of Europeans in the 17th century, aboriginal Tongan society began to change. When the various missionaries arrived in the archipelago they were perceptive enough to realise the ranking system involved. Lawry reported in 1823: "... the following is the order in which the present Chiefs of the Friendly Islands rank, viz:

1. Tooitonga [Tu'i Tonga]
2. Tooihatacalowa [Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua]
3. Tooiacanabooloo [Tu'i Kanokupolu]."<sup>(16)</sup>

The rank and status of the fourth individual mentioned earlier, the Tamahā, are revealed in the account of another Wesleyan missionary: "Formerly there were three ranks of nobles in Tonga to which the term *Eiki* or Lord

14. Lawry n.d.: entry for Apr. 28, 1823.

15. Although accurate and verifiable information pertaining to the first Tu'i Tonga, the legendary 'Aho'eitu (c. A.D. 950.), is lacking, the procedures cited above (see note 11) in reference to the Tu'i Tonga Kau'ulufonua, leads one to believe that similar procedures took place for the first (and subsequent) Tu'i Tonga. Although note 11 cites Collocott, the statement was (ostensibly) made by the last Tamahā Amelia in 1844. The Tamahā, an extremely high-ranking individual, was "the highest earthly dignitary" in Tongan society (Gifford 1929:19). For additional specifics about changes in the status and ranking systems, see Urbanowicz (1975); for specifics about adoption and rank see Urbanowicz (1973:114).

16. Lawry n.d.: entry for Sept. 13, 1823.

of these the Tuitonga stood first, then the Tamaha, and next the Hau' or civil ruler."<sup>(17)</sup>

The difference in the rankings given by Lawry and Thomas is because there were Tamahā before there were the civil rulers known as the Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua and Tu'i Kanokupolu.

The rank and status associated with the individual known as the Tamahā were indeed very high, contrary to what Kaeppler has to say based on 20th century projections as to how aboriginal Tonga functioned.<sup>(18)</sup> The French navigator Dumont d'Urville was astute in his observations of Tongan life, and observing the Tamahā in 1827 he wrote: "... all the people of Tonga, without exception, even the toui-tonga and the toui-Kana-Kabolo themselves, had to accord the homage of *moe-moe*, which she was not obliged to honour anyone in this way."<sup>(19)</sup>

The *moemoe'i* was the indication of respect that an inferior had to show to a superior. The Wesleyan missionary Webb was quite correct when he wrote that "the Tamahā is the greatest personage in the whole group of islands"<sup>(20)</sup> Where the Tu'i Tonga was the representative of the gods, the Tamahā was virtually viewed as a god on earth.

Aboriginal Tongans developed a system of rank (based on kinship ties) and status (based on achievements) which made Tongan society an integrated whole. Tonga was a rank-conscious society, with rank being "relative" to those individuals gathered for a specific occasion. The model of Tongan society was that of a stratified one and, as such, redistribution systems developed (as in other parts of Polynesia) with the ranking individuals being the focal points of the system. In Tonga, this was the Tu'i Tonga 'sovereign of Tonga'.

With the introduction of various Western material goods into the stratified society, some individual Tongan chiefs soon sought to consolidate and improve their positions of "authority" in the islands. With the introduction of Western technological devices, particularly metal tools, which are obviously a labour-saving device, Tongans inevitably had more free time on their hands as European contact increased. Perhaps it was such free time, along with the eventual concentration of European weapons in the hands of a few individuals, which eventually contributed to the increased amounts of Tongan warfare in the 19th century. The role played by material goods in the process of 19th century colonisation was an extremely important one, and Shineberg's comments in reference to Melanesian society are perfectly applicable for Tongan society.

The entry of European goods was the thin edge of the wedge into their society. It was not long before the new things became necessities instead of luxuries, and the people [became] dependent upon a supply of western axes, muskets, and tobacco. It is well to remain aware, however, that the impetus for change came as much from within traditional society as without it.<sup>(21)</sup>

In approximately 1800, Goldman's most useful "terminal date" for aboriginal Polynesian society in general, a numerical estimate of the Tongan population would probably fall within the range of 15 to 20 thousand people.<sup>(22)</sup> In attempting to interpret aboriginal and changing Tongan society from 1800 on, the figure of approximately 15,000 Tongans is useful to keep in mind. Quite frankly, the failure to keep the size of the population in mind is one of the major reasons that there have been so many alternatives in interpreting aboriginal Polynesian society in general: Sahlins stressing the environment and Goldman emphasising status rivalry as the interpretive paradigm.<sup>(23)</sup>

There are obviously more Tongans in the 20th century than there were before European contact in Tonga, and various researchers have tended erroneously to project from the interaction patterns of 20th century Tongans to what they (the researchers) have believed to have been the interaction patterns of aboriginal Tongans.<sup>(24)</sup>

A considerable amount of convoluted thinking about Tonga has resulted from the fact that researchers have not consistently taken into account that aboriginal Tonga is not traditional Tonga, and the fact that many 20th century Tongans may have formed their views of what aboriginal Tonga was by reading European accounts of Tonga. Consider, for example, the following statement from Gifford's 1929 work:

Of the published works Mariner's *Tonga Islands* [first published in English in 1817] is by far the most extensive and possesses the merit of great accuracy and understanding on the part of its author. Doubtless Mariner's work is to be regarded as the standard by which modern work is to be checked. A comparison of Mariner's records with mine near the completion of my [1920-1921] sojourn in Tonga revealed a surprising similarity in the two sets of data recorded more than a century apart. Judged by this standard the data recorded in this paper have a relatively high degree of accuracy in spite of 75 years of Christianity in Tonga.<sup>(25)</sup>

This is all well and good, but the above should be read in conjunction with a statement that Gifford made in an article for this *Journal* in 1924, and which was *not* repeated in the 1929 monograph: "Moreover, many a Tongan's clear conception of the affairs of his nation in the first decade and a half of the 19th century is due to his reading Mariner's 'Tongan Islands' translated into Tongan."<sup>(26)</sup>

Another, and perhaps the most important, factor which must be kept in mind when attempting to interpret aboriginal (or early-contacted) Tongan society is the Tongan Constitution of 1875 promulgated by King George Tupou I (with the assistance of European advisers). With the introduction of this Constitution much of the inherent consensus and flexibility of aboriginal Tongan society was solidified into a pseudo-

17. Thomas n.d. MS:1.

18. Kaeppler 1971:183.

19. Dumont-D'Urville n.d.:27.

20. Webb 1843: entry for Mar. 1, 1843.

21. Shineberg 1966:146.

22. Goldman 1970: xxviii.

23. Sahlins 1958; Goldman 1970.

24. For examples, see Kaeppler 1971, Gifford 1929, Sahlins 1958, and Goldman 1970.

25. Gifford 1929:3.

26. Gifford 1924:289.

Western framework. Scarr has pointed out that Tongans were advised in the 19th century that, if Tonga wanted to avoid being taken over by foreign powers, Tonga would have to take on the accoutrements of Western civilisation. This "Westernisation" was epitomised by the written Constitution and codified laws.<sup>(27)</sup>

With the change to a Constitutional Monarchy in 1875 a basic and important difference was rigidly introduced into the total fabric of Tongan life. Much of the aboriginal system of consensus and flexibility was done away with at that time. The Constitutional Monarchy may not have been created solely with the aim to restructure the patterns of aboriginal Tongan social organisation, but it certainly represented the 19th century culmination of the restructuring process which began with the first Christian colonisation of the islands in 1797.<sup>(28)</sup>

#### THE BEGINNING OF EUROPEAN CONTACT

Part of the Tongan archipelago had been contacted by the Dutch navigators Schouten and Le Maire in 1616, and various contacts with other Europeans eventually followed: Tasman (1643), Wallis (1767), Cook (1773, 1774, 1777), Maurelle (1781), La Perouse (1787), Bligh (1789, 1792), Edwards (1791), D'Entrecasteaux and Labillardiere (1793), and Malaspina (1793). These contacts, which lasted from a few days to a few weeks, made Tongans quite aware of Europeans (and European technological devices) and also placed Tonga on Europe's map of the world. The publications of the men associated with the expeditions spurred Europeans to send men and materials to proselytise the peoples of the Pacific. In 1797 Tonga was chosen, along with Tahiti, to receive European missionaries. As Oliver has accurately pointed out, one cannot study Pacific events without placing the events into the context of other activities on the planet.<sup>(29)</sup> In the late 18th century the great "Evangelical Revival" swept the European continent, and the peoples of the Pacific began to change because of it!

The first missionaries to land on Tongatapu Island were of the Missionary Society of London (formed in 1795 and later termed the London Missionary Society or LMS). The LMS vessel *Duff* reached Tonga on April 10, 1797, after first leaving missionaries at Tahiti.<sup>(30)</sup>

Some of the missionaries remained on Tonga until 1800, but the attempt at religious conversion ended in a debacle. One missionary left the island shortly after he arrived while one (George Vason) married a Tongan woman and accepted the "Tongan way of life". Three missionaries were killed during a battle on Tongatapu in June 1799, and the remaining five huddled together for safety until they were removed in 1800.

The various reasons for the failure of this 1797-1800 LMS attempt in Tonga are many, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate any one single factor. Certainly one cannot place the total blame of the LMS

failure on the Tongans, as some seem to suggest. Wood wrote of the Tongans of this period and of their "lawlessness and fiendish cruelty", and Lātūkefu wrote of the LMS venture that: "This well-meaning effort was doomed to fail right from the beginning, for the missionaries were ill-equipped for this tremendous task, and the Tongans themselves were not ready for the new religion".<sup>(31)</sup>

To state that the missionaries were ill-equipped is only partially correct; to state that the Tongans "were not ready" tells us very little. Perhaps a better interpretation would also point out that the new religion bringers were not ready for the Tongans! The subsequent successes of the Wesleyans would seem to prove this point.

#### THE WESLEYAN MISSION

The problem that faced the Wesleyans was simple: how to convert the Tongans. The motive of the Wesleyan missionaries was conversion, but, viewed against a larger background, the Wesleyans also wished to succeed where the LMS had failed. The solution to the problem of Christian colonialism in Tonga included (1) better-trained missionaries and (2) increased supplies of western technological devices.

The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society began their colonial venture in Tonga in 1822 with the mission group led by Walter Lawry. Lawry and his wife and servants were in Tonga from August of 1822 until October of 1823, when he was ordered by his London Committee to be "removed from Tonga to Van Dieman's Land".<sup>(32)</sup> Although his stay was short, and his attempt at converting Tongans a failure, Lawry was an extremely important individual in setting the pattern for subsequent 19th century Wesleyan work in the islands. Lawry understood the necessity for a constant supply line back to Sydney for material goods for the mission. The Wesleyans of the 19th century realised that material goods diffused much more rapidly than philosophical or ideological systems. In 1823 Lawry acknowledged the importance of material goods for the success of the missionaries:

... inasmuch as the only importance attached to the character of the Missionaries is derived from their being annually visited by their relations (as the natives term it) and replenished with such property as most effectively secures the natives in our favour. And we are all most decidedly of the opinion that had this measure been adopted by the directors of the [LMS] Mission begun here 25 years ago, it would have prevented its ultimate failure.<sup>(33)</sup>

The Tongans of the 19th century, to be sure, had their own motives for interacting with the Wesleyans. As Lātūkefu has pointed out concerning Taufa'ahau, later known as King George Tupou I: "It appears, however, that Taufa'ahau's initial acceptance of [Wesleyan] Christianity was only part of his general desire to adopt the ways of the white man, his wealth,

27. Scarr 1968:86.

28. "Restructuring: is used after Brookfield (1972:1) who writes of "Colonialism" as the "thoroughgoing, comprehensive and deliberate penetration" of an area by individuals "who aim to restructure the patterns of organization".

29. Oliver 1962:98.

30. Wilson 1799:96; Benson 1960:113.

31. Wood 1932:29; Lātūkefu 1974:25.

32. Lawry n.d.: entry for July 25, 1823.

33. Lawry n.d.: Entry for Aug. 10, 1823.

superior knowledge and weapons of war, and also [quite incidentally it would appear] his religion, to achieve his ambitions".<sup>(34)</sup>

This is quite similar to the 19th century Wesleyan missionary John Thomas' first assessment of Tautafa'ahau when he met that Tongan in 1828 at the time that Tautafa'ahau was Tu'i Ha'apai "Sovereign of Ha'apai" and was requesting a missionary to live in those islands:

Indeed the present offer by [Tautafa'ahau] the head man of the [Ha'apai] islands would by some persons be considered a good thing. I think, however, but little about it, because it is natural for man in their state to make use of various means in order to obtain property and although I hope good will follow yet the heathen will tell many lies to obtain their object and when they have got the property under their arms, they will then do as they please with us, at least this is what we have experienced at Hihifo [on Tongatapu]. All his fair promises are little worth if he is under the superstitions of their own priests and hotuas ['otua 'gods'].<sup>(35)</sup>

The theme of "property" or the need for material goods runs throughout the letters and diaries of the early 19th century Wesleyan missionaries. The Wesleyan missionary Nathaniel Turner (in the archipelago from November 1827 to April 1831) wrote to his Wesleyan superiors, thanking them for the fresh supplies, including:

... a good supply of hardware, calico, &c&c, but [they] have unfortunately omitted one important article, viz. *beads*. . . . They are to us here what fish-hooks are in New Zealand. Their colours should be a dark and light blue, purple and green — let them be of sizes. There is a light blue bead nearly the size of a marble that is very valuable here. Some of these should be sent if possible.<sup>(36)</sup>

Indeed, so dependent were the Wesleyans in Tonga on material goods (and money to purchase the material goods) as a means to their Christianisation end that when their budget request had been cut, part of the mission expansion also had to cease. In the late 1820s Tautafa'ahau wanted John Thomas in the Ha'apai group. Although Lātūkefu states that the Wesleyans needed "approval from mission headquarters in London" before sending Thomas to Ha'apai,<sup>(37)</sup> in 1829 Turner wrote that he received a letter from New Zealand authorising "no more than £300 for the prosecution of this mission" and "In consequence of the information received we shall be obliged to relinquish the idea of Mr. Thomas going to commence a new station at the Haabais, for which he was prepared and only waiting a fair wind".<sup>(38)</sup> Thomas eventually went to the Ha'apai Islands and "converted" Tautafa'ahau, one of the most important achievements (or perhaps even *the* most important achievement) that the missionaries accomplished in the 19th century. Without the support of Tautafa'ahau it may seriously be debated whether the Wesleyans would have done as much as they did.

34. Lātūkefu 1970:61.

35. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for Mar. 28, 1828.

36. Turner, N. 1931; emphasis original.

37. Lātūkefu 1970:62.

38. Turner, N. 1929.

Although Walter Lawry was in the Tongan Islands for a little more than a year, his reports back to London influenced what was to follow. Specifically, Lawry stressed the supposed "ripeness" for a mission in Tonga and the need for material goods for the successful completion of the mission's work. Lawry's successor, John Thomas, arrived with his wife and another missionary family in June 1826. Thomas, more than any other 19th century European, provided us with some excellent accounts of Tonga.

It has been asserted above that in aboriginal Tongan society consensus and flexibility were key concepts of the political system. An individual who wanted to lead the people had to have support, and even the Tu'i Tonga 'Sovereign of Tonga' could not be appointed to office (or remain in office) without the support of the people. Thomas recorded that "there is a union amongst the Tonga people, especially the chiefs, so that they consult each other before they determine anything".<sup>(39)</sup> With the systematic introduction of Western material goods and eventually Wesleyan ideology in the 19th century, a not-so-subtle restructuring of aboriginal religious beliefs and the body politic began. Under Wesleyan encouragement, individual Tongan chiefs soon rose to power, and the most important was Tautafa'ahau, later known as King George Tupou I.

In the early years of the mission, things did not go smoothly for the Wesleyans. The Tongans often told Thomas and Hutchinson what they had earlier said to Lawry: "Your religion is very good for you, and ours is very good for us."<sup>(40)</sup> Thomas wrote that the Tongan chief Ata feared that if the Tongans "allowed the [Wesleyan] praying to go on the English will come by and by and take their land".<sup>(41)</sup> The important role of the individual Tongan chief must be stressed. If a chief was converted, his people also converted with him. Thomas wrote: "It is said by the head Chief, or King, of Tonga, Tubou, that if Ata turn, all Tonga will turn to Christianity; and on this one point this important matter depends."<sup>(42)</sup>

The Wesleyans made numerous attempts to convert the last Tu'i Tonga Laufilitonga but they failed, and he became a Catholic convert, a faith he professed until his death in 1865. The Tamahā, on the other hand, did convert to Wesleyanism and the Wesleyans scored quite a coup when this happened. Thomas wrote that "Tamma ha had turned to God — also her brother Fehokohabai, and all the people of Tungua [in the Ha'apai group] have turned".<sup>(43)</sup>

The Wesleyan missionaries gradually gained a foothold in the islands, first on Tongatapu and then elsewhere. With the aid of Tautafa'ahau (and the Tamahā) the Wesleyan missionaries eventually expanded their stations into the Ha'apai and Vava'u group of islands. The process, however, was slow, and the Wesleyan missionary Watkin (in the islands from 1831 to 1837) wrote on the mission in 1835: "... in Tonga [it] is almost confined to Nukualofa, [and] a spirit of opposition to Christ appears to have grown

39. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for Feb. 11, 1828.

40. Lawry n.d.: entry for Dec. 21, 1822.

41. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for Mar. 16, 1828.

42. Thomas 1828.

43. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for Dec. 12, 1832.

of some of the chiefs who were previously indifferent, the diffusion of the truth present themselves on every hand. They may be and will eventually be surmounted."<sup>(44)</sup>

There existed among the Tongans themselves, as Watkin's following passage makes clear:

The heathen [or non-Wesleyan Tongans] notwithstanding their unanimity in opposing Xz [Christianity] are far from being at one in other respects [and] they are living on bad terms with each other and live as the hostilities were on the point of commencing. All Tonga with the exception of this place are building strong holds, sharpening their spears, and fabricating clubs with which to take away each others lives.<sup>(45)</sup>

Wars eventually occurred and Taufa'ahau consolidated his position. Installed as Tu'i Kanokupolu in 1845, he finally unified the various island groups of Tonga under his personal leadership after final battles in 1852.

The Wesleyans managed to convert an earlier Tu'i Kanokupolu, Jiosaia Tupou, in 1830, but it was Taufa'ahau's eventual acceptance of Wesleyanism that really made the difference for the missionaries. With Taufa'ahau's rise to power, there came a concomitant decline in the power of the Tu'i Tonga and related titles. After the last Tu'i Tonga died in 1865, Taufa'ahau absorbed his title. In a speech to the Tongan parliament in 1875, he stated that at a meeting in Vava'u he had been conferred with the titles of "Tu'itonga and Tu'iha'atakalaua together with the titles of Tu'ikanokupolu."<sup>(46)</sup> Consensus and flexibility were done away with in 1875, and Tongan society was restructured.

Taufa'ahau was made Tu'i Kanokupolu at a meeting of the assembled chiefs of Tonga in 1845. Thomas wrote of the occasion:

There is now talk about George being made Tuikanokubolu. I have been waited upon by some who have to do with it. I do not think there is any other person so suitable — also I think it is *good* that George should have the office. Some persons it is said have wished for someone else, but no notion will be taken of them or what they talk about among themselves. My pray[er] to God is, that he would undertake for us, and give to Tonga a righteous governor.<sup>(47)</sup>

Jiosaia Tupou, the previous Tu'i Kanokupolu, had been pro-missionary but decidedly not as powerful as Taufa'ahau. Jiosaia Tupou had been made Tu'i Kanokupolu in 1827.<sup>(48)</sup> Although Jiosaia Tupou gave up the Wesleyan religion in 1827, he eventually re-converted and was baptised by the Wesleyan missionary Nathaniel Turner in 1830.<sup>(49)</sup> This baptism was not viewed favourably by some of the non-Wesleyan Tongans, and the missionary Cross wrote in 1830: "A report is in circulation that the chiefs who are opposed to Christianity are determined to depose our chief [Jiosaia] Tubou and to choose one from among themselves in his place.

It is probable that should this take place a war would be the immediate consequence."<sup>(50)</sup>

Jiosaia Tupou was not deposed, and he retained his delicate position as Tu'i Kanokupolu until his death on November 18, 1845. In his position as Tu'i Kanokupolu, Jiosaia Tupou did not exert pressure on the Tongan people to convert to Wesleyanism. Thomas wrote that certain chiefs were saying that "Tubou is taefoa [*ta'e 'ofa*], that is without care to them. He does not speak to them about the new religion."<sup>(51)</sup> On the other hand, when Tupou did get seriously involved in the work of the mission, Thomas was not at all pleased with that, as the following relates: "The chief is not a firm friend to the cause. He wishes to be the head of all things, not only the inhabitants of Tonga, but to the Church of Christ here."<sup>(52)</sup>

The Wesleyan missionary Tucker termed Jiosaia Tupou's government "miserably inefficient."<sup>(53)</sup> Such inefficiency, however, allowed the Wesleyans to become firmly entrenched in the islands.

Part of the Wesleyan methods also involved using the beachcombers who were in the archipelago as translators and intermediaries. When Thomas arrived, he reported:

I learn from a young man here, an Englishman, that Tonga at this time is principally in the possession of petty chiefs. Some few years ago the great men departed this life and some were killed — even the King's family now have no power — but these chiefs fought and defended Tonga and they now possess the part they have rescued from their enemies, so at this time they seem much confused, having no head man.<sup>(54)</sup>

Concerning the overall lack of Tongan leadership at this time, N. Turner wrote: "Mr. Lawry was certainly in an error when he published to the world in an [sic] magazine that the offices of Tuikanakabola, and Tuitonga, where [sic] then filled. See Mage Sep. 1825 for no person is yet created to the latter office."<sup>(55)</sup>

Because of the problems between Taufa'ahau and Laufiletonga (the Tu'i Tonga to be), the Wesleyans were able to gain a stronger foothold in the archipelago.

A major series of battles took place in the Ha'apai group of islands in 1826 between the forces of Laufiletonga and Taufa'ahau. Although Lätükefu has written that "it took place during a period when there were no Europeans such as William Mariner or Vason to give eye-witness accounts" and therefore, according to Lätükefu, "oral traditions were the only source of information on the events of 1825 and 1826,"<sup>(56)</sup> this is only partially correct. Although there were no "eyewitnesses" to the battles, Thomas and Hutchinson *did* record such information in their manuscript

44. Watkins n.d.: entry for Apr. 11, 1835.

45. Watkins n.d.: entry for Apr. 11, 1835.

46. Hunter 1963:4.

47. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for Dec. 4, 1845; emphasis original.

48. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for Dec. 1, 1827.

49. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for Jan. 10, 1830.

50. Cross 1830.

51. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for July 29, 1832.

52. Thomas 1834.

53. Tucker 1838.

54. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for Jan. 30, 1827.

55. Turner, N. 1827.

56. Lätükefu 1968:140.

ants. As Thomas wrote in September of 1826:

Early this morning a canoe arrived here from the Hapies [or Ha'apai] (to the Inache [*inasi*]) which brought intelligence that they were at war at the Hapie Islands. The King [Taufa'ahau] of the Hapies and the Tui of Tonga (as he is called) have fallen out. However we expect it to be of short continuance to Tooi or King of Hapie is likely to be the worst of it, as the other islands are all against him.<sup>(57)</sup>

By the end of October the battle still raged in the Ha'apai Islands, and Hutchinson wrote back to England: "The war at the Hapies continues to rage. If the King of Tonga [Laufilitonga] should be overcome, we shall soon be in serious circumstances; and something of this is expected, as the people have received orders to prepare for war".<sup>(58)</sup>

Taufa'ahau was eventually victorious, and his star in the Tongan firmament began to rise.

#### THE WESLEYANS AND ACCELERATED CHANGES

Although it may not have been deliberate missionary policy, the Wesleyan approach was literally that of "divide-and-conquer" as they turned Tongan against Tongan. The three religious wars in 1837, 1840, and 1852 were ferocious. Of the 1840 war, Thomas wrote that he told the Tu'i Kanokupolu Jiosaia Tupou that "the heathens [or non-Wesleyan Tongans] had acted more kind a great deal than the Christians and that they were less disposed for war".<sup>(59)</sup> The Wesleyan missionary P. Turner, commenting on one battle, stated: "The heathens seem determined to die in their foolishness. I am told that they have made an oath to do so, before they will yield to the Xtns."<sup>(60)</sup>

Tongan society was altered from within and from without: from within by Tongans who were desirous of change, and from without by Europeans who were advising and encouraging the Tongans to change. This internal and external restructuring process, however, must be viewed as a complementary one. Without the presence of the Wesleyan missionaries Tongan society would never have developed as it did.

The Wesleyans were aided in their restructuring process by the occasional appearance of vessels of the British Navy in Tongan waters. On visits from passing British vessels Thomas wrote: "From what I have heard by the natives in reference to the visit of His Majesty's Ship of War at Vavou, the effect will be very beneficial and lasting. The [Tongan] King and his people seem to think that religion is of more importance now than they were willing to believe."<sup>(61)</sup>

The Wesleyans also tried to get various ships to "remove" some of the beachcombers in the archipelago. The British vessel H.M.S. *Seringapatam* arrived at the islands in 1830, and the captain removed some Frenchmen who were "troublemakers".<sup>(62)</sup>

57. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for Sept. 25, 1826.

58. Hutchinson 1826.

59. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for Aug. 4, 1840.

60. Turner, P. n.d.: entry for July 19, 1840.

61. Thomas 1830.

62. Thomas n.d. *Journals*: entry for June 10, 1830.

The British Wesleyans received tremendous moral support from the visits of the British men-of-war but when the French Roman Catholic priests attempted a similar method, the Wesleyans were not at all sympathetic. The Catholic mission in Tonga began in 1842 and since the Tu'i Kanokupolu was a Wesleyan convert, the Catholics concentrated on the Tu'i Tonga Laufilitonga. The Wesleyan P. Turner wrote that the Catholic priests "have induced some poor heathens [or non-Wesleyan Tongans] to come over to them by making them false promises of help from France." Turner continued: "And the Tuitonga who has just become a Papist is to be the King of Tonga, and Geo. Taufaaahau and some others are to be put on one side as of no importance."

Turner also wrote that "these things I told to the priests and showed them how unbecoming it was for them to meddle so much with the chiefs and the government of the Islands" and "That all true ministers of Xt preached the gospel and lived holily before God and men. But that they were trying to intimidate the people by telling them of a [French] man-of-war wch. wd. come and give them help."<sup>(63)</sup>

This is the same Wesleyan missionary who wrote of a visit by Taufaa'ahau to the Wesleyan compound in 1842, when that Tongan "came to ask our opinion about punishing those who violate the laws of the land". At the time Turner also wrote that the Wesleyan missionaries "desired not to have much to do with the affairs of the land in a political sense" but Wesleyan activities and statements belied that "desire".<sup>(64)</sup> At a later date the same person wrote:

And the [Tongan] King and chiefs are becoming jealous of our interfering with what they think their prerogatives. We have been recommending to them a better code of laws, but O no things must remain as they are and we are thought evil of for wishing to elevate them in the scale of civilization, and we have but little hopes of seeing them much better.<sup>(65)</sup>

Briefly stated, the British Wesleyan missionaries did interfere in the politics of the Tongan islands. Not only did the missionaries restructure traditional religious beliefs, but they also caused major changes in the political system. With the aid of various Wesleyans, three law codes were promulgated in 1839, 1850, and 1862. These codes would never have come into existence had not the Wesleyans been in the islands. The three codes eventually culminated in the celebrated Tongan Constitution of 1875. Captains of various British vessels told the Wesleyans not to interfere with Tongan politics. One wrote that he advised the missionaries "against proposing laws to the natives",<sup>(66)</sup> but the advice was not taken. Lātūkefu has written off the influence of the Wesleyans on Tongan politics.

In spite of the Society's official policy of 'no politics' its missionaries in Tonga *participated significantly* in the political development of that country during the period covered by this study [1826-1875] . . . the

63. Turner, P. n.d.: entry for Nov. 5, 1848.

64. Turner, P. n.d.: entry for Feb. 28, 1842.

65. Turner, P. n.d.: entry for Nov. 28, 1849.

66. Waldegrave 1833: 187.

missionaries' influence was crucial in deciding the direction which political changes took subsequent to their arrival. This was a natural consequence of the task which they had undertaken and of the circumstances in which they found themselves. . . . As politics was so closely interwoven into the total fabric of Tongan society, it was unavoidable that they would be affected by the new teaching. When the religious basis of the old order was undermined, much of the framework of the traditional society collapsed with it. Christianity became the foundation in which the new structure had to be built. It was inevitable that the missionaries should become the principal designers of the new social order, particularly in its early stages. *They were mainly responsible for the destruction of the old.*<sup>(67)</sup>

This statement is supported by an earlier unpublished work by Hammer. The period of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary activity in Tonga, extending from 1822 to 1855, was essentially a pioneering one. During this time the missionaries broke down much of the native culture and customs, and partly replaced them by Christianity and the way of life peculiar to Western civilization. *The changes were accomplished mainly through the medium of political power . . . it would appear that the missionaries did not fully understand the native culture in all its ramifications, and that the task of replacing that ancient way of life by Christianity in its deeper sense had not been accomplished by 1855.*<sup>(68)</sup>

Although the Wesleyans may not have fully "understood the native culture", they did know enough to entrench themselves firmly in the island and they did this by astute support of Taufa'ahau.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Christian colonialism was ultimately introduced to Tonga through the Wesleyans (and their material goods) via weapons:

This beatific state of religion had not resulted exclusively from the sweet reasonableness of the Tongan heathen to the moving sermons of the emotional Wesleyans. The instrument that had saved these people for Jehovah was George Tubou I [Taufa'ahau], [eventual] King of all the Tongans, a sovereign who carried the sword amongst unbelievers and smote members of the Devil's party as gladly as he preached to his subjects of the Sabbath. Before this servant of the Lord was gathered to his fathers at the age of ninety-six in 1893, he had Christianized, one way or another, all the islands in his domain, and if Tonga had become a byword for religious intolerance, it was only the logical consequence of the teachings of the Wesleyan preachers who shaped the policies of the preacher-king in the forties and fifties.<sup>(69)</sup>

Indeed, the Wesleyans did shape the policies of Taufa'ahau in the 1840s and 1850s. Tippet attempts to stress the point, in writing about "civilization" in Tonga, that: "Immediately after its conversion to Christianity

Tonga introduced its own form of civilization. The missionaries were instruments and agents bringing it about, but they did not initiate it." He further adds: "The one point I make firmly is that if the missionaries aided this, they did not initiate it. It was all the desire of the Tongan people, and of the king [Taufa'ahau] in particular."<sup>(70)</sup> Unfortunately, the 19th century evidence certainly does not support this opinion of the non-initiatory role of the Wesleyan missionaries. The missionaries were both the initiators and the major instruments of colonialism in Tonga.

It is Rutherford's contention that Tonga's "most rapid westernization began in 1862",<sup>(71)</sup> but the evidence presented indicates that Westernisation began before 1862. In some respects, Westernisation began when Schouten and Le Maire first stopped in the archipelago in 1616. The true beginning, however, of Westernisation was in 1822/1826 when Wesleyan missionaries began their flow (and distribution) of material goods in the archipelago. In 1826 Tonga finally entered into sustained contact with the Western world.

Although Scarr has written of rigidity in Tongan social structure, springing "in part, from primogeniture,"<sup>(72)</sup> aboriginal Tongan society displayed a great deal of flexibility. Consensus and flexibility stemmed not from primogeniture but from the fact that a chief needed the support of the people he was to lead. Strict rules of primogeniture were only introduced with the Tongan Constitution of 1875, a Constitution strongly influenced by Western European concepts of leadership and inheritance principles. In aboriginal Tongan society rank was relative to the particular occasion, and a chief was a chief because of the consensus of the people. After the Constitution, a chief was a chief because of law. Because of these changes in the Tongan system, King George Tupou II (who came to the throne in 1893) eventually had related problems with a variety of Tongan chiefs, with whom, as Barney points out, he was "already very unpopular" in 1900.<sup>(73)</sup>

The motives of the early 19th century Wesleyan missionaries in Tonga included the will to succeed where the LMS had failed and to Christianise the archipelago. The methods that the Wesleyans used included the systematic and steady introduction of material goods into the archipelago, combined with the visits of British men-of-war. As one of their methods, the Wesleyans used the "division" of territorial "rights" with the LMS. In the 1830s the Wesleyans received "exclusive rights" to Tonga and Fiji provided they would not attempt to convert the inhabitants of the LMS territory of Samoa.<sup>(74)</sup>

This brief paper has attempted to demonstrate that in the 19th century certain Europeans were extremely instrumental in restructuring Tongan society. The point must also be stressed that certain Tongans were not mere passive pawns in the overall political process. Some Tongans aided the Wesleyans and manipulated and restructured the system to their own

70. Tippet 1971:108; emphasis original.

71. Rutherford 1971:x.

72. Scarr 1968:4.

73. Barney 1972:263.

74. See Garrett 1974. For a recent explication of Catholic missionary work in Samoa, with passing reference to the LMS activities in Samoa, see Franco 1976.

67. Lātūkefu 1967:537-8, 1974:218-9; emphasis mine.

68. Hammer 1953:170-1; emphasis mine.

69. Wright and Fry 1936: 243.



advantage. This point comes across in Lātūkefu's work<sup>(75)</sup> and is also in Cummins' review where he points out that "in the process of change and modification that resulted from missionary involvement in political affairs, the Tongan chiefs and people were by no means clay in the potter's hands."<sup>(76)</sup>

Decktor Korn's work is pointing out the need to re-think Tongan social structure for, indeed, "a noble view is a faulty basis for generalising about an entire society."<sup>(77)</sup> The analyses of Gifford,<sup>(78)</sup> Sahlins,<sup>(79)</sup> Goldman,<sup>(80)</sup> and others must be put into perspective. Barney<sup>(81)</sup> has more than adequately pointed out that the "literate revolution" was an important factor in the political processes of Tonga after the mid-19th century. It is more than clear that "twentieth century Tonga is not aboriginal Tonga"<sup>(82)</sup> just as the late 19th century was not aboriginal Tonga. As stated elsewhere:

There is a certain amount of timelessness inherent in some ethnographic reports: a timelessness which stems from the quest of the synchronic description *cum* analysis of culture . . . Change obviously takes place over time, yet all too often statements in the published accounts have compressed many of the unique aspects of Tongan culture into a homogenized whole.<sup>(83)</sup>

When researchers lump all of the Tongan data into a fictive "ethnographic present" statement, not only do they do the data an injustice, but they also do Tongans a gross injustice!

#### EPILOGUE

It almost seems as if Anatole France had uttered a truth which were valid for the whole Western world, when, in his *Penguin Island*, Catherine d'Alexandrie offers this advice to God: "Donnez leu une ame, mais une petite!"<sup>(84)</sup>

The 19th century missionary refrain did appear to be "Give them a soul, but a little one!" In numerous respects, 19th century missionaries did not aid the Tongans in becoming first-class Tongans, but rather encouraged the Tongans into becoming second-class Victorians! A classic example of the 19th century Wesleyan paternalistic attitudes towards Tongans is a statement made by the Rev. T. Adams in 1853:

It is only by the judicious maintenance of salutary discipline that our present triumphs can be secured and provisions made for the stability and perpetuity of the work which we are labouring to promote. *We think the time has not yet come to consent to native agents in Tonga*

75. Lātūkefu 1974.  
76. Cummins 1975:106.  
77. Decktor Korn 1974:12.  
78. Gifford 1929.  
79. Sahlins 1955.  
80. Goldman 1970.  
81. Barney 1974.  
82. Urbanowicz 1973:119.  
83. Urbanowicz 1975:559.  
84. Jung 1927:xxviii.

[to] the exercise of this holy discipline over their fellow countrymen. They are valuable auxiliaries to our work.<sup>(85)</sup>

Such sentiments led to an eventual break which came in the 1860s; King George Tupou I gradually separated himself from his Wesleyan advisers, with the exception of the Rev. S. W. Baker.<sup>(86)</sup> And so, it is only in this decade of the 20th century that a Tongan finally became the leader of the Tongan Church in Tonga.

85. Adams 1953; emphasis mine.

86. See Rutherford 1971.

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