The State and the Church, the State of the Church in Tonga

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I hereby declare that this thesis constitutes my own research and writing, and it has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree. All quotations have been distinguished and the source information acknowledged.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated with deep gratitude to my parents Rev. Dr. Siaosi and Sauliloa Afa Niumeitolu who taught me about loving and living for others.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the impact of 'Tongan culture' as represented by those with power in the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (FWC). The word "free" in the name of a church usually denotes the desire to be independent of the State or any other outside control but in this context it was often the contrary. From the outset of the Wesleyan Mission in 1826, the chiefs who embodied and controlled Tonga, welcomed the early European explorers yet with the twin underlying aims of gaining benefits while simultaneously maintaining their supremacy. The dissertation argues that the outcome leaves the FWC in dire need of inculturation, with Gospel challenging 'Culture.' Historical and anthropological approaches are used to substantiate this claim. Encouraged by Captain Cook's report the missionaries arrived and were welcomed by the chiefs. The conversion of the powerful Taufa'ahau was pivotal to the spread of the Wesleyan Mission yet this marriage of convenience came at a cost because Taufa'ahau had his own agenda of what a church should be. This study assesses Tongan demeanour prior to the arrival of Europeans and in the early years of settlement, especially the response to Cook in 1773, 74, 77 which set the tone for later interaction. It then looks at how Tongan ways have moulded the FWC since the beginning of the Wesleyan Mission in 1826 by relying on data from archives, interviews, and journals of early explorers and missionaries. This dissertation argues that what is widely accepted as the Tongan way of life, which the FWC represents as the Gospel, is essentially the interest of the elite with power and wealth. From the start the chiefs were not only interested in the Wesleyan Mission for religious but also for political reasons; indeed they made and even still make no such separation. Because of this collusion of the FWC and the state, the FWC is recognized as the supporter of the status quo, its ministers being part of the elite system of social and spiritual control. The ensuing confusion between the church, Christ, and culture leads to a neglect of the poor and marginal and a failure to speak prophetically to the elite.

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Most important to the Holy Spirit at work in me throughout this time.

Abbreviations

CT	Church of Tonga
FCT	Free Church of Tonga
FWC	Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga
LMS	London Missionary Society
STC	Sia‘atoutai Theological College

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Chapter Six Minister: Chief or Servant

Introduction

This thesis assesses the place of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (FWC) in the faith life of the Tonga people, and does so based on Gittins' understanding of inculturation. In his article "Beyond Liturgical Inculturation: Transforming the Deep Structures of Faith," Gittins warned that what Christians sometimes celebrate as Christianity making headway in the local "culture," is not inculturation but merely acculturation, which may include the state using the acculturated church to support the status quo. A new liturgical innovation is not inculturation, and nor is the wearing of local dress, use of local dialect or other superficial markers. These and other elements normally observed at the surface and behavioural level is acculturation, the outcome of the contact of Christianity and the local "culture." This may lead to a modification in the local "culture" which impacts on church life, but not necessarily on faith. Inculturation must not be taken to be a cultural performance only, nor is it just about struggling to live the Christian way, balancing Christianity with the old way. It is about a living relationship with Christ the Head of the Church and its only purpose is faith. Making use of an analogy from linguistics Gittins insisted that the deep structures of Christianity must be translated into the deep structures of the people and their culture and must challenge them to live in Christ[1]

Before going further into faith, the aim of inculturation, let me pick up on one crucial term, culture. Relevant to the argument of this thesis is the reality that no culture is homogeneous. Culture is not a "neatly defined box" with fixed boundaries. There are at least as many views and experiences of a culture as there are individuals. Indeed, as Geertz has said,

> The discrimination of cultural breaks and cultural continuities, the drawing of lines around sets of individuals as following a more or less identifiable form of life as against different sets of individuals following more or less different forms of life - other voices in other rooms - is a good deal easier in theory than it is in practice.[2]…
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> The view of culture, a culture, this culture, as a consensus on fundamentals – shared conceptions, shared feelings, shared values –

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[1] Anthony Gittins, "Beyond Liturgical Inculturation: Transforming the Deep Structures of Faith," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 69 (2004): 47-72.

[2] Clifford Geertz, *Available Light:Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 247.

> seems hardly viable in the face of so much dispersion and disassembly, it is the faults and fissures that seem to mark out the landscape of collective selfhood.[3]

Not all opinions in a context, a territory, a country, carry equal weight, for the opinions of the elite few with the power and wealth epitomise and control the local 'cultural understanding,' and the opinions of the remaining majority count for little. A member of parliament is expected to have a different perspective and experience of a culture from the man in the gutter. One would have more influence than the other, and, frequently it is the opinions of the elite that are considered while the views of the rest are either not heard or deliberately neglected. The elite are the few who are generally portrayed as 'owning' the "culture." Often with an inadequate and biased view they utilise the culture as a tool to support or silence those who disagree with them.

They are the arbiters who decide the 'norms.' They can decide what is 'crucial' and what is 'marginal:' they distinguish what is 'authentic' from what is "foreign." They are the most influential in almost every institution that exists whether it is social, political, or religious. Hence it is normal for the "culture" to be appropriated/ ordered/ presented by the elite. Such power is neither atypical nor exceptional in any way, but quite normal. Certainly the elite would become the 'voice' representing the majority and thus can develop the inevitable tension that constantly challenges every context; the elite who represent the majority often subvert the wellbeing of others in favour of their own interests. While I shall assert that this is exemplified in Tonga, in 'Tongan culture' and in church-state relations, Tonga is not the only place where this occurs, for it is in every culture.

The notion of inculturation, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, is no human invention or creation. Here I wish to place it within the Gospel, indeed at the Gospel core. The length, width and the height in which the process of inculturation engages is no less than what God had in mind when the 'Word' became 'flesh' as recorded by the Johannine gospel and dwelled amongst humankind. God resolved regardless of the cost to transform all that which was lost in the fall of Adam to a 'new creation.' The transformation begins when one has faith in the 'Word.' One's faith in the person of the 'Word' is central but faith alone is not the

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[3] Ibid., 250.

end but the beginning. No matter how well formulated and intended, or how indigenized, or how meaningful a cultural expression may be, if it does not transform lives then inculturation has yet to begin. It is not enough to read the Bible and conduct the service in the vernacular if that does not lead to the transformation of lives. The litmus test to ascertain whether inculturation has begun is to see whether what is being done has produced new and transformed lives.

All the four canonical gospels wrote of the world as the mission field to which the disciples and followers were to take the good news. As recorded by the Johannine gospel God '… loved the world…,' the *κοσμοσ* was and is the object of God's love. It was not limited only to humankind; it encompasses the whole of creation. In other words everyone and everything in the world is included and no one and nothing is beyond this love of God. The 'Word' was sent to transform every context and everything in it, human or otherwise, into this 'new creation.'

This mantle to change the world was passed on to his disciples and thence to the Church throughout the ages. Hence the context in its entirety is what inculturation aims to transform, and nothing less. The gospel values should challenge the visible and the invisible, the material and symbolic, the ethos and the worldview, the values and ideals. It should challenge inter-personal relations at all levels and the perception of personhood. The list is not complete and it keeps on extending as the Holy Spirit progressively reveals more.

The Lukan evangelist recorded that the disciples were commissioned by the resurrected Lord to be witnesses to Him, beginning in Jerusalem and to the 'end of the earth;' an impossible mission if they were to make an attempt on their own. But they were cautioned not to commence immediately but to wait in Jerusalem until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Hence the admonition to wait was just as important as the mandate to go. But the 'filling' must first come before the 'witnessing,' which (taking Luke) has equal value with going. They would 'receive power' when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8). Worthy of note is that the Lord himself acknowledged the key role of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of his ministry when he read from the book of the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth (Lk 4:16).This is unquestionably the blue print for evangelizing the world, and more creatively helpful than the Matthean account which has been so often used to support missions as superpowers in colonial and the present globalisation.

With the aim of making the gospel comprehensible and appropriate to a particular context the Church, after some initial hesitation if not blank refusal, changes its programs, policies and constitutions, sermons, hymns and singing, translations of the Bible, liturgies, ways of worship, dresses, manners and behaviour. These are needed modifications or basic contextualisation, without which no teaching, no shared living, can be entertained, but those are all manmade changes which fall far short of faith or perhaps rather fail to touch, faith.

Only the Holy Spirit can change lives. The Church can orchestrate a counterfeit 'performance' but only the Holy Spirit can create genuine devotion. The Church can preach and teach but only the Holy Spirit can convict lives. The ripple effect of the 'transformed lives' can make an impact on a particular context. If inculturation is the work of the Holy Spirit then it implies attempting the 'impossible.' It implies a radical mind shift and a change of values and emphasis. It implies refocusing, rethinking and redefining purposes and plans. It implies a change of presuppositions and the widening of horizons. It implies risk-taking and breaking into new grounds. It implies 'shattering' of traditions. It implies something new and refreshing.

The Lukan evangelist wrote that even after the Day of Pentecost Peter, James and the early Jewish converts still found it difficult to accept that the gift of the Holy Spirit was not only for the Jews but for the Gentiles as well. However all were proven wrong and were amazed by what they saw in the house of Cornelius the Roman centurion. There had to be a divine intervention before Peter and the apostles could grasp the reality that God is no respecter of persons. It was just like what they experienced on the Day of Pentecost. Eventually they realised that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek' but all are 'one' in Christ. No wonder an angel had to be sent to arrange this meeting at the house of Cornelius, for the Jewish custom would not allow Peter to go into the Gentile's house for a meal.

If inculturation is the work of the Holy Spirit then the Church's main concern as the 'body of Christ' should not be to build itself, to strengthen the institution, to become part of the local power and state structure, but to 'stay connected' with the Holy Spirit with no interruption. But there is always tension between the Church as an institution and the Church under the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Church as an institution is rarely humble, for it must organise authority, control, exercise and rein

in power, deal with buildings, money, people. In no context is the Church comfortable with being 'powerless,' preferring, even needing, to be in control rather than in submission. The Church as an institution is uncomfortable in a 'Spirit led' environment because it means surrendering to the Holy Spirit.

Indeed instead of facilitating the process of inculturation with the aim of faith challenging context, the Church can become the main obstacle. The Church therefore may cling on to the 'old' instead of exchanging it with the unknown 'new' for that would demand stepping out of its comfort zone. Often it chooses the 'broad road' instead of the 'narrow road' because it demands less sacrifice, and avoids 'rocking the boat' in preference for a fleeting solution. When it has to decide between its prophetic role and the assumed imperatives of the 'culture' it often chooses the latter in the name of the 'cultural way' which it may, given the frequent link between elites in church and society, actually control. In other words the Church loses its 'saltiness' and is no longer the 'light' to the world. The 'deep values' of the culture are shielded from being challenged by the 'deep values' of the gospel. The outcome is an unchallenged culture with a Christian coating. When this occurs the Church becomes simply another organization, with pews and pulpit, bibles and crosses and bishops and pastors substituting for the rulers, mores and customs and ideology, and culture patterns. The Church as an institution is no longer the 'hand' of God for transforming the way of being of people, but has become the main institution supporting the status quo.

For many people the Church is now no longer the living and breathing 'body of Christ' but an organization that is oppressive and dominated by its manmade structure: this, and written from a perspective of a minister in the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, may also be the case in that small idyllic Pacific island. Where there is change in the Church it will only be on the surface, for the Church as an organization will resist any change that goes deep and will emphasize only what supports its stance. Many prefer to maintain a pattern which has been effective, maintaining the status quo, but this may have little to do with the Gospel of equality for all. This is not just a problem for the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, the subject of this thesis, but for the Church as an organization anywhere.[4]

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[4] Stephen Sykes. *Power and Christian Theology*. (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006).

By domesticating the values of the gospel and the faith, the Church produces members who are contented with ‘drinking milk’ but do not aspire to eat the ‘solid food’ of the word of God. By compromising the faith the Church can easily produce converts who are ‘signed up’ members going through the motions, the routines and the ritual with ease without any change in the heart. They wear the right clothes, perform the right deeds and respond with the right words but their hearts have never been challenged by the values of the gospel. They can comply with a list of dos and donts but have no lively and practical relationship with the Holy Spirit. A disciple, on the other hand, would be characterised as a follower who is wholly obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit regardless of the cost. It is this radical change brought about by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers that embodies inculturation. Nothing less. These changes are lasting, yet change will continue, for it should be normal not exceptional.

Yet this is not only an individual matter, for change through the Holy Spirit should make an impact on society, especially on the lower rungs of the social ladder: those at the bottom should gain in some way. Does the change bring about opportunities for their voice to be heard? Does it cause the rich to be concerned and give more for the poor? Do the ‘Jewish’ Christians eat together with the ‘Gentile’ Christians, the chiefs with the commoners? The people at the fringe of society were the main benefactors of the ministry of the Lord. The majority were those in need either physically or spiritually. His ministry covered the poor, blind, lame, the captives and even those who were dead. The ‘untrained’ and ‘uneducated’ disciples were the leaders of the early church. The outpouring of the Spirit resulted in the pooling of resources by the church members to help those in need (Acts 4:34).

Inculturation therefore is not about the Church as an institution and its work but about the work of the Holy Spirit in his Church. It is not a method or a policy by which to build the local Church. It is the plan and way of the Holy Spirit that matters and there is a tension between human effort, no matter how commendable, and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Church should not try to control, manipulate nor interfere, for the goal of inculturation should be nothing more or less than whatever the Holy Spirit intended for the Church in a particular context and time. People,

however, do not actually know what the Holy Spirit intends, but interpret that from their own standpoint, their own biases, their own cultural reading and position in their social context and rank. They may defend that position by asserting they are"empowered by the Holy Spirit."[5] It can be hard, indeed unwise, to accept this as a true statement (and it is of course untestable) but it is necessary to be aware of the use made of "the spirit" to validate human power.

The goal of inculturation is commonly perceived as 'mature faith.' This maturity is not to be independent of but to be in dependence on the Holy Spirit. It is the Church appreciating not its strength but its powerlessness without the Holy Spirit. While running the institution of the Church, which needs to be efficient to be effective, it must exercise power -yet in so doing, it must recognise the power and the dangers emanating from it.

Research Problem

Tonga is always described as a Christian nation with at least ninety percent of the population claiming to be Christians. Tongans are proud of their Christian heritage; the comment "*..ko e fonua lotu 'eni* or "…this is a Christian nation..." is often heard. Tongans are church-going people and association with the church is the cultural norm. The church building would be the largest building in almost every village. The sound of bells ringing and *lali*[6] beating to call worshippers to prayer throughout the whole nation during the week and especially on Sunday is common.

Almost everything revolves around the church. One's very identity is described by the church he or she belongs to. Almost every public event starts and ends with a prayer and that includes the beginning of every parliamentary session. Even in the giving and receiving of gifts in cultural ceremonies, like weddings and funerals, it is common to hear cultural orators, or *matapules*, focus their speeches on passages from the Bible. The cross of Jesus Christ is on the red and white national standard, the red colour representing the blood of Christ. A story that is proudly and repeatedly told was that King George I picked up a handful of soil and lifted his hands towards the sky symbolising his yielding of Tonga to God. The words he said during his act of dedication "…God and Tonga are my inheritance…" became the

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[5] Stephen Sykes. *Unashamed Anglicanism.* (Nashville:Abingdon Press, 1995), 186-7.

[6] *lali* is a wooden drum.

country's motto and these are the words found in the coat of arms. The act is well known as the "*Tuku-Fonua-ki-Langi*," which literally means "the giving up of the country to the sky." Tonga is the only country in the Pacific that has never been colonised and this is commonly attributed to King George yielding Tonga to God instead of relying on any of the super powers at the time.[7]

When referring to what distinguishes Tonga from other nations, the way that Sunday is kept is usually mentioned. Article Six of the 1875 Constitution states "The Sabbath Day shall be sacred in Tonga for ever…."[8] No plane or ship can embark or disembark on Sunday. Every shop is closed; and no taxi or bus can run and people do not engage in work, trade, or games: the pietist streak in Methodism has been retained in what is to all intents and purposes a Methodist kingdom, ruled by a king and queen who are both lay preachers of the FWC.

The problem which this thesis is investigating is why a church called the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (FWC) that is supposed to be free from any manmade control but under the leading of the Holy Spirit is still largely subjugated to the impact of the culture as represented by the monarch and chiefs. The common understanding of the word "free" as regards to the name of a church is that it is the desire of the church to be free of any outside control especially from the State. However the word "free" in the eyes of King George I who established the church with this name in 1885 connoted little or none of that. His primary intention was for the church in Tonga to be free of the control of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Australia or any foreign control. Local state control was not seen as an issue.

At the heart of this investigation is the rigid hierarchical arrangement of Tongan society, which was traditionally rooted in indigenous religion and which persists despite wholesale conversion to Christianity. The implication is that the gospel values proclaimed by the Wesleyan Mission in 1826 and onwards have yet to challenge the 'deep values' of Tongan culture as regards this highly stratified Tongan society. In other words the process of inculturation has yet to occur in this critical aspect of Tongan church life.

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[7] There is of course a potential problem here, as to inherit may also be seen as to possess: the King of Tonga may possess Tonga but does not possess God, and nor do the people.

[8] S. Latukefu. *Church and State in Tonga: The Weslyan Methodist missionaries and political development, 1822-1875*.(Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), 253.

Consequently, this thesis investigates the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga as a case study of *acculturation* since the beginning of the Wesleyan Mission in 1826. Tradition claimed that at least a thousand years before the first European contact, 'Aho'eitu was the first sacred and secular ruler of Tonga. Since then the sacred and the secular were always seen as united under the most powerful person in the country - the Tu'i Tonga. It asserts that the 'Tu'i Tonga sacred/secular unity' was not left behind in the nineteenth century but still underlies Tongan spirituality in the twenty-first century in the FWC. As the elite with the power and wealth, the monarchs and the chiefs have always been and still are the most influential few in 'Tongan culture.'

Likewise in the FWC kings and chiefs have always been the focus of leadership and taken a key role in the direction of the FWC. It is no surprise that the FWC has always given the impression of being a loyal supporter and defender of the status quo more than any other Church in Tonga. The thesis seeks to show where, how, and when the FWC has been affected by the monarchs and chiefs and by its willing collusion in the maintenance of Tongan state to the detriment, we shall argue, of the gospel. The Wesleyan Mission and now the FWC has been a subordinate of those in power and authority and was/is a reflection of the Tongan culture in its organization (hierarchical), ethics (Tongan and not European) and loyalties (to those in authority – king, chiefs, ministers).

The implication is that the FWC has departed from the focus on the poor that was advocated by John Wesley. The result is that the FWC mirrors the Tongan culture and centres on those with power and wealth at the expense of those lower down the social ladder. It tends to overlook mission to those who are at the edge of society. The pastoral and theological implications of the existing situation are carefully investigated and discussed not with the intention of damaging the FWC of Tonga, but rather to set out that which is usually unspoken or covert, in order to challenge the situation on behalf of both the gospel and the dispossessed

Methodology

The research problem gives rise to three main research questions which are "Why is this so?" and "How do we account for its continuance today?" and "How could the process of inculturation challenge this predominant influence of Tongan culture and the State in the Free Wesleyan Church?" The resources available to me were-:

The journals and memoirs of the early explorers and missionaries. As Europeans, they observed, experienced and tried to account for what they saw, but did not necessarily grasp the cultural issues, so what they wrote could be an inadequate, misunderstood or incorrect representation of Tongan life. I tried to evaluate critically these historical materials, which I examined at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London for three weeks in July 2004, against each other and in the light of the writer's background, purpose and possible bias. This was an important basis for later field research, because the way in which the early church began, based to a considerable extent on misunderstanding of the people by the mission, has contributed to what I assert is the present malaise of the FWC.

Field-work was done by me, a Tongan 'to the toenails', a minister of the FWC and a lecturer of the Sia'atoutai Theological College. The field study of contemporary Tonga was done from November 2003 to April 2004, and for three weeks in February – March 2006, when I was given ready access (even a welcome) for interviews with church ministers, church members and non-churchgoers, which took place on the main island, Tongatapu, the centre of government. I also took 'participant observations' in church services and activities in the FWC, for comparison with the indigenous Free Church of Tonga (FCT), the Church of Tonga (CT) and the Roman Catholic Church. I did not at any point in my field work preach or take an active part in worship, and while I am aware that all knew my role in the church, standing outside for a period did make a clear statement of distance. I was aware, too, of the risk that some interviewees might censor their answers, or say what they thought I wanted to hear, and I encouraged people both to accept that what they said would not (unless they wished) be cited in an identifiable way and that I was interested in learning rather than telling in a effort to encourage them to be as frank as possible. It is impossible to judge whether I was successful in this.

I have used a number of works on Tonga by Tongans and others, written in the 20th and 21st centuries. These I have used for comparison with, but not for corroboration of, my own research.

Chapter Organization

This thesis is made up of six chapters.

Chapter One addresses the progress from a basic contextualization to a possible inculturation in current literature, setting it within the mission and ministry frame. It further explains Gittins' understanding of inculturation which is the position that this thesis is taking. It claims that for any serious attempt of inculturating the gospel values in the Tongan manner of living one has to access deep down into essence of the culture which is its focus on the chiefs. It chooses a few examples of making the gospel more meaningful in the Pacific context and the tendency for them to support and maintain the status quo especially in a stratified society like Tonga.

Chapter Two analyses Tongan cultural patterns in the early years of European contact. It looks at past Tongan cultural patterns as they are now understood as a "text." It may seem that everyone is equally involved in the "writing," of the "text, " but effectively it is "written" and "rewritten" only by the few with power and wealth. Being "authors," of the "text," they had and have their purpose in creating the "text," in such a form and manner, having in mind their "readers" and the projected impact of the "text," on them. This "text," more than anything else, shapes how one thinks about Tongan society.

Chapter Three demonstrates that Cook's name "the Friendly Islands" for Tonga was a misnomer. It was the image that the principal chiefs wanted the people to impress upon the European visitors. This chapter challenges the popular image of Tonga in the early days of European contact as "hospitable and friendly." The Tongans were not passively absorbing everything that was introduced but were actively deciding what to or not accept. They did not see these white strangers as "gods" as was popularly asserted but rather viewed these contacts as opportunities for their gain and at the same time maintained their domination, regardless of whether the first Europeans were explorers, missionaries, beachcombers, or stowaways.

Chapter Four asserts that the 'Tu'i Tonga sacred/secular unity' that tradition claimed to begin with the first Tu'i Tonga 'Ahoe'itu is still the underlying Tonga spirituality in the FWC. It seems either the Wesleyan missionaries turned a blind eye to the reality of the sacred/secular unity because that was one area where they failed to

confront the chiefs, or they failed to fully understand. Even though they witnessed the sacred/secular unity under the chief very much in action they continued promoting the tradition of sacred/secular unity under the chief. One outcome is that the most influential person in the culture is still the most influential person in the spirituality of the people.

Chapter Five shows that because of the key role of the monarchies and chiefs in the Wesleyan Mission since its beginning in 1826 the FWC has been giving the impression that it is a defender and promoter of the stratified structure, which, in that it values different people differently according to birth, is against the Gospel. This is exemplified by how most of the activities in the FWC focused on the monarch and chiefs. The implication is that FWC often works closely with the State and supports it.

Chapter Six looks at the *faifekau* or minister as one who has authority and status and possibly the most influential person in the community. The minister is therefore a member of the elite few at the top of the social ladder and often given the treatment normally given to a chief or *'eiki*. But like everyone else with power the minister could abuse the trust and privilege that is given to him or her.

Issues Related to the Methdology

I grew up in a home where both of my parents were fervent royalists. I was an officer in the Tonga Defence Services where every officer is commissioned by His Majesty and the essence of one's oath as a member of the Tonga Defence Services is to protect the honour of the monarch and the royal household. I was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but only worked for a few months then resigned when nominated by the 1988 Ministers' Conference of the FWC to be a probationer. For nearly twenty years now I have been a minister of the FWC either as a theological student (in Tonga and overseas) or as a lecturer at the Sia'atoutai Theological College.

Like everywhere else in Tonga I was not surprised to find that the focus in the FWC is on the monarch and the chiefs. I was convinced then that this Tongan phenomenon of the monarch and the chiefs' close involvement in the church, though not unique in the history of the Church in the West, was worthy of researching. When given this opportunity to study at New College at the Centre for the Study on Non Western Christianity, I was prepared to take up the challenge of investigating the influence of

the culture as represented by the monarch and chiefs in the FWC. One needs not to be an academic, an anthropologist or to have any special training or even to become a Tongan, but one needs only to be in Tonga for a short while in order to appreciate that at the heart of what is commonly hailed as 'Tongan culture' is its chiefly focus. It follows that if one studies the Tongan cultural pattern one has to consider the social structure; for almost every aspect of life centres on the elite, especially the monarch and the chiefs. While most theological studies often 'speak well' of 'Tongan culture' I was drawn to be critical. It was a transforming experience at least, on my part, taking into account that I am proud to be a Tongan and that being a minister I am automatically a member of the elite. This research, and even more the reflection and writing have been much more personally challenging than I expected at the outset.

The informants for my field studies were chosen on the basis on their accessibility and willingness to help in the research, not that they might be thought to be, or even known to be in sympathy with its broad intentions. While I did look for people who might understand the research, I also sought out people whose knowledge and experience not only in the FWC but also in the society would give valuable insights. For example, one key informant who has very little involvement in the Church is a well known critique of the FWC and "Tongan culture." The *kau faifekau* or ministers were chosen because they were seen as the most influential group within the local church, if not the community. Chiefs were talked to because their views were crucial to understanding the situation from their perspective. However, in order to obtain a variety of interpretations, some the informants were chosen on the basis of their social positions, especially amongst the lower social ranks and the marginalised, their gender, and also their age. The resulting coverage was not and is not intended to be statistically representative, the numbers being too small.

At least seventy percent of the interviews were done in the homes of the respondents and most would take at least three quarters of an hour. In most cases I was left on my own with the informant and there was hardly any disturbance from anyone else in the household. While I already have collected opinions of my informants, I can only surmise on how they perceive me. In a relatively small country like Tonga being a minister and a lecturer at the Sia'atoutai Theological College who is now studying in the United Kingdom means that at least ninety percent of my informants were people who knew me. I did, however, refrain from preaching for the entire period of field

work in order to underline my clear statement that I came to them as a student, not as a minister. It is clearly impossible to assess the extent to which this was successful in making a break between my two 'presentations of self,' but given the openness, surprising at times, with which people engaged with me on difficult and contentious issues of church and state, I do feel that the effort had a positive outcome. Hospitality, being very much part of the custom, some families would prepare food knowing that I was coming although I made every effort not to be a burden to them. Such hospitality is offered to any visitor, not only to clergy. All acknowledged that they felt privileged to be part of the research, and while clearly some might initially say things they felt I might want to hear, there was a sufficiently good level of trust, and knowledge on my part, of when someone was doing that to work around it.

I sought the informant's permission whether it was all right to record our conversation on tape. All of the interviews I did were with one informant at a time. I took the first five minutes to explain the purpose of my visit and the research and to answer and clarify any queries that the informant may have at the time. It was intended to be an open-ended interview and not restricted to my preconceived notions of the interview. Nevertheless, I already had in mind broad topics I wished to explore and questions that I wanted to ask. I was aware of my role in introducing the general area of discussion and to probe for the informant's answers to my guiding questions. The informant was asked to give his or her view on the impact of 'Tongan culture' on the Church or words to that effect. While this was the main question the guiding questions in mind were: What do you understand by the phrase "Tongan way of living"? Who decides what is and what is not the Tongan way? What are the influences of the monarch and chiefs in the society? What are the influences of the monarch and the chiefs in the Church? Although I sought to prevent my views affecting the informant's opinion sometimes I had to share my views to the extent that the interviewee wanted to know. After the interview to the best of my ability I explained to my informants my research motives and interests and how the information they have been given would be used. I explained to them that their identity would remain confidential unless they wanted it to be disclosed. They were well aware that while making every effort to be confidential with Tonga being so small one could not rule out the risk of being known.

I can only assume that because the research could be easily interpreted as speaking against the status quo that is one reason why at least seventy five percent of those

key informants who are quoted more than the rest were either expatriate or retired ministers of the FWC or Tongans who are now staying overseas. These key informants have more freedom than the rest to express their opinion, for there is little or no cultural restriction. With the intention of making it easier for the informant sometimes I had to clarify that while the research may be seen as critical, it is critical of the organization of the Church not the people in it.

As regards the main written sources used in the second and third chapter one would have wished for a description of the Tongan society before the first European contact. Preferably this could include an eyewitness account recorded by a 'local' but this is not possible for the 'locals' grew up in an oral culture and were not aware of the need of future researchers. The early accounts were from what the early European explorers and missionaries saw and heard and from the traditions related to them by the 'locals' at the time. The early sources were 'interpreted accounts' of the Tongan society through the eyes of these Europeans. These accounts were chosen because they were the first records written or recalled by Europeans who have stayed in Tonga relatively longer than the rest of the early Europeans. It is impossible to get an 'objective' picture of Tongan society as the early European visitors found it: one must constantly remember that these Europeans and Tongans were all biased to a certain extent.

Although there were other European explorers who arrived earlier, Captain Cook was the first to anchor in Tonga for a relatively longer period. The LMS missionaries' journals (from April – August 1797) were the first account by European missionaries who attempted to live in Tonga. Mariner's account was the first record written by one of the early Europeans who lived in Tonga between 1806-10. Vason was a renegade member of the LMS missionaries who arrived in 1797 and chose to live as a native until he managed to escape back to England in 1801.

The early accounts must therefore be read critically, considering the early visitors' purpose in writing, their values, interests, cultures and the style of writing they used to serve both own their values and interests, always keeping in mind the readers.

These Europeans came with a purpose that certainly influenced what they chose to focus on and how to present it. One would expect a reluctance to report an occurrence that might mar their own reputation as well as their benefactors. Usually Captain Cook and his men would avoid commenting on any incident that might

damage the reputation of the Royal Navy as later explained in the third chapter. The missionaries were anxious to maintain continuous support from home and therefore often focused on whatever fell in line with the interests of their home congregation. Basil Thompson who was posted to Tonga in 1890-91 to be an advisor to the ninety two year old King George I, wrote that the missionary records:

> …were not penned for the eye of an unsympathetic public, nor should we expect them to be partial histories of public events. They were written with a purpose, by men who viewed all things by the light of their appointed task; who classed all events, all native customs and ceremonies, as helping or retarding "the work;"[9]

For the explorers, the discovering, conquering and claiming of uncharted lands and taking home anything to impress was their top priority. Even if they acted with good intentions, these early European visitors had limited knowledge of the language and the culture and were often ethnocentric and racist. Tasman who visited Tonga in 1643 inaccurately concluded that Tongans were not religious when he saw no temples. Captain Cook gave the Tonga Group the name 'Friendly Islands' not knowing that the chiefs were setting up to kill him and his men, as will explained in detail in the third chapter.

In the second edition of Mariner's narrative an incident is recorded in which he tried to get on board the ship *Hope* skippered by Captain Chase, aiming to return to England. His companions, Higgins, Parish and Williams, were already on deck when the captain or mate looked over the quarterdeck and said that they could not take him for they already had enough men on board. Whatever the reason was, Mariner deliberately left out this unforgettable incident in his first and third edition.[10] One can only speculate that Mariner did not want to portray Captain Chase and his crew in a bad light at least to the readers of his first and third edition, for their deliberate neglecting someone who might then die in the hands of the local people.

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[9] Basil Thomson [first published 1894]. *The Diversions of a Prime Minister*. (Dawsons of Pall Mall: London, 1968), 196.

[10] Paul W. Dale. *The Tonga Book*.(Montreux, London, Washington: Minerva Press, 1996), 164-5

Even the Tongans were biased. An example is that the people boasted to Captain Wilson and the LMS missionaries that the whole of the Fiji was ruled from Tonga. [11] But there was never a time in history where the whole of Fiji was ruled by Tonga, nor was there even a time in history where the whole of Fiji or the whole of Samoa for that matter was ruled by Tonga.

The Tongans were often presented in a more favourable light than its neighbouring island countries of Fiji and Samoa. This was the case not only in writings specifically about Tonga but even in books on the neighbouring island countries. Pritchard, in his *Polynesian Reminiscences* wrote of them as the "favoured Tongans"[12], while Berthold Seeman on his book on Fiji called them the "Anglo-Saxons of the South Seas" [13] and the "flower of the Polynesian race."[14] Most writers, when referring to cannibalism in Tonga often wrote an aside informing their readers that cannibalism was introduced into the country either by Fijians or Tongans who had been fighting in Fiji.

The implication being that if were not for the contact with the Fijians there would be no cannibalism in Tonga or at least not to a great extent. It is popularly claimed that there was no cannibalism in Tonga before contact with it in Fiji. Mariner, who was given a piece of human liver to eat and witnessed cannibalism first hand in Tonga, [15] still referred to cannibalism in Tonga as "Fiji habits,"[16] and even said that at the time when Captain Cook visited Tonga, cannibalism was hardly known until later when "the Fiji people soon taught them this…" Whatever the reason was for presenting Tonga in a better light than its neighbours one can only assume but it is undeniable

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[11] James Wilson. [First published in 1799]. *A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, performed in the years 1796, 1797, 1798, in the Ship Duff, commanded by Captain James Wilson compiled from the Journals of the Officers and the Missionaries… with a Preliminary Discourse on the Geography and History of the South Sea Islands…*(Graz/ Austria: Academische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 274.

[12] William Thomas Pritchard. *Polynesian reminiscences, or Life in the South Pacific Islands.* (London: Dawsons, 1968), 227.

[13] Berthold Seeman [First published 1862]. *Viti: An account of a Government Mission to the Vitian or Fijian Islands 1860-1861.*(London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1973), 237.

[14] Ibid., 236.

[15] John Martin. [First published in 1817]. *Tonga Islands; William Mariner's Account*. 5th edition Volume I & II combined. (Nuku 'alofa: Neiafu Vava'u Press. 1991), 88.

[16] Ibid.

that cannibalism was thoroughly practised in Tonga, especially as a sign of revenge in time of war.

One has to take into account what end of the social ladder the informants came from. Mariner was an adopted son of the most powerful chief at the time Finau ‘Ulukalala. Vason’s patron chief was the last of the last Tu’i Ha’atakalaua Mulikiha’amea. Likewise the LMS missionaries divided themselves amongst the main chiefs in Tongatapu. The Methodist missionaries who came thirty years later were no different. Lawry stayed with the chief Fatu at Mu’a. The two natives of Tahiti who were teachers of the LMS were under the protection of the Tu‘i Kanokupolu Aleamotu‘a in Nuku’alofa. Thomas and Hutchinson, who arrived as Lawry’s successors were both hosted by Ata the chief of Kolovai. Therefore, one can only assume that most of the early Europeans’ informants were people of chiefly blood. The places they went to and the etiquette that they were exposed to reflected this connection. The ‘Tongan view’ was essentially the ‘chiefly view.’ The ‘commoners’ view’ was almost non existent.

Clearly the fact that I am Tongan, and a Methodist minister, analysing the situation of church and state in Tonga, means that I too, as these written texts noted above, have my own perspectives. Yet were this work to have been done by a non-Methodist, or a non-Tongan, the outcome would have been different, for Tongans, and Methodists would almost certainly have protected their reputation and self-perception before outsiders. As I share in being both a proud Tongan, and a committed minister, my ‘need to know’ is seen not as voyeurism, or antagonism, but more a genuine wish to understand the points of view of Tongans from all walks of life. If that one day can be translated into a renewing of the church led by others, that will be up to them. My task here is to uncover, analyse and present in this thesis the present church- state relations in Tonga.

Chapter One. Challenge for the Gospel

Introduction

This chapter looks at the progress from a basic contextualization to a possible inculturation in current literature, setting it within the mission and ministry frame. It further explains what Anthony J. Gittins' claimed to be inculturation, which is the understanding of inculturation that this thesis argues from. That is the 'deep structure' of the gospel must challenge the 'deep structure' of the culture. The thesis claims that the 'deep structure' of the Tongan way of life is its chiefly focus and any attempt which claims to have taken the culture seriously must take this chiefly focus as one of its hermeneutical themes. In order for the gospel values to go deep, contextualizing the gospel in a highly stratified society like Tonga must take into account the social structure. Three attempts to make the gospel more meaningful in the Pacific context, of which two are popular, are chosen to show how these efforts could easily become a means of supporting and maintaining the status quo.

The notion of a Superior Culture

The Gospel words of Christ indicate that he related to people regardless of culture, race, age, gender and religion, and indeed it is reasonable to expect that such regard for people is the standard that every Christian must aim for. Yet Christians of all ages are no exception when it comes to discrimination against people other than their own – nor indeed discriminating against sub-groups within their own culture. The embedding of ethnocentrism – that is the regarding of one's own as privileged, indeed as the best in church life, ministry and therefore mission - has been a continuing issue conflicting with Christ's expressed love for all. Jewish Christians of first century Palestine had serious problems when trying to relate the gospel to the cultures of the Gentiles. Some were adamant that the Gentiles must take on Jewish culture in order to become Christian, but the apostle Peter maintained at the Council of Jerusalem that there was no need for a Gentile to go through the Jewish demands of circumcision or of obedience to the laws of Moses, since these were only cultural expressions and not the essence of the faith.

Peter's advice helped to a certain extent and for a limited time. The issue is still with us, for the notion of a universal and worldwide superior culture is nothing new. The classical Greek philosophy on which Western thinking is very much based, entertained the possibility of everyone in the world eventually thinking and behaving like a Greek. When the Roman Empire took over as the super-power the assumption then was that everyone or every proper person would prefer to become Roman. In the fourth century the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and felt destined to call everyone to Christianity. This 'peace' guaranteed by Constantine was hastily embraced by the Church, and Christianity became the religion of the superior culture. This wedding of the Church and the State for convenience, gave birth to a politico-religious system known in history as Christendom. This was a classic example of what happened whenever the Church as an institution uncritically engaged with the state, and it is a criterion of this thesis on relations of the FWC to the Tongan State and Tongan culture that such a church has little or no prophetic or critical voice.

There were exceptional situations when the Church was aware of and even ashamed of holding an ethnocentric attitude and was conscious of the need to respect the host culture. Therefore one of the early means adopted by the evangelizers in teaching the faith was what has been called the functional substitution technique, whereby the particular ritual of the local culture still remains intact but over a period of time is replaced with a Christian meaning. In this way there is little confusion or cultural disorientation experienced by the local people. An early example is found in the letter of Pope Gregory the Great [540-604] to Abbot Mellitus who was a missionary of St Augustine of Canterbury:

> Tell Augustine not to destroy the temples of the gods, but only the idols housed therein. Tell him…to set up altars and places relics of the saints…The people will see that their places of worship have not been destroyed and will, therefore, be more inclined to renounce their error and recognize and adore the true God for the places to which they will come will be familiar to them and highly valued.[1]

Nevertheless the predominant attitude, whether reflected upon or not, was that the gospel must be presented in the form of the perceived superior culture i.e. that of

[1] Gerald A. Arbuckle. *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers*. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), 10-11.

Europe,[2] when coming into direct contact with cultural contexts which differed radically in terms of technology, social organization or worldview. The evangelizers of the post-Enlightenment period went out with the confidence that they were not only messengers of the superior faith but equally important, that they were representatives of the superior European culture and, regardless of the means, they were doing a favour to the host culture and its people by introducing them to the superior religion and culture.

This is not to imply that all intercultural interactions were inept or unholy, although the issue of power differences should not be forgotten, and indeed there have been instances of the Church attempting to improve on their attitude toward non-Western cultures. One example was the establishment by Pope Gregory XV of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1622 and his firm advice amounting to a decree in the initial texts to condemn cultural domination.

> Do not for any sense of zeal attempt to…persuade those people to change their rites, customs, and ways unless they are most obviously contrary to Faith and good morals. For what could be more absurd than to carry France, Spain, or Italy, or any other part of Europe into China? It is not this sort of thing you are to bring in but rather the Faith.[3]

But all these warnings did not alter the prevailing attitude of the Church toward non-Western cultures, entangled as it was with trade, empire and occupation, from insisting on such diverse "markers of faith" as the use of Latin, or multi-layered heavy clerical clothing, European liturgy, European influenced ideas of propriety and proper order. The usual pattern clearly excludes such missionaries as Ricci, Ruggieri and Valignano in China, de Nobili and Ziegenbalg in India, but while all these 'Fathers of Mission' learnt local languages and cultural thought and practice, only Ziegenbalg insisted on bringing the Gospel to all levels of the society of Tranquebar.

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[2] Aylward Shorter. *Toward a Theology of Inculturation.*(Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1988), 17-19.

[3] Arbuckle, 12.

In obedience to the Great Commission, and thoroughly embedded in their socio-political understanding of the world, the evangelizers from Europe went out to the non-Western world. That includes the early Protestant missionaries who first came to the South Pacific beginning in the late eighteenth century: like everyone else it was impossible for them to part with their 'cultural robes.' In his book *Theologies of Religions*, Paul F. Knitter sets out what he called the Replacement Model to represent the common attitude of the early European missionaries to the non-Western cultures. The missionaries were convinced that the local culture was not a worthy foundation to foster the local church in. Their strategy then was 'to clear out' or uproot everything of the local culture and religion and replace it with something new. Knitter wrote:

> In the final analysis, Christianity is meant to replace all other religions….It's also the dominant attitude, the one that generally has held sway throughout most of Christian history. Although views differed about the way this replacement be carried out and why it was necessary, Christian missionaries throughout the centuries have cast forth into the world with the conviction that it is God's will to make all peoples Christians. In the end – or as soon as possible – God wants there to be one religion, God's religion Christianity. If the other religions have any value at all, it is only a provisional value. Ultimately, Christianity is to take over.[4]

The missionaries went ashore with a mono-cultural and ethnocentric view. They believed that they came with a superior religion. Back in their home country they have been "doing church" for hundreds of years, a process in which they had fitted the Gospel into their preferred way, so why should they risk the time and resources by reinventing that wheel. Therefore the local church they established was at best a 'replica' of their home church in every possible way. Even if there were other European missionaries in the vicinity, each denomination tended to distinguish themselves as the most 'biblical' and the nearest to the 'New Testament' pattern:[5] what they replicated was, apart from a Christianity acculturated to European ideas, a Christianity divided against itself by the politico-religious arguments of centuries.

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[4] Paul F. Knitter. *Theologies of Religions.*(Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 19.

[5] Charles H. Kraft. "The Church in Culture: A Dynamic Equivalence Model." In *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture. The Papers of the Lausanne Consultation on Gospel and* Culture (London, Sydney, Auckland, Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), 211- 2.

In general the missionaries placed themselves in the centre of the universe with their values, religion, culture, ideas, superior technology and greater fire power. The temptation was to view other cultures as wrong, worse and underprivileged in most ways. The missionaries were the 'civilized' while others were the 'uncivilized,' they the 'advanced' while others were 'primitive.' Such views generated little or no respect to the host culture and their general action was either to disregard or destroy the host culture. Because they viewed the host culture as having little or nothing to offer they did not endeavour to learn about the philosophical views of their hosts, with abstract thought in some cases assumed to be absent in the savage: 'culturally influenced ' actions they might try to grasp in order both to control and to change the people. While the cultural misapprehension of the early missionaries in Tonga will be examined in detail in the fourth chapter, one illustration at a more superficial level is the ethnocentric insistence of the missionaries in Tonga that the local people should wear full European dresses to church. Such a change was not appropriate for the tropical climate. In a letter to his brother dated 25th November 1879 from the capital of the Tonga group Nuku'alofa, Hugh Romilly who accompanied the British Governor General to Fiji on his visit to Tonga, blamed the missionaries for what he saw in church:

> The missionaries seem to have taught them all the useless parts of civilisation without any useful ones. For instance, instead of letting the people dress in the simple sulu,[6] which is the most natural dress for the country, the missionaries import coats and trousers, silk dresses, bonnets, patent leather boots, &c, ….[7]

According to Romilly the missionaries made it a rule that the people entered church at different doors based on the number of clothes they had on. For example there was a "tall hat and black coat entrance" and "a shirt-sleeves entrance."[8] Clearly this touches not merely on issues of culture but of rank according to wealth – almost ubiquitous in the Christian world as in other religious contexts. However Romilly knew only part of the story. The truth was that it was the king at the time not the missionaries who insisted that his people dress in the European fashion. Nonetheless

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[6] Romilly is using here the Fijian name *sulu* but the Tongan name is *vala*.

[7] Hugh H. Romilly. *Letters from the Western Pacific and Mashonaland 1878-1891.* (London: David Nutt, 270 Strand, 1873), 31.

[8] Ibid. 29-30.

the missionaries are to be blamed for colluding with the king. The chiefs whom their people followed would not passively take anything that the missionaries came with and it means that often the missionaries would not succeed without their backing. It was King George's idea to make the people dress in the European fashion so that the outside world could see Tonga as a 'civilized' country. As a result there was the Law on *Tapa,* drafted between 1876 and 1878, which tried to ensure the wearing of native cloth would gradually be abolished. The Tongans were forced to buy European cloths, as these laws prohibited the manufacture of the native *tapa* cloth.[9]

Adaptation and Equivalence

Concepts and expressions such as adaptation, accommodation, indigenization and incarnation of the gospel, were the outcome of an increasing sensitivity and appreciation of the host culture and its people especially in the Third World after the end of direct colonial government. There was an increasing urge to begin theological reflection not with the abstract but in the reality of a people's lives or cultures – their joys, struggles, hopes and frustrations. Most probably before coining these concepts there was already concern and awareness of the need, and indeed individual missionaries in many if not all mission contexts had been aware of and sensitive to local thought and capacity. But the taking up of such quietly held ideas into theological and missiological thought is shown in the development of local theology in Third World nations after the postcolonial era. These terms became more familiar in the writings of the missionaries, and in many cases, the supported the right of, even the necessity for, the local people to maintain their own culture. Pope Pius XII asserted that "the rights of one's culture and national character …are exigencies of the law of nations dictated by nature itself." [10]

The notion of replacement, as discussed above and the rather later but still essentially similar *adaptation* and its equivalent *accommodation* assumed that the theology and worship that left Europe was wholesome, in other words the Church imported by the missionaries was a 'finished and perfect product.' The familiar model is the pot-plant where it is brought from the missionary's culture and nurtured to blossom in the local

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[9] Noel Rutherford. *Shirley Baker and the King of Tonga*. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1971), 60-61.

[10] Arbuckle, 13-14.

soil. The plant represents the gospel while the pot *and even the soil* represent European culture. It was the European way of living Christianity well packaged and ready to be exported, passively received and maintained. Although the missionaries were now in a different culture from home the local church structures, theology, liturgy and understanding of the Gospel remain unaltered. It presupposed that the European way of living Christianity had little or nothing to gain or learn from the host culture.

Some adjustments to enable basic reception would have to be made in order to make the gospel better understood to a people who did not have the advantage of growing up in Europe, but these minor readjustments were done by the missionary. According to Gerald A. Arbuckle the host culture was seen as a machine; the missionary, who was the 'technician,' would alone decide which and when part of the machine needed replacement and what to replace it with. The expectation was that this adaptation instigated by the missionary would be welcomed by the local people and claimed by them as their own. Such an approach did not encourage the missionaries to enter into an in-depth dialogue with the local culture,[11] indeed it is not cynical to suggest that knowing much could confuse and impede the process.

In the 1940s and 1950s the term indigenization became common but often it was no more than the local people taking up leadership positions in the local church, replicating the foreign manner of practising religion. It must also be noted that indigenisation, where it occurred, did so under the influence of diminishing colonial control and growing uncertainty about continued missionary access, the cases of China from 1911 and even more 1948-1950 and of India after Independence causing great anxiety to the world missionary movement. The final goal, according to Pius XII in 1951, was "… the firm establishment of the Church among the peoples, each [local Church] having its own hierarchy chosen from the ranks of the native clergy."[12]

Such ideas were not new, and indeed we find them in 19th century Protestant India, China and Korea, where several missionaries saw that the goal of indigenization was

[11] Ibid. 17.

[12] Ibid. 14.

for the local church to become self governing, self-supporting and self propagating. This model of the three-self church was proposed by Henry Venn in India and Nevius in China and Korea. Yet it was not easy for a local church to be totally independent of foreign support. The local leaders were either trained up in the West or were previously under the tutorship of missionaries from the West. Wherever the local way of being was seen as a problem to be eliminated or re-jigged, but the local church was not seen as part of the problem, a change of face could achieve little if there was no change of (never mind challenge to) faith. The local churches in fact continued to rely heavily on outside financial backing and of course 'whoever pays the piper' calls the tune. It follows that European theology and worship were still dominant and local theology was still under-developed.

Moreover indigenization tended to stress the 'original local culture' when the early missionaries arrived, hence often giving the incorrect impression that this 'original local culture' was fixed and ignoring totally the role of the elite – who usually interacted with the missionaries in privileging 'their' version of that culture. So indigenisation in practice related the gospel to past traditions but did not and does not seriously consider the present forces that bring about changes. Most of the local churches[13] turned a blind eye to the necessary differentiation in 'culture' based on age, gender and class, and indeed indigenisation could lead to a replication, and even an exacerbation, of male dominance, with women expected to remain silent and at best working 'behind the scene.' According to such patterns, women do not participate in meetings which mean there is no woman lay preacher or minister. More recently, even if women are ordained as ministers they cannot take some of the influential positions that have been traditionally held by men. The junior ministers are expected to agree and follow the decisions made by the senior ministers, so that church debates would be done by the senior ministers and the rest of the meeting, equally ordained ministers of the Word, would only listen. It is the wish of the leaders that becomes the 'pattern' for the church. That is, the church is only a rubber stamp for the leaders of the church, and the church the rubber stamp for the maintenance of past patterns.

[13] 'Local churches' in this paragraph refers specifically to the two indigenous churches the Free Church of Tonga and the Church of Tonga.

In short, 'indigenization' ideas and practice had little to do with theology or the idea of challenge to Gospel and culture. It was a movement which, on the whole, lacked any anthropological sophistication regarding culture, power, representation, and history, but is perhaps most clearly to be understood as a pragmatic response to the official end of colonialism in various regions and to the expulsions of the missionaries after the Communist revolution in China.

Contextualization

The Catholic Church did not adopt a pluralistic view of culture until the middle of the twentieth century. The first allusion to a pluralistic view of culture in a Papal document was in 1944. This modern view of culture also made a leap forward when Pope John XXIII addressed the Second International Congress of Negro Artists and Writers in 1959. He reaffirmed the Church's position on multiculturalism and the equality of cultures.

> Whenever the authentic values of art and thought can enrich the culture of the human family, the Church is ready to encourage and give her patronage to these products of the spirit...As you know, she does not identify herself with any one culture to the exclusion of the rest – not even with European and Western culture, with which her history so closely linked…And it is a matter of no consequence that these things may not always spring from Mediterranean lands, which in God's providence formed the cradle of her infancy.[14]

The Pope made it clear that the Catholic Church does not make a distinction of a particular culture apart from the others. Europe and the Western cultures are not privileged cultures, nor are any of the historic lands of the Mediterranean singled out as being especially significant for the maintenance of the faith in modern times.

In early 1972 a new term, contextualization, was used by the Protestants Shoki Coe and Aharon Sapsezian, directors of the Theological Education Fund.[15] The publication of that year *Ministry and Context* saw contextualization to mean:

> …all that is implied in the familiar term indigenization and yet seeks to press beyond. Contextualization has to do with how we assess the peculiarity of third-world contexts. Indigenization tends to be used in

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[14] Shorter, *Toward a Theology,* 187.

[15] Bruce J. Nicholls. *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture.* (Paternoster Press, Exeter: 1979), 21.

> the sense of responding to the gospel in terms of a traditional culture. Contextualization, while not ignoring this, takes into account the process of secularity, technology and the struggle for human justice which characterized the historical moment of nations in the Third World.[16]

This notion of contextualization seeks a wider horizon of concern than indigenization but it is inadequate in the sense that all churches regardless of geographical locations are contextualized and this is not confined to the Third World churches as projected by relating it just to the third-world. As Stephen B. Bevans articulated, "doing theology contextually is not an option" but an imperative and is therefore not only needed in the Third World. The attempt to comprehend faith in a particular context is essential[17] and as we have seen, every single context includes fissures, sub-groups, varied approaches and interests. Contextualization, although still insisting that the presentation of the gospel should fit the context, now puts more emphasis on the forces that bring about the changes. Indigenization majored on the purely 'cultural' aspect of human experience while contextualization broadens the horizon to include social, political and economic issues. While indigenization tended to 'speak well' of the cultures, indeed to maintain them, contextualization tends to be critical of both bringing *and* receiving cultures. [18] While indigenization tends to portray culture as 'fixed' and unitary, contextualization sees culture as continuously changing. It is emboldened to address the immediate need and concern rather than clinging on to old models or ways not relevant to the present situation. It is, or should be, always prophetic and is concerned with current issues such as distribution of wealth, poverty and riches, land ownership, justice, power politics, bribery and corruption, freedom of speech, and all that affects the peace and stability found in a society. Yet, as with Church and State relations noted earlier, contextualization could be harnessed by the local context to maintain the church, or use the church to maintain the local context Hence contextualization could easily become a vehicle for maintaining the status quo. While this is especially vivid in the context of India, where contextualizing Christianity according to the ideology of the Vedata/Brahmic elite can support the subjugation of the Dalit, contextualization in the stratified Tongan context also

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[16] Kosuke Koyama. *Waterbuffalo Theology.* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1974), 20-21.

[17] Stephens B. Bevans. *Models of Contextual Theology.* Revised and Expanded Version. 2nd Printing. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 3.

[18] Ibid. 26-27.

contains that risk, supporting the ideology of the King and chiefs which rests on the ancient but still relevant sacred-secular unity.

Indeed the main criticisms of contextualization are firstly that it is often used by theologians only with reference to the Third World neglecting the fact that both the Gospel as conveyed had itself been and still was being contextualized in the richer and more powerful sending world, and reduces the critical reflective approach being used in the rest of the world on its own theology and practice including that richer and more powerful 'West'[19]. And secondly it still strongly enables the interaction between the gospel and cultures to remain at the external and superficial level, especially as contextualization is so very often understood to have been achieved where local dress, dance and the like are part of church services.

Inculturation

Pope Paul VI published the document *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975. It demands that evangelizers should not work only with what is seen on the surface but must always aim for the gospel to descend deep into the heart of the culture which is often not visible. It was the first Roman Catholic document to borrow and use the latest cultural anthropological understanding of culture. The fact that signs and symbols are at the heart of culture means that evangelization must pierce deep within. Evangelization which does not go deep to the very roots, way beneath the spoken surface, is not evangelization at all. In this document, which is called the Charter of Inculturation, the Pope verified the nature of evangelization:

> What matters is to evangelize human culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to the very roots)….The transposition has to be done with discernment, seriousness, respect and competence.[20]

A document from the World Council of Churches on evangelism and mission similar to that of the *Evangelii Nuntiandi* was published in 1982. While it is clearly in support of inculturation, its emphasis is on the political and social liberation aspect.

> The planting of the Church in different cultures demands a positive attitude towards inculturation of the Gospel….Inculturation has its

[19] I do not wish to imply that 'the West' is one unit in which all are equal in wealth and power – for this is clearly not the case. But in theological terms, Europe Australia and America do have more power, money and influence than do Third World churches and theologians.

[20] Arbuckle, 15- 16.

> source and inspiration in the mystery of the incarnation….Inculturation should not be understood merely as intellectual research; it occurs when Christians express their faith in the symbols and images of their respective culture. The best way to stimulate the process of inculturation is to participate in the struggle of the less privileged for their liberation.[21]

Yet this is still not reaching inculturation in the way Gittins sees it, the way with which this dissertation begins, for there is still the danger of remaining at the level of symbols, without challenging the unspoken givens of a context.

How and when the term *inculturation* came into being is uncertain but it was most likely introduced and gained popularity due to the work of the Society of Jesus. The very first recorded usage in the theological sense is likely to by Fr Masson SJ before the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962. He wrote:

> Today there is a more urgent need for a Catholicism that is inculturated in a variety of forms …

It first appeared in a papal document in 1979. The term *inculturation* was not confined only to churches in the Third World under the use of the central administration of the Jesuits. This appeal for evangelization was careful to make no distinction between the Third and the First World. The whole world was the 'mission field." Fr Pedro Arrupe, Jesuit Superior General wrote that the need for inculturation was universal.[22] One could extend it further: it is not only the evangelized culture and its people which have the need but also the *evangelizers'* culture and its people. The local people not only deserve a meaningful and clear presentation of the gospel but should also be able to see the gospel values in the lives of the evangelizers who are themselves challenged. Commonly used is the analogy of the Word's incarnation and *inculturation*: just as the Word became flesh and entered into the Jewish culture of first century Palestine so must the Christian faith take on and challenge every single culture that receives it. [23]

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[21] Ibid. 21-22.

[22]Arbuckle, 17.

[23]Gittins, *Beyond Liturgical Inculturation,* 47-48. Two terms sometimes mixed up with *inculturation* are *enculturation* and *acculturation*. Unlike *inculturation,* which is a theological term, both are sociological. *Enculturation* is the process of learning of a growing child that equips him or her to be a member of the culture. *Acculturation* is the process and outcome of contact between two cultures or cultures.

Most probably there is no single definition of *inculturation* that is accepted by all and there is no necessity. According to Aylward Shorter a working definition would be that *inculturation* is "the presentation and re-expression of the Gospel in forms and terms proper to a culture - processes which result in the reinterpretation of both without being unfaithful to either."[24] The focus is on making the gospel message meaningful and appropriate to the local culture, but this is not done by others on behalf of the local people, but by them. The local people can now claim to a certain extent that the 'gospel message' is for them as much as it is for the missionaries and the rest of the world. Shorter mentioned two definitions of *inculturation* which emphasize either the gospel or the culture:

> The process of a deep, sympathetic adaptation to, and appropriation of, a local culture in which the Church finds itself, in a way that does not compromise its basic faith.
>
> The process by which a particular people respond to the saving Word of God and express their response in their own cultural forms of worship, reflection, organization and life. This is how a local church is born and continues to live.[25]

One cannot deny that the first introduction of the gospel message by the early missionaries and all attempts to make the local people feel at home with the gospel message were necessary steps, but they were steps only of contextualisation to allow a basic unchallenging understanding.

Anthony Gittins, in his article "*Beyond Liturgical Inculturation: Transforming the Deep Structures of Faith*"[26] took a different emphasis regarding *inculturation.* This is the position that this thesis is taking. He contended that *inculturation* only occurs when there is an authentic transformation or *metanoia* in the lives of people and cultures to enable faith. One could say that the aim of *inculturation* is thorough and

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[24] Aylward Shorter. "Inculturation: Win or loose the future?" in *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 3.* James A. Scherer, Stephen B.Bevans. eds. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 55

[25] Aylward Shorter. *Evangelization and Culture.* (Geoffrey Chapman: London, 1994), 32.

[26] Gittins. "Beyond Liturgical Inculturation, 47-72.

permanent conversion seen not as an event but a process. He cautioned that a "renewal of liturgical *practice* is not *inculturation*: whatever appears purely at the behavioural, performative level is *acculturation*, the effect of contact between Christianity (a 'culture') and a local community (a 'culture')…: it is a modification of culture, not necessarily by faith."[27]He maintained that in order for *inculturation* to occur, the "deep structures" of Christianity must be translated into the "deep structures" of the lives of people and cultures. It must then generate transformations in the "surface structures" of the actual lives of the people. We must comprehend how faith, which is invisible, links up to the observable good works that Christians do. If we fail to trace the connection between the deep structures of faith and the surface structures or actual behaviour of Christians then we have not progressed beyond *acculturation*. It may be a behavioural or cultural modification or expression but definitely not an authentic transformation of lives. [28]

To illuminate his approach to *inculturation* Gittins uses language as an analogy in connection with Noam Chomky's model, and the discussion here draws heavily from Gittins' text. Extending the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, Chomsky reduced contemporary English into some one hundred and fifty rules for creating, assessing and judging whether 'utterances' are grammatically correct. He created the utterance "colourless green ideas sleep furiously" which is perfect grammatically but has no meaning in the real world. Another well known construct was "The wine is agreeable but the meat stinks" which again is perfectly grammatical but conveys little meaning. His model exposes the inadequacy of grammar unrelated to the real world of meaning. According to Gittins the possibilities offered by this linguistic study for the evangelizer are enormous, for our theological formulations and liturgical innovations may also be 'perfect grammar' but, like "sleeping furiously", offer little meaning to the local way of thought of the people.[29]

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[27] Ibid. 49.

[28] Ibid. 50.

[29] Anthony J. Gittins. *Gifts and Strangers: Meeting the Challenge of Inculturation.* (New York and Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1989), 20-21.

He defined linguistic competence as a "person's – or a community's- basic intuition, meaning and acceptability, as well as strict grammaticality." He contrasted linguistic competence with ordinary performance or the "actual speech, including hesitations, repetitions, and even errors." One cannot reduce a language to mere performance as if that performance is a completed event since every language remains "capable of producing utterances never been previously articulated, that can nevertheless be routinely produced and understood." [30] Even if we can compute all the utterances ever spoken we still could not contain the language. Applying this to *inculturation* Gittins wrote:

> *Inculturation* requires conformity between faith and works, and consistency between the practices of our lives and the faith that generates them. It is not just a matter of changing people's performance but of transforming or critically converting their *competence*, and not simply replacing one set of practices by another. It demands that we identify the core values (faith) underlying the practice of Christian life and find the convergence or correspondence between them and the core values of a culture.[31]

As agents of *inculturation,* pastors, ministers, priests, elders, and people cannot afford to be unsure of the relationship between the deep structures of faith or Christianity and the surface structures or the actual work and behaviour of Christians: there is a problem with Gittins' assumption that the missionizer is the agent, as that implies inculturation comes from outside, and that it is not engaged in by ordinary non-theologically trained people: he may intend the reader to understand that all members of the church are missionizers, but has not done so.

Who is involved, is an important point because if the missionizer as external person is to "do the inculturation," he or she is less likely to access the deep structures. One who speaks a second language would be able to generate some surface structures of the language but because of the slight command and understanding of the deep structures of the language such a person is unlikely to have only limited ability effectively to relate the deep and the surface levels. This is because he or she lacks the intuitive capacity and the creativity that a native speaker has.[32] Applying this to *inculturation,* some people may produce surface structures in liturgy and culture but

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[30] Gittins, *Beyond Liturgical Inculturation,* 50.

[31] Ibid. 49-50.

[32] Ibid. 52-53.

if they are 'foreigners' (and this category may included 'local-born' from an elite, or a very specific niche, nor does it totally exclude that rare foreign-born speaker who can function at both deep and surface structure of the language[33]) they will lack the command and the creativity of the native speaker. Gittins claimed that:

> An approach to inculturation that is purely behaviouristic (concentrating on 'liturgical formation...The Right Application of the Conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy, or the faithful translation of an *editio typica*), cannot change people's core values, the deep structures of their faith. But unless their competence is modified or extended, there will be no authentic transformation of lives.[34]

Prior to this study by Chomsky the focus was confined to the actual sentences, for which in missiology we can read liturgy and ritual, but since his transformational-*generative grammar*[35] enables experiments with the deep structure to generate new combinations and "determine the acceptability (or not) of sentences in relation to the intuitions of native speakers, thus accounting for unacceptable and non-grammatical forms." In such a process, the local pew-sitter, the local person outside the church, is the assessor. The application to and implication of this Chomskian process for theology and liturgy is that the life of a Christian should not be merely copying and reiterating past forms but the creation of something new and more comprehensible and meaningful.[36] *Inculturation* is grateful for the past but is simultaneously opening up and expecting something totally new which it does not a priori know. This may not be comfortable for the church as an institution, naturally given to order.

Translation from one language to another was another analogy Gittins chose to demonstrate the call for *inculturation* to go deep instead of settling on the surface. Translating could be a betrayal, a travesty of the original, if it is not done with respect and knowledge. A good translation must be more than just a delivery of information. To make a good translation it is crucial that the translator knows both

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[33] The French Protestant missionary and later anthropologist Maurice Leenhardt is one example, his work on Vanuatu, set out in his book. *Do kamo: person and myth in the Melanesian world.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press.1979) showing the possibility for outsiders to enter another world.

[34] Gittins, *Beyond Liturgical Inculturation,* 52-53.

[35] Ibid. 49. Generative Grammar is 'a set of rules that specifies the structure, interpretation, and pronunciation of sentences that native speakers accepts as belonging to the language. It represents native speaker's *competence* in, or knowledge of, their language.'

[36] Ibid. 52-53.

languages and cultures and levels well.[37] The challenge is how to translate the gospel values and the actual words of the scriptures so that the original meanings come through clearly and the local hearers identify with what they are hearing. The impact of the translation should at least be equal to or better than the impact on the original hearers, being both creative and appropriate. In order to arrive at such depth there must be a substantial involvement of and contribution from the local culture and its people.

Just as when a 'contextualised ' liturgy is seen merely altering this or that gesture, phrase or movement to suit local mores while the whole remains the same as in the source, so too translation which is a word- for- word or literal translation adopts and settles for the formal equivalence approach. Languages are incorrectly envisaged as been constructed in a more or less identical manner, translating being just filling in the slots from one to the other. But, as Gittins says, such a method has limited ability and is not capable of translating the metaphors and poetry and the "rolling cadences of language." On the other hand dynamic equivalence "…seeks to get beneath the surface, to find the core of the language, and then to translate it into the core of another language. It requires exploration of the deep structures."[38] This may challenge, as it should, both the translator and the church which will be using the new text. Pope Paul VI warns of the type of evangelization that fails to respect and listen to the local culture.

> Evangelization loses most of its force if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life.

The application to *inculturation* is that landing with pre-packaged ideas and ways of implementation would be an obstacle to any in-depth encounter: mission by slotting in old concepts to the holes is pathetically inadequate; indeed it would be meaningless to and disastrous for the host culture. The 'slot-filling' evangelizer naively assumes that the host culture and its people would arrive at the same meaning as his or hers, or that the lower classes in a rank-ordered society also see the world as expressed in language and symbol exactly as an elite missioniser would. In

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[37] Gittins, *Gifts and Strangers,* 18-19.

[38] Gittins, *Beyond Liturgical Inculturation*, 54.

order for one to understand questions, language, signs, and symbols of the other, one needs patience and time, acknowledgement that one knows little, and a commitment to listen and learn from the hosting context and its people. There cannot be overnight success.

Equally important is that the evangelizer must be willing to learn and to be challenged and changed by the local culture and its people. It is not only the evangelizer who teaches local people; the local people also have 'treasures' of great value to teach the evangelizer. The evangelizer must be willing and prepared to listen to and grasp their views and opinions and be challenged in his own life and her own faith. In other words the evangelizer should be well geared up to be changed in this meeting with the local people, and to let go of any sense of ownership of the message. The local people must judge for themselves whether the evangelizer (whether home-grown or imported)_is not only the embodiment of the fruits of the Holy Spirit but is also humble enough to accept that he or she too must be open to receiving the Word mediated by the hosts. Gittins, in a more recent text, has made this often rejected point with great insistence, that mission, just like ministry, is only feasible, viable and creative if the missioniser or minister is prepared to be changed by the encounter. He wrote:

> …we are always called to engage in appropriate ministry – collaborative ministry-not simply for the poor or to the needy, but with those whose lives may be changed by the encounter. And that, of course must include ourselves. Unless mission in reverse (which seeks total conversion of the evangelizer) is deliberately undertaken, our best efforts will be undermined because our conversion is not part of our missionary motivation.[39]

If *inculturation* is chiefly the work of the Holy Spirit it entails that the whole world and everything in it is within the scope of *inculturation* for it "is the work of the Holy Spirit making all things new; no part of life is excluded."[40] The lesson the Church should learn is that we should never, we can never, 'box in' *inculturation* according to our human limitations and then call it 'authentic.' Gittins contended that "inculturation must be nothing less than the transformation of everything." It demands that our concern should not be restricted only to the church and its related

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[39] Anthony J. Gittins. *Where There's Hope There's Life: Women Stories of Homelessness and Survival*. (Liguori/Missouri: Liguori/Triumph, 2006), 137-138.

[40] Gittins, *Beyond Liturgical Inculturation,* 64.

activities. Liturgical concern is only a small part of it: our theology, worldview, church, family, country, education, economics, politics, sports, in short, our world, is to be transformed. The final outcome must be a transformed people and a transformed world. It must be the creation of a new world.[41]

For one to know the deep structures or core values of Christianity, also known as the gospel values, one has to identify and obey the commandments of the Lord who said "…if you love me, keep my commandments." One has to look at the work of the Holy Spirit as expressed in the gifts and the fruits (Galatians 5:22-3). These are deep structures of Christianity. We must not stop only with *knowing and talking* about these gospel values, as Gittins pointed out. These are only ideals and abstractions and *inculturation* will not occur until these gospel core values are embodied in the lives of people and their ways of seeing the visible and less-visible world, their cultures. That is, *inculturation* must be an embodiment of faith, challenging and risking the transformation of all. When faith is truly inculturated Christians would be the embodiment of love, peace, joy, forgiveness, and the other gospel values. An inculturated faith produced good works and behaviour. Faith that is not matched by good works is a corpse: the two always go together. Hence the deep structures of Christianity incarnated in the lives of Christians bear the fruit of inculturation – the gospel values in their lives of faith.

It is all very well knowing and teaching about the fruits of the Holy Spirit like gentleness, kindness and faithfulness but it is impossible for one to bring forth fruits of the Holy Spirit; only the Holy Spirit can do that. A coconut tree can only bring forth coconuts and no other fruit. Human effort can only produce fake fruits but no one wants that. This inculturated faith mentioned above is an indispensable component of one's relationship with the Holy Spirit. *Metanoia* can only be found within this relationship. *Inculturation* is essentially how one relates to the Holy Spirit and that relationship is meant to be continuous. Even the departure of the resurrected Lord was no hindrance but an enhancement to the disciples' relationship with the Holy Spirit. Their relationship with the Holy Spirit determines the outcome of their ministry. Deep structures are revealed and encountered only through relationships,

[41] Ibid. 60.

through reflection, through listening, through learning. Without this 'Holy Spirit relationship' it is impossible to experience 'changing of hearts' or 'changing of lives.' The priority of this relationship is even made clear when the Lord gave the picture that he is the vine and we are the branches and our bearing of fruits depends exclusively on one's abiding. It is not so much about how hard we try but our continuous abiding in this relationship.

The application and implication of this linguistic theory to theology and *inculturation* is revealing. There can be no ending for *inculturation*: to say that we have arrived or completed or even to admit success would be unfounded, for the relationship continues. Conversion of lives, though essential, is only an experience during the journey not the destination. *Metanoia* can never be the end but only the beginning of the journey. Lives may have authentically changed and communities transformed, but the relationship, the movement, the unfolding, continues. The destination is not a place but a relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. History proves that even some who began well failed to finish well. The demand to remain or abide in this relation is not an option; our bearing of fruits relies only on that abiding relationship and nothing else.

The event of the Word becoming 'flesh' and settling amongst humankind is foundational for the theology of inculturation. It was also a story of the Lord's enculturation in Jewish culture. Often this is highlighted as the blueprint for the evangelizer to follow when encountering a different culture. One should not enter a different culture with arrogance and an attitude of superiority but with humility and respect. But one cannot deny that what stands out more than anything else in the Lord's attitude towards the Jewish culture of the day was the manner in which he confronted the religious elite who were at the heart of the culture. He was renowned for breaching the norms of the religious Jewish culture rather than keeping to them for the sake of custom. He was bold enough to speak critically against the status quo. Whenever it came to a choice between the imperatives of the culture and the will of God he always chose the latter. In the eyes of the religious elite it was his violation of the religious traditions that led to his death. The approach that this thesis is taking is that while we are proud as Tongans of our traditions and culture at the same time we should be honest enough to accept that the cultural heritage we are proud of is far

from perfect and that we should with humility allow the core values of the gospel to continuously challenge it.

Chiefly focus as a theme to be considered

In a highly stratified society like Tonga it is imperative that for anyone involved and interested in the dialogue and discussion of gospel and culture, they address the question of power and authority or least to give a thought to it. One must comprehend that what is commonly accepted as the Tongan way of life is the chiefly values, understandings and ways of doing things. The chiefly way of life is the dominant culture. This chiefly focus is the essence of the deep structures of the culture and its people, for the majority who are not of 'chiefly' origin have little chance of being heard or considered. It is difficult to think of any aspect of Tongan society which is outside of and not affected by this chiefly focus. Almost everything in the country including the Church and especially the FWC revolves around this chiefly centre. These elite few are not only those ascribed as chiefs but anyone like the *faifekau* or minister and the theologian who achieve that authority and status. They, chief and minister, are the most interested party in maintaining this cultural way unchallenged, for they, both chief and minister, are the main beneficiaries. It follows that in trying to contextualize the gospel in the Tongan context one should never take lightly the fact that at the heart of Tongan culture is this chiefly focus. This is the challenge that everyone interested in inculturation of gospel values in the Tongan context has to constantly confront and wrestle with and there is no quick and easy solution. As Robert Schreiter reminded us there are two kinds of contextual theologies: one tries to reaffirm identity and culture while the other highlights the need to be liberated from poverty and oppression.[42] It follows that in order to own a relevant living theology for the Tongan context one should prophetically address this chiefly focus. This concern for the core value of Tongan culture is well articulated by Sister Ann Katian Kanongata'a in her article "*Why Contextual?*" [43]when she wrote,

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[42] Robert J. Schreiter. *Constructing Local Theologies*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 12-15.

[43] Keiti Ann Kanongata'a, "Why Contextual?" *Pacific Journal of Theology* 27 (2002): 21-39.

"We need a theology that will penetrate the depth and foundation of our social structure."[44]

However from the dialogue and discussion on gospel and culture in the Pacific at least in the Tongan context so far it seems that this question of power is not given that place of importance it should have. If it is mentioned, most of the time it is generalised as 'socio-political issues' which touches only the surface. We can only assume that some still have the illusion that the so called 'Friendly Isles' have little or nothing to worry about regarding power and authority. Another possible assumption is that because the question of power deals directly with the status quo one is definitely asking for trouble if the topic of the clash between the deep structure of Tongan life and the most ordinary demands of a life in Christ is discussed. The warning is that one 'should not point to the rainbow,' or " *'oua teke tuhu ki he 'umata*," not try reaching the 'unreachable.' Indeed, hearing about this thesis, an expatriate FWC minister suggested that "You are treading on dangerous grounds. However, this is the road the Master went. Should not the servant tread it still?"[45]

This thesis contends that the failure to confront the issue, the failure to risk inculturating the church in Tonga but rather sticking with indigenisation and a superficial contextualisation is not to be attributed to either ignorance or fear, but to both. The Church, especially the FWC, is still naïve to hold on to the illusion that the Tongan society of today is still the same as the society that the folk songs of the 60s were proud to sing of: "*Sai pe si'i Tonga*," or Tonga is alright," "*Palataisi pe'a Tonga*," or "Tonga is a Paradise," the "jewel of the Pacific." The greatest public demonstration in history against the government in history took place on August 2005 and the burning and looting of at least seventy percent of the shopping centre in Nuku'alofa on the 16th November 2006 with an estimated loss of at least three hundred million dollars were both directly linked with the power structure. This is a sure warning that one who is seriously considering Tonga and the church, so clearly embodied in the Tongan flag, cannot afford to overlook the question of power.

Contextualisation and inculturation have been reflected upon in the Pacific for the last thirty years as 'Coconut Theology', whose first proponent was the late Rev. Dr. Sione 'Amanaki Havea a former Principal of the Pacific Theological College and

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[44] Ibid. 23.

[45] Personal communication with the author on 13/12/2004.

President of the FWC.[46] This new Theology is claimed to be the first to have come out of the Pacific island nations independent of Western theology, dominant in the region for at least a hundred and fifty years. The coconut tree was chosen because it is found in nearly every island in the South Pacific, and because in terms of usefulness it surpasses every other tree or plant, every part of it from shoot to root being of use.

Coconut theology's three principal themes were Christology, *Kairos* and Communion.[47] As regard the first, the fruit when it ripens falls down and, being spherical, rolls down to the lowest point on the ground. There it will germinate or 'die' if left long enough and a new tree will arise. One therefore looks at the parallel between the life of Jesus and a coconut cycle, Jesus who was with the Father coming down and living amongst us, dying and rising again. Then there is the *kairos* or the coconut time. The understanding of *kairos* comes from the ripening of the coconut fruit. We can do nothing to speed up or delay that process, which depends entirely on the tree. Unlike his Western counterpart who is more or less a slave of the clock as shown by expressions like "time is money" the Pacific Islander can afford to relax and take his time for his time is coconut or the Pacific time. Many things in life will happen only in their own time: that is 'fulfilled time.' The last theme is communion, where the coconut became an image of the Holy Communion. Already in some congregations in the Pacific the coconut meat and juice have taken the place of the bread and the wine.

While it has certainly made an impact, it is my contention that Coconut Theology has yet to challenge the deep structures of Tongan culture. It speaks well of and reaffirms the positive elements of the culture but is not critical and prophetic enough to tackle the forces which very much affect the lives of the people like the control of the cultural voice, the abuse of authority, nepotism, the distribution of wealth and the distribution of land. As noted by Randall Prior unlike other theologies that come out of the Third World like Dalit theology and Minjung theology, Coconut Theology

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[46] Ma'afu 'o Tu'i Tonga Palu. "Intra-textualization: towards a Bible-centred approach for Contextualization in Pacific Theology" *Ko e 'Uuni Okooko 'I he Lotukalafi*. (Nuku'alofa: Tonga Mo'unga ki he Loto he Papai Faka'evangelio 'o Uesile Theological Society, 2003), 59-60.

[47] Randall Prior, "I am the Coconut of Life," *Pacific Journal of Theology* 10, no.2 (1993): 31-40.

cannot claim to have been the outcome of a struggle of the people of faith to live out the values of the gospel in their particular context.[48] Yet it should be.

The enormity of the task is demonstrated by the fact that unlike its non-conformist beginning in England the FWC since the Wesleyan Mission began in 1826 has, apart from one brief period explained later, consistently been the main body supporting the social structure of Tonga. It seems that this interaction between the gospel values and the culture has been happy to remain only at a superficial level instead of going deep into those aspects of Tongan life which should seriously be challenged. Traditional practices have been incorporated like the *kava* ceremony before the service and traditional dresses worn. Leadership roles have been taken by up by Tongans, and the Bible, hymns and the services are all in the vernacular but still the FWC has remained a fervent supporter of the status quo as expressed in the chiefly system. This is not only because these elements, being underlying, are core values of the culture. Far more important, this thesis claims, is the fact that the FWC, especially the ministers (of which I am one) who are also the 'trained' theologians, are happily part of this chiefly few who are at the focal point of the culture.

This concern about the dominant culture was the first to be highlighted by Kanongata'a in her article "*Why Contextual?*" She did not put the responsibility on one particular denomination but the entire Church. Most of the main line churches have this tension, although to a lesser degree than the FWC, the backbone of the Establishment. The Tongan way and the Christian way are diametrically opposed. While Tongan culture values as *me'avale* or 'stupid thing' the ninety five percent of the population, church is delighted to call them a son or a daughter and an heir, but for nearly a hundred and sixty years, it has been words only: the Church does not care about the *fonua*, the people.

> To name a human person a *me'avale* is degrading. Yet it seems that no one, even our 155 years of Christian faith has ever challenged this dehumanizing structure. The Church is not challenging our social structure because the Church itself in Tonga is a replica of this pyramid or kingship model of our Polynesian society. The Bishop/President is as the King on top of the pyramid, the priests/ministers are the nobles, and the non-ordained are the "*me'avale*" – the stupid things! The Church is silent and there is no prophet in Tonga to bring God's liberating message that God creates us in God's image…that God in the Bible names and calls us with the

[48] Ibid. 39.

> utmost and uplifting names such as: "You are my delight."; "You are precious." You are sons and daughters and heirs to the Kingdom…"[49]

The Church does not seem eager to learn because it has its own hierarchical structure which is a tainted reflection of the Tongan way. The Church to some extent has been moulded by the culture, to mirror it faithfully, instead of the other way round.

In a different context but still in the South Pacific is the neighbouring nation of Fiji. In his article *What is Contextual Theology: A View from Oceania*,[50] the former President of the Methodist Church of Fiji and Principal of the Pacific Theological College Rev. Dr. Ilaitia S. Tuwere looked for a relevant and meaningful theology for the Fijian context from the viewpoint of four hermeneutical keys, drawing them from Pacific rather than Western theology. All of these four ideas were taken from the *vanua* (*fonua* in Tongan) or the land. These *vanua*-related concepts were the *kunekunetaki* or conception, *mata* or face, *mana* or energy and *veirogorogoci* or listen. In the process of making the Christian faith more meaningful in the Fijian context, these *vanua*-related concepts point out what the Christian faith may mean in the Fijian setting. At the interface *mata* of the context and the revelation a new community is being born. The critical element of the gospel is sharpened up and empowered *mana* by the language and knowledge of the culture to challenge anything in the culture which is not in line with the values of the gospel. Life affirming elements of the culture are promoted by the gospel. The *vanua* remains God's creation and should be taken up as the context of God's intervention in Christ. The four *vanua*-related concepts may have been helpful to the Fijian context, as Tuwere claimed.[51] However, the attempt to compose a theology based on the land or *fonua* in the Tongan context would founder on Tongan rank-ordering and the cultural mat: the gospel cannot be inculturated if it is based on an unchallenged reading of the Tongan land.

Any attempt to create a *fonua*-related theology in the Tongan situation without taking the political and social structure seriously simply maintains the status quo. According to tradition, still operating, the majority of the population, the *me'avale* or stupid, do not have a positive and reaffirming linked with the *fonua*, but are derogatively called

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[49] Kanongata'a, 22

[50] Ilaitia S. Tuwere, "What is Contextual Theology: A View from Oceania," *Pacific Journal of Theology* 27, no. 2 (200): 7-19.

[51] Ibid. 15-16.

kainanga'o e fonua or eaters of the land and that, in the eyes of Tongan tradition means they are worms. The eaters of the land may work it to survive but land, all land, belongs to the chiefs as indicated in the common declaration today in any public function when speakers acknowledge " *Ko e fonua 'eni 'o Tupou mo Hou'eiki*." which could be translated "This land belongs to Tupou [the monarch] and the chiefs." The land therefore in the eyes of Tongan custom is definitely a chiefly possession and the larger the land, on which live the many worms, the more powerful is the chief. An example is the town of Mu'a (the old capital of Tonga) which is the estate of the holder of the chiefly title Tungi, Tungi being the leader of the chiefly line Ha'a Takalaua. At a funeral where I attended Tungi's representative Tu'akalau in giving his speech gave the first respect to the *fonua* before mentioning anyone present. He said, "*Tapu mo e kelekele 'o Ha'a Takalaua*." or "With respect to the land or soil of Ha'a Takalaua." It is just another way of giving respect to Tungi in his absence but everyone is aware that the land in this context belongs to Tungi the leader of the Ha'atakalaua chiefly line. And land, as we shall see later, is not merely a material possession but is imbued with spiritual meaning and power (*mana*) access to which is controlled not by visible means but rather by greater power of *tapu* (taboo)

Far earlier than 'Coconut Theology' was the adoption of the *kava* as a symbol of contextual theology in the Pacific and this is still the first symbol that comes to mind when discussing contextual theology, at least in the Tongan context. *Kava* as the symbol of contextual theology is more familiar with most ministers, lay men and women than any other symbol in Tonga and in most of the Pacific islands. Here are just two of the many reflections on using the *kava* as symbol, from Samoa and Tonga both in the early 90's. In the article "Gospel and Culture in the *Ava* Ceremony," Urima Fa'asi'i from Samoa has this to say.

> Theologically, *ava* should be understood as a logically created material which can be used to manifest the sacramental reality of God's creation. The *ava* drink is produced from the crushed solid pieces of the *ava* or *kava* plant. The pounded *ava* can be interpreted as a symbol of the Christ who was crushed on the cross. From the cross His blood (the liquid *ava*) was poured out to redeem, reconcile and unify the world as God's people.[52]

[52] Urima Fa'asi'i, "Gospel and Culture in the *Ava* Ceremony," *Pacific Journal of Theology* 10, no.2 (1993): 61-63.

In his article "Tongan Culture and Christian faith: An Artist's Impression," Nasili Vaka'uta wrote:

> To the Tongans, seeing the *kava* and the *to* (sugar cane) is like seeing the Cross of Christ. And having them is like having two elements of the Eucharist. They symbolise that sacrificial love which brings life to everyone – life that Christ has offered abundantly.[53]

According to Tongan tradition both sugar cane or *to* and the *kava* plant were first found growing up from the grave of a girl named Kava, an only child living with her parents on an isolated island. There was a great famine country wide and the only food crop left in the island was their giant yam or *kape*. The situation was made more difficult for them when they found the Tu'i Tonga, the spiritual and temporal leader and link to the gods, leaning against their *kape* sheltering under its shade, together with his men. Out of respect they could not explain their problem to their sacred guest so their only option was to kill their only child Kava and put her body in the *'umu* or earth oven. The king later learned of the couple's great sacrifice and told them never to unearth the *'umu.* It was from their daughter's grave that the *kava* plant and the sugar cane grew. Regardless of the variant one is discussing, the dedication and respect of the couple to their king is the attitude that is recommended and eulogized. Cruel as it may seem, it expresses the Tongan expectation of how one should honour one's chiefs.

Many in Tonga could easily identify the parallels between the sacrifice and the dedication in the story of Kava and the life of Jesus of Nazareth. There is no occasion today of cultural significance that would go without a *kava* ceremony. That includes weddings and funerals and even the church service on Sunday where normally there is *kava* ceremony or *faikava tali malanga* before the service but one which effectively excludes all but chiefs. No doubt this is the main reason why some scholars in the Pacific, including Tonga, have tried to incorporate the *kava* ritual in Christian practice. Yet in so doing, one must be careful that this is not simply another twist towards maintaining the status quo by supporting the position of the chiefs and their right to be counted as owners of all.

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[53] Nasili Vaka'uta, "Tongan Culture and Christian faith: An Artist's Impression," *Pacific Journal of Theology* 5, no.2 (1991): 82-83.

Another example of an attempt to make the gospel more meaningful in the Pacific context is an article "Behold the Pig of God" by Rev. Dr. Ama'amalele Tofaeono[54] who contends that just as the lamb was so central in the lives of Jews like Jesus in first century Palestine the pig as an animal was and still is central to the daily life of people in Melanesia. The pig then could be a more meaningful religious symbol than the lamb in the Melanesian context. Relevant to the argument of this thesis is that Tofaeono wrote in the second sentence of his introduction about the significance difference between the Melanesian and the Polynesian context. He wrote, "These island-cultures have a more fluid, less rigid orientation to the chiefly system than the Polynesian island groups, and embrace a diversity of language groups…"[55] By saying this Tofaeono was well aware that in a strong chiefly social structure like Tonga it would not be easy to identify with the symbol of a pig.

Tonga is the most stratified society in the Pacific and as mentioned earlier it is difficult to find anything of the Tongan way of living which is not permeated by its chiefly focus. And using the pig as a symbol could easily become another twist of supporting the status quo. For every cultural occasion the pig is the main animal that is killed. The size of any occasion whether funeral, wedding, or celebration is described by the amount of food that is being generated especially the number and size of pigs that are killed. The larger the pig the bigger is the occasion; the larger the pig the higher is the rank of the chief. The largest pig or the *puaka toho* will always go to the chief, its heavy carcass being put on a carriage and pulled (*toho*) by many people. Anything to do with food is certain to have this challenge for it is in connection with food or a meal that the gap between the chiefs and the majority of the people is most apparent. The best part of the food will always go to the chief or whoever is highest in rank depending on circumstance, and that includes carving up the pig. The four parts of the pig which are fitting for a chief to eat are in their order of importance: (i) the back *tu'a,* (ii) the head *'ulu*, (iii) the rump *tu'ungaiku*, and (iv) the chest *fatafata*. The food of a chief is to be prepared in a certain style and manner as in the preparation of a roast pig. After the pig has been cooked, fresh banana leaves are tied around the extremities of the four legs, the nose and the rectum. This

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[54] Ama'amalele Tofaeono, "Behold the Pig of God: Mystery of Christ's Sacrifice in the Context of Melanesia - Oceania," *Pacific Journal of Theology,* 33 no. 2 (2005): 82-102.

[55] Tofaeono, 82.

is to conceal the parts, which are most in contact with filth and dirt.[56] Therefore even the symbol of a pig or animal in a sacramental context which could be used as food has its problems in the Tonga context, for it too could be seen as another way of supporting the status quo.

One must appreciate every attempt, including those mentioned so far, of making the gospel more meaningful in the Pacific context but this thesis still insists that it must go beyond that. The test is whether it has led to the transformation of lives.

In the light of Gittins' assertion, both here and in other texts, *inculturation* is certainly not just the introduction of the gospel message in a minimally intelligible language though that clearly is an essential prerequisite. It is not a superficial adaptation or merely a cultural expression of the gospel message. It is not enough to be appropriate, indigenized, contextualized, comprehensible and pleasing to the ear and entertaining to the eye of the local culture and its people. It is not a baptism of elements of the culture to make them suitably if superficially 'Christian.' It is not enough to be properly 'sympathetic' to the local culture or to any specific culture: sympathy can imply superiority and can also be withdrawn. It must advance beyond a 'continuing dialogue between gospel and culture.' There has to be a transformation in the lives of people and cultures. There has to be a new creation of people and cultures and nothing less.

Conclusion

It should be made clear that it is never the aim of this chapter neither to discourage any effort of contextualization nor to imply that some efforts are better or more appropriate or even more meaningful than others. Except for Tofaeono's article I have chosen these attempts because of their significance and the fact that they are familiar with most people in the Pacific. It is not my aim to write a recipe for Coconut theology, *Vanua* theology or *Kava* theology or to write a text of how they should be done. I could be easily accused of setting up a picture and not fulfilling it. The prime aim of this chapter was to show how some of our contextualizing efforts with all good intentions and meaningful as they, are, have the tendency to support

[56] Edward Winslow Gifford. [First published in 1929]. *Tongan Society.* Bulletin no. 61. (Honolulu, Hawaii: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1929), 125.

and maintain the status quo while those at the edge of society are neglected. In other words this is a brief reminder to give voice to the majority of the people, the eaters of the land, the silenced. The following chapter will look at the Tongan way of life before the first European contact and how the chiefs with power and wealth were the centre of attention in almost every aspect of life.

Chapter Two. The Cultural Text in Tonga

Introduction

As pointed out in the Introduction, inculturation is the radical permeation of individuals by the Holy Spirit, and through them of communities: given, however, that no individual exists without being part of a collective ideology, separating the two is impossible. Inculturation does not take place on a 'clean slate' in the manner in which the import of a new religion or 'superior way' of life was in essence frequently seen to take place, and inculturation is in no way external to the community, a thing done to it, but arises, if it does at all, from within, from the transforming interaction between an already encultured Gospel and encultured people. As has also been pointed out, no culture is or was homogeneous, and even what may be seen to be and presented as 'the culture' is the outcome of unwritten past variations, incursions, and unknown flexibility. Therefore the aim of this chapter is to explore in depth the 'cultural text' of pre-European Tonga, for this underlies what is currently presented as the face of Christian Tonga and it is at this level, this deep structure, to pick up on Gittins's approach, that any challenge, any 'enspiriting', would have to occur[1].

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[1] The resources to do this are the records of European visitors, from their own observations and through the accounts they were given by the Tongan chiefs, of the originators, upholders and purposes of the foundation myths. The principle texts are: J.C. Beaglehole. ed. *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his voyages of discovery: the voyage of the Resolution and Adventure 1772-1775*. Volume II. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, 1961); J. C. Beaglehole. ed. *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his voyages of discovery: the voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780.* Volume III. Part I and II. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, 1967). The first volume prints Cook's journals while the second is of his officers who travelled with him; John Martin.[first published in 1817] *Tonga Islands:William Mariner's Account*. 5th ed. Volumes I & II combined. (Nuku'alofa: Vava'u Press, 1991). William Mariner was a fifteen year old survivor of the English privateer *Port-au-Prince* deliberately wrecked at Lifuka in 1806. He was adopted by the chief Finau 'Ulukalala-i-Feletoa who masterminded the attack and gave Mariner the name Tokiukamea or 'Iron-Axe'. He spent four years in Tonga (1806-1810). On his return to England he met John Martin, a doctor who wrote the book from their conversations; James Wilson. [first published in 1799]. *A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, performed in the years 1796, 1797, 1798, in the Ship Duff, commanded by Captain James Wilson compiled from the Journals of the Officers and the Missionaries… with a Preliminary Discourse on the Geography and History of the South Sea Islands*. (Graz/ Austria.: Academische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 1966); George Vason. [first published in 1810]. *Narrative of the late George Vason of Nottingham.* (Nuku'alofa: Friendly Islands Bookshop, 1998) George Vason was one of the first group of missionaries that came to Tonga in the Duff in 1797. Attracted by the local way of life he left the missionaries and lived as a Tongan. He escaped and left for England in a missionary boat in 1801.

Whenever there is a discussion on the subject of Tongan cultural patterns one is bound to hear the Tongan phrase, '*ko e tala 'o e fonua*', for which a literal translation is difficult because it would vary depending on the circumstances of its use. It could mean 'tale or story of the land or country', with the focus on the link between the past and the present: or 'the instructions or directions of the land', with the emphasis on what values one should uphold, or 'the explanation of the land or country', with the emphasis on why these values should be upheld. Finally it could mean the blueprint of how one person should relate to another. Perhaps another expression would fit here: 'How Tongans are'. This is not, of course, free from evaluation, from social expectation of conformity, from social control, for 'how we are' is how we should be, and how we should be depends, to a very large extent indeed, in a rank-ordered, very tightly knit and controlled society such as Tonga, on how the elite of Tonga intend and therefore define it.

The Foundation Myth as basic to the values of the 'cultural mat'

To understand the *tala 'o e fonua* in its application to Tongan history and mindset it is necessary to be familiar with the myths. According to Collocott, *talatupu'a* is a name applied '…to tales of the old gods, creation myths and the like…' *Tala tupu'a* literally means 'an ancient story'[2] and like the '*tala 'o e fonua'* it was a chiefly expression. A *talatupu'a*[3] by nature would always legitimise and support the values, beliefs and cultural pattern laid down by these 'originators', with whom the chiefs claim lineage. Of course there were as many variants as there were tellers of a myth and the wording of each version would depend much on the context in which it was being told. But there is no question that the chiefly version would always override every other version. Mariner recalled that the chiefs and their spokesmen were

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[2] '*tala'* means 'story' and *'tupu' a'* means 'ancient.'

[3] E.E.V. Collocott. *Tales and Poems of Tonga.* Bernice P. Museum Bulletin 46. (Honolulu, Hawaii: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1928), 5.

familiar with most of the myths, while the majority of the people were either confused or ignorant[4]. One could only assume (and this issue is not absent today) that the majority were far from ignorant but because of fear or self-protection they had to agree with the chiefs.

The myth of the origin of the Tu'i Tonga

The foundation myth of the origin of the Tu'i Tonga is well-known today in Tonga.

As expected it highlighted chiefly views and values[5]. This evidence is in most if not all existing written versions of the foundation myth. The myth of the origin of the Tu'i Tonga validates the reason why the Tu'i Tonga should be the one ruling in Tonga. It was crucial, for every chief traced back his or her origin to the first Tu'i Tonga – the 'first king', the son of the sky god Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a[6]. In all versions of the origin of the Tu'i Tonga the primary focus remained the same[7].

The story goes that the superior god Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a was attracted to a beautiful lady on earth called Va'epopua[8]. Tangaloa came down a few times to court Va'epopua and eventually he slept with her. Va'epopua gave birth to a son who was called 'Aho'eitu. Va'epopua kept the father of her son a secret to herself. But as 'Aho'eitu grew up he constantly pestered her for the identity of his father, wanting to meet him. Va'epopua gave in and revealed the secret to him. She directed him to a *toa* tree[9] which reached the sky and advised him to climb until he reached the top. There he would meet his father waiting for him.

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[4] Martin, 307.

[5] Finau 'O Kolo. 'Histography: The Myth of Indigenous Authenticity.' In *Tongan Culture and History.* Phyllis Herda , Jennifer Terrell and Niel Gunson. eds. (Canberra:The Journal of Pacific History, 1990), 3.

[6] Edward Winslow Gifford. [first published in 1929]. *Tongan Society.* Bulletin no. 61.(Honolulu, Hawaii: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1929), 122. This was the first attempt to make a systematic and scholarly study of Tongan society. He was a member of the Bayard Dominick Expedition of Bernice P. Bishop Museum and he recorded the mass of his data during a nine month field research in 1920-1.

[7] Gifford. *Tongan Myths and Tales.* Bulletin no. 8.(Honolulu, Hawaii: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1924), 25-29; 38-43. Gifford recorded two variants.

[8] Noel Rutherford. ed. *Friendly Islands: A History of Tonga.* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1977), 27-28. This version was told to Rutherford by the late Honourable Ve'ehala the Keeper of the Palace Records at the time. This is the author's editing of that version.

[9] Casuarina tree

‘Aho‘eitu climbed until he reached the top and there he found his father happy to greet him. A feast was held in his honour, and ‘Aho‘eitu was then introduced to his elder brothers. The brothers were filled with jealousy and anger once they saw him. They invited him to join them in a game of *sika*[10]. Instead of throwing at the target, however, they speared their younger brother from earth to death, cut up his body and ate it. They lied to their father about what had happened but Tangaloa, knowing what had been done, ordered them to vomit into a *kumete* or bowl of *kava* and from that *kumete* the body of ‘Aho‘eitu was resurrected.

Then Tangaloa ordered ‘Aho‘eitu to go down to earth as his representative to rule the people of Tonga. But the brothers feeling remorse for what they had done begged for their father’s forgiveness and for permission to join their youngest brother, promising they would serve him. Tangaloa honoured their change of heart and commissioned them all as attendants of ‘Aho‘eitu and his descendants. The descendants of the eldest brother Talafale would continue the line if there was no descendant of ‘Aho‘eitu but the Talafale himself must not become king.

Six important aspects of this myth should be noted.

Firstly, it underlined that the Tu‘i Tonga dynasty was divinely chosen. It stressed that the Tu‘i Tonga line was no human invention or aspiration but a divine intervention of Tangaloa in mortal affairs. Although there were two Tu‘i Tonga before, Kohai and Koau, [11] only ‘Aho‘eitu had this unique beginning. Kohai and Koau both came from a maggot that was broken in two by a Tangaloa. ‘Aho‘eitu was the outcome of Tangaloa’s ‘climbing down’ from the sky and sleeping with the lovely mortal woman Va‘epopua.

This Tu‘i Tonga was unique not only in that he was of divine initiation but furthermore because he himself was to a certain degree divine. Thus the Tu‘i Tonga line was the mortal representative of the superior god Tangaloa. It was imperative for the myth that ‘Aho‘eitu’s father was not just any god but Tangaloa ‘Eitumatupu‘a, the most superior of all the gods: any other lesser god would invite a challenge.

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[10] A game of throwing spears.

[11] Rutherford, *Friendly Islands: A History of Tonga,* 29.

The idea that the installation of the Tu‘i Tonga was done in the sky and not on earth also helped by resisting implications of any mortal influence: except for Tangaloa ‘Eitumatupu‘a there was no other immortal influence. All in the sky and on earth passively accepted Tangaloa ‘Eitumatupu‘a’s will, despite the fact that in choosing the youngest brother, Tangaloa had rejected the normal primogeniture rules. It was thus not a normal choice, but nobody in his right mind would dare to question the wisdom of Tangaloa ‘Eitumatupu‘a in choosing ‘Aho‘eitu.

Secondly, it was imperative that ‘Aho‘eitu’s mother should be an earthly woman. The myth was careful to qualify that the mothers of the other brothers were all immortal. ‘Aho‘eitu was the only son of Tangaloa with an earthly mother.

Everyone knew that even though the Tu‘i Tonga was claimed to be partially divine he was definitely a mortal being like everyone else, a situation which demanded an explanation. Moreover in the Tongan tradition it was the people on the mother’s side more than the father’s side who were expected to provide for the child. A person would normally have more courage freely to express his or her thought in their mother’s village[12]. ‘Aho‘eitu would be a far better candidate than any of his brothers for he had the support of his mother’s people, the mortals, and would have a better hope than any of his brothers of relating to the people of the earth.

Thirdly, it was equally important that all possible contenders were warned off from either competing or revolting against the Tu‘i Tonga. A successful and stable reign of the Tu‘i Tonga would not be possible without the people’s undivided loyalty. The brothers were portrayed in the worst possible light. They were brutal, merciless and jealous of ‘Aho‘eitu for he was talented and handsome. They had hated their youngest brother so much that they not only killed him but, far worse, they ate him.

They had even lied to their father about where ‘Aho‘eitu was. It had been Tangaloa’s initial decision that ‘Aho‘eitu would go down to the earth on his own to become the Tu‘i Tonga and his brothers would remain behind. Hence the unprecedented decision by Tangaloa to enthrone the youngest brother was to some extent justified as a punishment for the cruelty they had wreaked on ‘Aho‘eitu.

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[12] It is still the case that if one dares to voice an opinion especially regarding a delicate issue one has more freedom to do so amongst the relations of one’s mother’s side. Sometimes one is rebuked when making contentious or harsh points within the general community that such ‘talk’ is unbearable and that it should be uttered only in his or her mother’s village.

Furthermore it was the brothers' own decision to accompany their brother to the earth for after committing their shameful deed they had wept and repented. Their exile from the sky to follow ʻAhoʻeitu was of their own volition, as penance, rather than from Tangaloa. The myth carried on to show how the brothers followed their youngest brother and all were assigned to serve him.

It is important to note an extra precaution kept for the most likely competitor against ʻAhoʻeitu, the eldest brother Talafale. On the condition that there was no descendant of the Tuʻi Tonga then the descendants of the Talafale were to take over the Tuʻi Tonga line. But just in case he entertained the thought of becoming the Tuʻi Tonga himself he was reminded that he could not possibly become the Tuʻi Tonga for he had murdered ʻAhoʻeitu.

Fourthly, although the brothers were designated to serve ʻAhoʻeitu they were all recipients of chiefly titles. All chiefs on the land were descendants of Tangaloa and were related to ʻAhoʻeitu. The picture portrayed is that the Tuʻi Tonga and all the chiefs on the land were unified into one category separated from the rest of the population. Chiefly blood was confined only to ʻAhoʻeitu and his brothers and their descendants. It follows that being chiefly was founded on one's relationship to the Tuʻi Tonga. The nearer one is to the Tuʻi Tonga the more chiefly is he or she.

Fifthly, the myth promoted the idea that the Tuʻi Tonga was not only superior in rank but also superior in knowledge of the sacred. The myth was careful to state that when climbing the *toa* tree ʻAhoʻeitu was on his own. He was portrayed as the only human to have entered the dwelling of the gods. The gods had visited the earth but ʻAhoʻeitu was the only mortal to have visited the dwellings of the gods. No one else but ʻAhoʻeitu had reached such height of experience and knowledge.

Last but not least is that the hierarchical ranking is clearly laid down. At the top of the pyramid is the Tuʻi Tonga and next to him are his brothers and then the rest of the people.

The myth of the origin of turtles

Another example of how the myths portrayed chiefly views and values is the Tongan tradition on the origin of the turtles which according to Mariner was widely known

by the people. It is interesting that this myth, which controlled visible aspects of daily life for all, was known by the people in contrast to the less well known myths of origin. The myth gave the impression that, as regards turtle meat which must have been a delicacy at the time more than now the chiefs should be given priority. The myth was about a god named Langi who had two beautiful daughters who constantly asked their father to allow them go to Tonga to see mortal men. Fearing the fatal consequence of losing their immortality if they ate the produce of the earth he ordered them not to go. One day he had to leave for a 'grand conference' of the gods after making his daughters promise they would never leave Pulotu. But they disobeyed him and went to Tonga and landed on Mu'a at the residence of the Tu'i Tonga. Mariner continued:

> ...The moment they arrived all the eyes were turned upon them, and all hearts, except those that envied, were filled with admiration and love..the young men began to quarrel among themselves…the gods of Bolotoo [Pulotu]heard what was going forward at Tonga…charged poor Langi with the cause of this disturbances…He…left the synod of gods and flew with speed to Tonga, where he found that one of his daughters, by having eaten of the productions of the place, had deprived herself of immortality, and was already dead. The loss of his daughter enraged him to the utmost extreme; he sought for the other, and seizing her by the hair, severed her head from the body. The head he threw into the sea, then flew, with rage and disappointment, back to the sky. The head in a short time turned into a turtle, and was the origin and source of all turtle now found in the world.[13]

Because the turtle was originated from the gods it is no surprise that the nearest to the gods would have priority. The myth was directly linked to the *tapu* that turtle meat as noted by Anderson was reserved only for the chiefs[14]. Turtle meat was *tapu* or not to be eaten by any but the chiefs. Breaking the *tapu* had major consequences for many would not eat for fear of one's liver or other internal organs being enlarged, frequently checked in post-mortems[15]. However a way out for those who insisted on

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[13] Martin, 310-11.

[14] *The journals of Captain James Cook on his voyages of discovery: the voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780.* J.C. Beaglehole. ed. Volume III. Part Two. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, 1967), 942. With regard to Cook's expedition to Tonga the references quoted from this Volume III Part Two being edited by Beaglehole were all observations made during Cook's third and last visit to Tonga in 1777.

[15] Martin, 128; Robert W. Williamson. *Religion and Social organization in Central Polynesia.*(London: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 135.

eating it was that they should not eat without first giving a portion to some god or to a chief. As always a loophole was created for the chiefs to evade the *tapu*. Mariner recalled that the *tapu* would not have a 'bad effect upon the great chiefs, as they approach so near in rank and character to the gods themselves'[16].

The chiefs as originators of the *tala 'o e fonua*

No matter how well it is expressed in writing, the '*tala 'o e fonua*' was and still is more an oral than a written account - a 'story' to be 'uttered' rather than a story to be 'read'. It thrives and develops better in an oral than in a literate context. It is an open 'cultural text' allowing room for future changes and interpretations, even though its recitation is still firmly controlled by the expectations of the state[17]. It is implicit in social, political and religious circles and in every ritual and ceremony. It is found in the feastings, in the dances, in the language and in the myths. It is this founding myth, acting as is usual in 'founding myths' a charter for proper action, that moulds how a proper Tongan person should think and act.

The question of the 'authorship', purpose and intended 'readership' of the '*tala 'o e fonua',* must be considered together with the effect of such myths on people, and therefore on the deep structures in which inculturation may take place. Connected with the authorship are questions such as who are the interested parties in the *tala* and why are they interested? The answers to these questions will indicate who benefited the most and therefore who are most likely to insist upon the importance of the *tala 'o e fonua.* Everyone can formulate his or her own interpretation of the *tala 'o e fonua* but everyone is aware of the contemporary ruling *tala* that overrides every existing alternative version.

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[16] Martin, 311-12.

[17]David J.A. Clines *Interested Parties: The ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible.* JSOT Supplement Series 205. Gender, Culture, Theory. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 1995), 1-25. It was this work of David Clines that prompted the writer to look at the 'cultural patterns' as a 'cultural text.'

The inescapable questions that then follow are who was/were the author(s) of this dominating *tala* and what right had they to be rewarded with such an honour? I am not here looking for the 'actual author', for myths grow as collective statements from one segment, but rather for the category of author. Clearly whoever ruled and owned the *fonua* or the land were most likely to be the 'authors' of this ruling *tala*. These 'authors' were raised by their *tala* to a pedestal higher than everyone else which made them, as the assumed creators of the *tala 'o e fonua*, far more important than the actual content of the '*tala.*' Unlike a written context where one could possibly read a wide variety of 'texts', and thereby become exposed to a diversity of opinions, in this oral context there was one superior and familiar voice which ruled the rest.

The 'readers' were everyone: the 'authors', who had their own agenda, used the 'cultural text' as a tool of social control. The interests of the 'authors' were always accorded priority over everything and everyone else. They knew what to include and what not to include in it, for they made and remade the 'rules of engagement'. They knew what to draw attention to and what to hide, how to discourage everyone else but themselves from deviating from the 'cultural text', and how to manipulate the thoughts of the 'readers'. '*Tala 'o e fonua*' was meant to scare any person likely to entertain the possibility of rebelling against the 'authors', to be a weapon with which to fight. It was a guarantee that the 'authors' and their descendants would continue in power. The content and the wording of the '*tala 'o e fonua*' changed from time to time but the primary aim remained unchanged[18]. It is possible now to see the element of contestation of the mode of control through state myths, a possibility denied to us in the texts written by the early travellers who lacked access to the common people. The extent to which the silent were silenced is unknown: the extent to which the silent now are being silenced through repetition of aspects of elite control, especially in the FWC, will be picked up later in this dissertation.

[18] I am using the past tense in this discussion, but the (potentially manipulative) political and social utility of such founding myths is still relevant in the Tongan sacred-secular context

Closely linked to the '*tala 'o e fonua*', which validates the proper ordering of the state is the saying '*fofola 'a e fala kae alea 'a e kainga*',[19] that could be translated 'unfold the mat and let the relatives talk.' It painted a tranquil picture of the Tongan society, embodying an idealised Tongan society. The scene projected was that whenever an important cultural function took place such as a funeral or a wedding the *kainga* or relatives were summoned to gather round the *fala* or mat to identify what one could contribute. The saying could mislead one to assume that everyone assembling at the *fala* had an equal right and unlimited freedom to voice his or her opinion. It is assumed that because it is a gathering of relatives everyone will honestly and freely share his or her opinion.

This gives an over-simplified and idealised picture of Tongan society before the arrival of the early Europeans. Hailed as a gathering of (equal) relatives, it was always a highly stratified assembly with the top person being a chief or a person of chiefly blood, and those of lower status being present but not otherwise taking part.

Even if gathering round the *fala* was common and discussion was encouraged, the outcome would be greatly shaped by the opinion of the top person, who would have already decided the agenda, when and where to unroll the *fala,* and whom to summon.. The rest of the *kainga* were present simply to learn their delegated roles. Keeping this background in mind, it is appropriate to adopt the picture of the *fala* 'o *e kainga* or the 'mat of relatives' and use the phrase 'cultural mat', linking up with the 'cultural text' of the *tala 'o e fonua.*

The chiefs as guardians of the 'cultural mat'

Before the first European contact, the chiefs or those with power and wealth were the key originators of the '*fala*' or the 'cultural mat', that has since remained the essence of Tongan cultural patterns. They were often respected as 'owners' of the 'cultural mat',[20] which had placed the chiefs at an advantage ahead of everyone else. What

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[19] C.M. Churchward. *Tongan Dictionary*. '*alea*' means 'to have a discussion' or ' to have a talk and agree to do something.'

[20]Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Roger. *The Invention of Tradition***.** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): this work of Hobsbawm and Roger prompted the writer to pursue this direction, one which may not be welcome within current Tongan society.

was commonly understood as the 'Tongan way' or *anga faka-Tonga* or *'ulungaanga faka-fonua* was mainly their creation. This is because the chiefs have always been the party most 'interested' in the 'cultural mat' and the party that gained the most from it. The chiefs have affected the customs and traditions of the country more than anyone else. According to the 'cultural mat', it is 'everyone's duty to obey the orders of his superior chief in all instances, good or bad'[21]. The chiefs were the leading supporters of the status quo and the promoters of cultural change depending on whichever best served their interest. They drew on their power and wealth to maintain if not advance their privileged position. Good behaviour was applauded and branded as '*anga faka'ei'eiki*' or 'chiefly behaviour' while bad behaviour was condemned as '*anga fakatu'a*' or 'behaving like a commoner'[22].

The 'originators' claimed that only the chiefs were 'worthy' to make any sound judgement of the '*tala 'o e fonua*' while everyone else was reminded of their 'unworthiness', and 'ignorance' when it came to reasoning about the 'cultural mat.' The phrase *anga faka-tu'a* or 'behaving like a commoner' was applied to anyone, even a chief or his spokesman who was 'not clever in Tongan ways'[23]. Only the chief was capable of leading and ruling the people, who were pronounced incapable of doing so, and categorized by the 'originators' as '*me'avale*' or 'stupid thing' or the 'the ignorant one.' What they said was dismissed as '*lauvale*', or 'stupid talk.' Anyone who was not a chief was persuaded against aiming high and told off for '*fie me'a*' or 'wanting to be somebody or something'. In most cases it was only those of chiefly blood who had a hope of attaining what was being judged as *anga faka'ei'eiki* or 'proper manner'. An example was that chastity among women was valued very highly but only for women of chiefly blood: male chiefs could be polygamous[24]. Charles Clerke who was the commander of the *Discovery* and second in command in Cook's expedition wrote that 'Chastity is by no means the reigning virtue of these Isles…'[25] On the same voyage according to David Samwell, the

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[21] Martin, 322. This is the case unless it is a fight against a chief.

[22] The word *tu'a* as a noun could mean a 'commoner' or 'back.' As an adjective it could mean 'outer' or 'external.' As a verb it could mean 'of lower rank.'

[23] Gifford. *Tongan Society,* 108.

[24] Beaglehole. Volume III. Part Two,, 1042.

[25] Ibid., 1308.

surgeon on board the *Resolution*, it was not difficult for them to get girls on board, the price for a night being a shirt or a hatchet[26]. These girls were brought to them by their fathers, brothers or just a friend or a relation[27]. He noted that women of chiefly blood never came on board, 'Agee [*'eiki*] Girls, as we called them, never came on board the Ships.' They were kept for the chiefs[28]. Twenty years later the London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries wrote that female chastity was not for the commoners. In their visits to the chiefs it was common practice for the chiefs to offer them girls to sleep with[29].

The chiefs as objects of veneration

The aim of the 'cultural mat' was to ensure that everyone venerated the chiefs, whether alive or dead. The 'authors' being aware of the significance of the land had already laid it down that all lands and their produce belonged to the Tu'i Tonga[30]. It claimed that the land and the sea, everything and everyone on it, was owned by the chiefs, who have more right, dignity, sanctity and value than anyone else. This was clear to the missionaries, indeed the Methodist missionary Rev John Thomas, who served in Tonga from 1826-50 and 1855-59, wrote that the great chiefs 'liked to be treated as if they were gods'[31]. William Anderson the surgeon on the *Resolution*

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[26] Ibid., 1015.

[27] Ibid.,1044.

[28] Ibid., 1042.

[29]Wilson, 275. The missionary ship *Duff* commanded by Captain James Wilson saw the island of Tongatapu on Sunday 9th of April 1797, and left ten missionaries, returning in August after visiting the Marquesas and Tahiti. The missionaries' journals from April – August are of interest as the first attempt by Europeans to live in Tonga with the people.

[30] Edward Winslow Gifford. [first published in 1929]. *Tongan Society.* Bulletin no. 61.(Honolulu, Hawaii: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1929), 102. This was the first attempt to make a systematic and scholarly study of Tongan society. He was a member of the Bayard Dominick Expedition of Bernice P. Bishop Museum and he recorded the mass of his data during a nine month field research in 1920-1. Wood, *History and Geography of Tonga*, 66. According to tradition since the beginning the rulers of the country were from the Tu'i Tonga line. But it began to decline in power during the rule of the twenty fourth Tu'i Tonga and the last Tu'i Tonga was Fatafehi Laufilitonga who died in 1865.

[31] Sarah Farmer. *Tonga and the Friendly Islands: with a sketch of their mission history. Written for young people.*(London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co. Paternoster Row, 1855), 34. Sarah Farmer wrote to encourage the young people in Britain to support the Methodist mission in Tonga. She had not been to

wrote that, '… it does not appear that any civiliz'd nations have exceeded them in the great order they observe on all occasions and ready compliance with the commands of their chiefs…'[32]. This was illustrated by the total silence when the chief was speaking to a gathering: regardless of the duration and the subject, every face showed rapt attention to what was being said, displaying no sign of boredom or disagreement[33]. The people were apparently proud of their chiefly connections and spent much time in relating how they were related to the chiefs 'whom they imagine to be the greatest Potentates upon Earth, or indeed in the skies…'[34].

There was no law that governed the people except the wish of the chiefs. Anderson witnessed how the chief was 'the absolute master' over the people's property. The Tu'i Tonga Paulaho[35] would send for fish to one place and for yams to another place and for other needs somewhere else, and these people always responded quickly and without question[36]. The 'cultural mat' opposed any change that would lessen the prestige of the chiefs. One who was born a chief would always remain a chief and one born a commoner would always remain a commoner.

Yet this did not mean that all Tongan life was calm and controlled by the Tu'i Tonga or those immediately around him Mariner recalled that the death of Tupouniua caused a revolt by the people of Vava'u. Finau and five thousand warriors from Ha'apai sailed to Vava'u. One night, those waiting to attack the fort at Neiafu were themselves attacked. A warrior of Finau[37] took a piece of lighted wood and put it on the touch-hole in one of the cannons. The explosion woke up everyone and the confused enemies fled. According to Mariner this was a bold act for one who has not fired a gun in his life and it saved their lives. The 'hero' received only praise and

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Tonga herself but had read and had spoken to people who had been there, like the missionary Rev. John Thomas.

[32] Beaglehole. Volume III. Part Two. 951.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 1043

[35] Fatafehi Paulaho was the 36th Tu'i Tonga who Cook met in last visit in 1777. The name 'Fatafehi' was the family name of the Tu'i Tonga.

[36] Beaglehole. Volume III. Part Two., 911-2.

[37] This was Finau 'Ulukalala-'i-Feletoa who captured the Port-Au-Prince in 1806. Otherwise stated from now on every mention of the name 'Finau' is a reference to Mariner's patron chief Finau 'Ulukalala-'i-Feletoa who was also known as Finau 'Ulukalala II.

admiration for his bravery but no elevation to chiefly status, the difference between the two categories being one more of kind than degree[38]. No one who is not a chief could be rewarded for bravery or for any other admirable deed with a title of a chief as '…no man can hold a rank in society which he is not born to'[39]. Chiefly status was totally ascribed, and therefore a person's standing depended on how he or she was related to the chiefs[40].

The 'cultural mat' ensured that paying respect to the chief was the paramount value of the Tongan way of life. To go without paying respect to the superiors was to call up the anger of the gods, or the spiritual forces of the particular island or place, in this almost caesaro-papal and long-lingering pattern[41]. Mariner recalled that as the three divisions of Finau's army reached the fortress of Feletoa, Finau ordered one of his spokesmen to advance and negotiate for an armistice. All warriors from both sides came together and met each other peacefully for the last time. It was common in the wars at the time for fathers to be fighting against sons and brothers against brothers simply because of their respect for the chiefs. The moving occasion lasted for two hours and 'many tears were shed on both sides.' Mariner explained that this was in accordance with a custom that connects every man 'in honour to join the cause of that chief on whose islands he happens to be at the time the war is declared'[42].

Instead of the welfare of the whole society, including at least ninety five percent commoners, it was the wellbeing and the wishes of the chiefs that were repeatedly emphasized which was the code of conduct for everyone to follow but the chiefs. As Vason wrote: '…the advantage of being a chief, is a life of ease, and indulgence, and the subserviency of all the inferior orders to his will and pleasure…'[43] The majority of the population would do all the work while the chiefs did nothing but amuse

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[38] Martin, 121.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., 289.

[42] Ibid., 121-2.

[43] Vason,101.

themselves. Vason observed that the chiefs often drank *kava* from early morning until noon, which Samwell corroborated, [44] then went to lie down and sleep for two or three hours, and rose for a bath then a walk or further amusements[45]. Even bearing in mind that Europe at this time was also class-bound, the fact that the 'cultural mat', included nothing about the chiefs' responsibility to their people came as a surprise to Cook and his officers, who felt the chiefs rarely helped and defended their people.[46.]

They had been told that whenever the Tu'i Tonga went into a house it would be *tapu,* never more to be entered or used by the owner, so wherever he travelled there were houses set aside to receive him[47]. When a person had entered the state of being *tapu*, by having touched a superior chief or relation, or anything personally belonging to him or her, he would have to perform the ceremony of *moemoe* before feeding himself with his own hands. The ceremony consists in touching the soles of any superior chief's feet with the hands, first applying the palm, then the back of each hand; after which the hands must be rinsed in a little water or should there be no water near, they may be rubbed with any part of the stem of the plantain or banana tree, the moisture of which will substitute for washing[48].

A mark of chiefly status was that he or she received tributes from the people. Clerke noted that one had to take a present to every introduction to a chief, the value of the present depending on the status of the chief[49]. Two stowaways, Morgan and Ambler whom the LMS missionaries found already in the country when they arrived, tried to

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[44] Beaglehole, Volume III., Part Two., 1034.

[45] Vason, 70.

[46] Beaglehole, Volume III., Part Two., 951. Chiefs may, of course, have been 'helping' the commoners by relating in the prescribed way to the local spiritual forces, a point which the travellers may have missed had they not grasped the sacred-secular unity: but they were clearly not positive about social roles in Tonga.

[47] J.C.Beaglehole. ed. *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery 1776-1780*. Volume III. Part One.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, 1967), 176

[48] Ibid., 176. The state of the hand before being washed is called *tapu nima* which literally means 'forbidden hand.'

[49] Beaglehole., Volume III., Part Two., 1305.

convince the people that they were high ranking chiefs back in England, while the missionaries were of low commoner order. The people were not convinced because they saw Morgan and Ambler receiving gifts neither from the missionaries nor from their people back in England[50]. The people were obliged to give the best of their produce and even, as we saw above with the failed attack by Finau, commit their lives to their chiefs but were to expect nothing in return from them. On receiving gifts from the people, the chiefs did not customarily express gratitude, it being more an honour for the lower to give. There appears to have been little or no idea of social, political and religious independence of the individual, survival relying heavily on obedience and subservience to the chief:[51] observable veneration would contribute to the likelihood of the latter's mercy.

Religion as social control

Religion may have been acknowledged as worshipping of the 'gods' but the practice tended to make the chiefs themselves the object of worship, into idols. As representatives of the 'gods', the chiefs used religion to back up their decisions and actions. Religion was essentially indistinguishable from the social system. Latukefu observed that 'politics was closely interwoven with religion'[52]. Wood noted that the chiefs received tributes from the people 'for both religious and social reasons'[53]. Religion, reflecting, indeed being, society, was highly stratified, exclusive and favoured those with power and wealth. Rev. Thomas West who was a missionary to Tonga from 1846 to 1855 observed the following on the role of religion in Tonga prior to the arrival of Christianity:

> The mysteries and the enactments of heathen worship, although submitted to by the chiefs themselves, unquestionably were intended more for the perpetuation of their power and influence, than to direct the ideas of the people to matters of spiritual and eternal interest, or

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[50] Vason, 66.

[51] Martin, 96. Mariner often referred to people other than the chiefs as 'dependents.'

[52] Latukefu. *Church and State in Tonga,* 4.

[53] Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church,* 3.

> even to those involving temporal improvement. No spirit of benevolence pervaded the system[54].

Clearly it was advantageous for the missionaries to be especially negative about Tongan 'religion' for they were attempting to supplant it with their own imported faith. Therefore we need to be a little cautious in not accepting all that was written as either accurate or adequately interpreted, but reading texts both by missionaries and travellers (who may or may not have been actively Christian) in the light both of critical appraisal and knowledge of contemporary chiefly patterns, the author would suggest there is a considerable validity in their overall view even though they did get some aspects, or details, wrong. The first three law codes of 1839, 1850 and 1862 would not have come into existence without the help of Wesleyan missionaries[55]. Their influence in these codes is apparent. The attitude of the missionaries towards dancing is found in Article XI of the 1850 Code which declared that 'Dancing is strictly forbidden, as well as heathen customs….'[56]. The penalty for the first offence was one month and two months for further offences. In contrast to their Catholic counterpart the Wesleyan missionaries had little appreciation or respect for the customs and innocent habits of the people[57]. The missionaries' intolerant attitude towards dancing was because it was done mainly at night into the early hours of the morning and often the sexual temptation it brought to the dancers was too much for the missionaries. Moreover, dancing was rooted in the ceremonies of the traditional religion where its prime function was to please the gods. However, the later Code of 1862 noted how unrealistic was the missionaries view and the ban on dancing was removed.

Sacrifices like *tutu'u nima* or the cutting of a finger were sometimes made to the gods for the recovery of a chief. Since children were the most inferior in the family it was common for their fingers to be amputated when a chief was dying. Yet the

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[54] Thomas West. *Ten Years in South-Central Polynesia: being reminiscences of a Personal Mission to the Friendly Islands and their Dependencies*.(London: John Nisbet & Co, 1865), 255.

[55] Latukefu, *Church and State,* 122.

[56] Latukefu, *Church and State,*

[57] Sione Latukefu, 'The Case of the Wesleyan Mission in Tonga', *Journal de la Societe des Oceanistes* 23 (1967):97.

need for this, indeed the honour of it, had been internalised by people, and Cook recorded how children actually fought each other to have their finger cut off. Many had had two fingers cut off[58]. Samwell noted that at the death of a chief both men and women and even children cut off their little fingers. In mourning the death of chiefs some would undergo the ceremony of *foa'ulu* or beating their heads until they bled, others cutting various parts of the body with sharp edges to express their sorrow[59]. At the death of principal chiefs some women and children were strangled, in the ceremony called *no'okia:,* and we have indications that this was mostly enforced.

The 'gods', according to mission texts, were called upon only in time of sickness and war[60] although, as the people were always reminded that the 'gods' would chastise them with the worst punishment if they dared disrespect them or neglect reverential respect and rites, the first statement does rather conflict with the second. These punishments, as recalled by Mariner, were '…chiefly conspiracies, wars, famine and epidemic diseases, such as public calamities; and sickness and premature death, as punishments for the offences of individuals'[61].

The priests and the priestess were usually drawn from chiefly rankings. Thomas noted that some 'gods' did not have priests and the chiefs were their 'living representatives', [62] being themselves priests. The Tu'i Tonga was certainly regarded as the high priest and the *moheofo* his principal wife was the priestess of Hikule 'o.[63] Fai'ana the priestess of Kolovai in the 1820s was the sister of Ata the powerful chief of the Hihifo district.[64] In most cases these human mediators between the 'gods' and

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[58] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two., 1041.

[59] Martin, 349-350.

[60] This is almost certainly inaccurate.

[61] Martin, 331.

[62] H.G.Cummins. 'Tongan Society at the time of European Contact.'. In *Friendly Islands: A History of Tonga.* Noel Rutherford. ed.(Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1977), 73.

[63] A Harold Wood. *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church. Volume I. Tonga and Samoa*. (Melbourne: The Aldersgate Press, 1975), 4.

[64] Cummins, *Tongan Society,* 73.

the people were closely related to and thus part of the chiefs they served. Even the priests who appeared to have received oracles from the gods were usually under the control of the chiefs, and were always seen as inferior to them. Most of the time the oracles the priests received from the gods had to agree with the chiefs.[65]

The LMS missionaries saw no priest[66] and observed that no one was more 'religious' than another which caused them to think that there were no priests[67]. Clearly their understanding of religion, worship and the need for a discernable priest or temple was part of their problem, for in Tonga the sacred included all land, people, things and activities to which all had duties and obligations and which all, in varying degrees, had benefits. To expect an active 'worship of gods' in set-apart places totally separate from the overall sacred was thus a misunderstanding of the situation, one shared by Tasman who,visiting Tonga in 1643 concluded that the people practised no religion for he found no temple[68]. There were a few houses built for the sacred but they were little different from a normal house except tidier. In his first visit in 1773 Cook referred inaccurately to the chiefly burial place as the 'place of worship'[69] It was only the chiefs who were buried in the *fa'itoka,* commoners having no particular burial site[70] Wood wrote that 'there was no public worship',[71] as there were no open air temples. Commenting on religion Cook could only speculate that the Tongans '…do not worship anything that is the work of their own hands, nor any visible part of the creation'[72]. The LMS missionaries saw two logs that were crudely carved in human form at one chiefly burial place and were told that they were *odooas*[*'otuas*] or gods brought from Fiji but the Tongans threw the images around with no sign of sacredness[73]. In his first visit to Tonga in 1773 Cook recorded being

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Wilson, 257.

[67] Ibid., 277.

[68] Andrew Sharp. *The Voyages of Abel Janszoon Tasman.*(London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 171.

[69] Beaglehole, Volume II., 252.

[70] Beaglehole, Volume III., Part Two, 947.

[71] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 3.

[72] Beaglehole, Volume III, Part One, 179-80.

[73] Wilson, 257.

led by the chief 'Ataongo to a chiefly burial place which he referred to as a 'house of Worship' on a man-made mound of about sixteen to eighteen feet in height. Inside the house he saw two carved images. He was careful not to touch the images, assuming that they were 'gods' of the natives, but 'Ataongo held the logs just like any other log of wood[74]. This does not of course mean they were without meaning, but rather that reverential attitudes appropriate to an English church were not part of Tongan practice. There was no need to erect special temples to have public worship or to carve out idols because the chiefs were or at least represented the 'gods' and the focus of reverence was wherever the chiefs were, especially during the ceremonies.

Although inferior to the original gods the souls of the chiefs possessed all the attributes of the original gods[75]. Mariner was told that the souls of the dead chiefs were so advanced in knowledge and understanding that they could easily distinguish good from evil, right from wrong, and truth from falsehood, and that they often returned to life to enlighten and inspire relatives, priests and others.

Religion was at the heart of the Tongan way of life for it clearly laid down what is one's identity thus highlighting the difference between the chiefs and the majority of the people. In other words the gap between the chiefs and the people was more obvious here than in any other area. There was very little reference to the majority of the people for they were already being written off by the 'originators', as having no souls. Unlike the chiefs they had no hope of continuing after this life[76]. They were derisively called *kainanga 'o e fonua* or eaters of the land. *Pulotu*, or 'the paradise beyond the ocean', is the underworld where the chiefs will go when they die and it was reserved only for the chiefs: commoners ended their journey at death. William King, a lieutenant on the *Resolution*, wrote in his journal that at the death of a chief his soul would depart to a paradise called *Pulotu* where the chiefs would become immortal gods and live surrounded by abundance, full of knowledge of right and wrong, good and bad and alike to enlighten their living chiefly relatives. The chiefs were adamant that the commoners were not worthy of Pulotu when they explained to

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[74] Beaglehole., Volume II., 250-51.

[75] Martin, 301.

[76] Ibid., 314.

King that commoners never deserved this privilege because a '...great bird call'd Loata hovers over the Graves & eats them up…'[77].

Thus the vast majority of Tongans were already doomed by the religion as failures and were perceived more as tools in the hands of the 'originators', enabling the sacred unity to endure. This is further illuminated in Mariner's list of the principal gods:

> Taliai Tupou…He is the patron of the Hau and his family…He is also god of war, and is consequently always invoked in time of war by the Ha'u's party. He has four houses dedicated to him…He has no priest, unless it be the Hau himself, whom he sometimes inspires; but it happened that a Hau, during his whole reign, has not been inspired.
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> Tu'ifua Pulotu…He is also the god of rank in society, and in this quality he is often invoked by the heads of great families, as the kings, and other great nobles, on occasions of sickness, or other family troubles. He has several houses dedicated to him, three or four at Vava'u…He has three or four priests…at least Mr Mariner was acquainted with three or four, but perhaps there are others.
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> Hikule 'o…a very high god, regarded principally by Tu'i Tonga's family. He has no priest, nor any house, and is supposed never to come to Tonga…[78]

In dealings with these principal gods there was no allusion to the rest of the people. Religion was seen as a 'chiefly domain' where principal gods related primarily to the chiefs, just possibly on behalf of or for the survival of the people. Each family had a deity or focus of their own, known only to them. According to Mariner there were about three hundred of these principal gods and most of their names were known only to some of the chiefs and their spokesmen. Yet it was the gods, the spiritual forces, in a particular locality who were important for the people of that area, each chief and his people relating to the spirits of their dead chiefs[79].

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[77] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two.,1368.

[78] Martin, 301-2.

[79] Latukefu. *Church and State,* 5.

Like the chiefs the gods were also hierarchically ranked. The most powerful chief would always be protected by the highest ranking god. For example, the highest ranking god Taliai Tupou was the protector of the *hau* or the sacred ruler, who was usually the most powerful person in the land and his family. The stronger the chief the higher was the protector god. It was the chief who 'gave' the 'god' its status rather than the other way round. The god was as 'powerful' as the chief it protected. Any likely challenger to the *hau* would have to think twice for he would not only be challenging the *hau* but religiously more importantly he would be challenging Taliai Tupou, the highest ranking god. In order to make things worse for the challenger, Taliai Tupou was also the god of war and who would dare fight against the *hau* who was backed by the god of war? The *hau* held the only tie to Taliai Tupou, the means being a mystery. Access to other gods was similarly restricted.

The power of food control

Food, the most important commodity, was not only for nourishment but equally importantly was a symbol of power, wealth, and status. The quantity and quality of food that a person had was a clear indication of this. Anderson noted that only the commoners ate rats[80]. According to Cook, pigs over a certain size were sanctioned for the use of the chiefs only and even the 'owners' could not eat them. It was the practice to set aside the best produce of the land and the sea for the chiefs, all over a set size being for the chiefs[81]. Moengangongo advised Tupouto'a that the best way to make the island of Ha'apai powerful against its enemies was to 'cultivate it well' for then the people would have something worth fighting for[82].

The importance of an occasion was demonstrated by the amount and quality of provisions collected for it. Mariner recalled that it was the custom of the people to, '…make liberal and profuse presents, that the people generally either feast or starve'[83]. The early LMS missionaries witnessed 'a great wastage of provisions' in

[80] Beaglehole, Volume III., Part Two., 942

[81] Beaglehole., Volume III., Part One., 169.

[82] Martin, 266.

[83] Ibid., 345.

the ceremonies[84]. It was said that up to half of the cooked food at the *'inasi* was wasted and not eaten. Mariner asked the people why twenty large half baked pigs were left for three days at the grave of the Tu'i Tonga during the annual tribute of the *'inasi* only to go waste. The reply was that 'such was the ancient custom.' This portion given in honour of the late Tu'i Tonga was supposed to be a portion for the current Tu'i Tonga[85]. Yet it was one way of the chiefs boasting of their power in aggressive shows of conspicuous consumption since in a land where food scarcity was a common occurrence, they still could afford to waste food supplies. Mariner recorded that in the ceremony *tautau*[86] the pile of food given to the people was not properly distributed but at the signal of a drum beat the people rushed in and grabbed whatever they could[87]. The waste of food was never an indication of poor planning but rather a symbol of power and wealth. It was through eating and drinking more than through anything else that one could identify who was superior in rank especially in a gathering where principal chiefs were present. Mary Douglas sees food as a code that expresses a layer of messages:

> If food is treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries[88].

It was *tapu* or forbidden to eat when a superior relation was present, unless the back was turned towards him, for only when a person's back was turned towards another was the eater not in the superior's presence[89]. Cook and his men found it difficult to understand the complexity of the political makeup because rank and authority did not always go hand in hand. This is how Anderson explained the situation:

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[84] Wilson, 248.

[85] Martin, 96.

[86] Ibid., 346.*Tautau* was the offering of yams, coconuts and other produce to Aloalo the god of the weather and other gods with the hope of their granting favourable weather for the food crops.

[87] Ibid., 347.

[88] Mary Douglas. *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology.* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 249.

[89] Martin, 355.

> Notwithstanding these marks of superiority over all others, we were not however a little surprizd to find some people who are certainly esteem'd superior in rank though they seem to have little power. It was discovered one day by a woman before whom Poulaho would not eat though she made no scruple to do so before him, and to whom when she left the house he paid the usual mark of respect as his superior – a respect we never saw him pay to any other person, though as was said before he acknowledged a woman living at Vavoo to be his superior. It was also accidentally discover'd that a person La'toone-booloo, the brother of this woman, who is called Moungala kaipa, was of the same rank though we never saw him touch his foot, for Poulaho would never come to a house where he knew he was , and if the other came into a house where the King was eating the last immediately left off and had the victuals put aside[90].

Paulaho the 'King' could not eat in the presence of the woman Mo'unga-'o-Lakepa and her brother Latunipulu[91]. This woman and her brother had a sister called Tu'i Lakepa. Their mother who was living at Vava'u at the time to whom Anderson referred as the 'woman living at Vavoo[Vava'u]', was a sister of the late Tu'i Tonga, Tu'i Tonga –'i -Langitu'oteau, Paulaho's father. Because customarily the sister and her children are superior in rank to her brother and his children, all of these four persons Mo'unga-'o-Lakepa, Tu'i Lakepa, Latunipulu and their mother were superior in rank to Paulaho. He, although more powerful than all of them, would not be able to eat or drink in their presence[92].

The chiefs always had the best food[93] and had access to a greater supply of it than anyone else. The sayings at the time confirmed that the residence of the chief was where food was amassed. The place to be if one was hungry was where the chiefs were, as expressed in the saying, ''*Uakai pea 'alu ki Fua'amotu*' or 'Greedy, then go to Fua'amotu', the place of the highest in the land and an attraction for those from many and distant islands. The ironic saying, '*Hongea mo hou'eiki*' or 'Enduring

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[90] Beaglehole., Volume III. Part Two., 954.

[91] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part One, 179. Cook wrote that the natives looked upon him 'as a Madman;' Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two, 1031. Samwell wrote that Latunipulu 'was remarkable for being foolish.' It is possible that he was mentally disturbed and it is equally possible that because he was superior in rank to Paulaho he behaved 'lawlessly' as if there was nothing to restrict him.

[92] Elizabeth Bott with Tavi.[first published in 1982] *Tongan Society at the time of Captain Cook's Visits:Discussions with Her Majesty Queen Salote*. (Nuku 'alofa: Friendly Islands Bookshop,1998), 31.

[93] Gifford. *Tongan Society,* 124.

famine with the chiefs' cheered those in close connection with the chiefs in expectation of benefit that they were bound to reap. It guaranteed that even in a time of famine any who were close to the chiefs did not need to fear hunger[94].

A person's wealth and power was indicated by the size of the food supply that he or she controlled. The chiefs could put sanctions or *tapu* on certain food items at will. They singled out which food item was not to be touched, when the prohibition would start and when it would finish. The *tapu* was the chief's warning to the people that he or she required this food item for his or her consumption only and demanded that there should be no competition from anyone else. Vason, who closely followed Finau's raid of Tongatapu and the Ha'apai group, described how he landed on the main island of Vava'u and saw it 'almost covered with hogs', because pigs had been placed under a *tapu* by Finau before he went on his raid of Tongatapu, in preparation for victory[95]. Prohibited fruits and flowers were usually marked by pieces of white *tapa* or a piece of plait in the shape of a shark or a lizard[96]. A commoner caught breaking the food *tapu* would be thrashed or killed[97]. Almost every plantation in the country was under the *tapu* in order to maintain a continuous food supply to the chiefs[98] even when there was a shortage of food. Usually it was the food normally regarded as chiefs' food such as pigs, fowls and coconuts that people were banned from eating[99].

Food shortages occurred almost every year. Mariner referred to this period as 'the scarce time of the year'[100] and Vason called it the 'hungry season'[101]. Wilson

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[94] Another saying with the same emphasis is '*Pani puaka pani fonu*' which means 'Smeared with pigs smeared with turtle', the chiefs place being the only one with both pork and turtle..

[95] Vason, 100.

[96] A.Harold. Wood. [first published in 1932]. *History and Geography of Tonga.* (Nuku'alofa, Friendly Islands Bookshop, 2003), 4. Sharks were objects of fear and lizards were suppose to bring misfortune.

[97] Gifford. *Tongan Society*, 345.

[98] Martin, 90.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid., 132.

referred to it as the 'scarce season'[102]. Vason wrote that in time of scarcity the majority of the people were forced to eat the roots of the plantain tree and to drink from unripe coconuts[103]. Even so, the chiefs never discontinued the ceremonies, in which feasting was the principal element and caused a major depletion in the country's food supply. When Mariner arrived in Tonga in 1806 the Tu'i Tonga had just died and as part of the mourning there was daily feasting for at least a month. This caused a significant depletion in the Tongan food supply necessitating eight months of rationing. There was another great feast at the end of the *tapu* to herald its lifting or *fakalahi,* [104] without which the gods would wreak havoc on all[105].

These ceremonies and others such as the paying of tributes and first-fruits, the death of a chief, the arrival of a chief, the wedding of the son or daughter of a chief, were effectively a 'military parade' or powerful exhibitions of the chief's status, power and wealth which included an enormous and excessive collection of cooked and uncooked provisions. Eighty percent and more of the items brought by the people to the chiefs were food, there being little time to do anything else but collecting and sharing it out. The site at a chief's burial ground, the timing after harvest, and the manner of carrying out these ceremonies were all determined by the chiefs in what were repeated public displays of the authority and power of the chiefs to control food and land.

The *'Inasi*

The *'Inasi* which literally means share or portion was a tribute in honour of the Tu'i Tonga, the mortal representative of Hikule'o the god of the harvest,[106] by which everyone in the country was affected. Mariner wrote that it was 'a ceremony which

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[101] Vason, 86,

[102] Wilson, 248.

[103] Vason, 106.

[104] Martin, 90.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Latukefu, *Church and State*, 3-4.

affected the property of every individual in Vavaoo [Vava'u] and all the Hapai [Ha'apai] islands … and the island of Tonga also'[107].

The ceremony was not only to honour the gods represented by the Tu'i Tonga but also to seek their protection over the whole country especially the yield of the land[108]. Failure to observe the *'inasi* would bring down the wrath of the gods and could lead to the death of the chiefs. The LMS missionaries noted the centrality of the chiefs in the ceremonies:

> …so that we find their natches[*'inasi*] and other annual exhibitions are not mere public amusements, but religious observances, whereon they think the lives and health of their chiefs, for whom they have great affection, entirely depend; as likewise the prosperity of the country in general[109].

Samwell wrote that they were told that the chiefs would pay homage to the Tu'i Tonga by killing some of their dependants and there would be about fifty human sacrifices at the annual *'inasi* ceremony[110]. The main food crop that was brought was the chiefly yam *kahokaho*. The Tongan calendar year of thirteen months revolves around the planting of the yams especially the *kahokaho*. The people had no other option but to participate because failing to do so could only indicate sedition, the worst offence of all. Each had to bring the best because what was brought was publicly displayed. It was sacrilegious to hold back any part that was intended for the *'inasi*[111]. The 'gods' were the focus but there were no other 'gods' but the Tu'i Tonga and the chiefs. It is not surprising that the practice of the *'inasi* existed as long as the Tu'i Tonga was powerful.

The chiefs were the least affected for they did nothing except decide when and where the *'inasi* was going to be held and who was going to get what from the piled

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[107] Martin, 342.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Wilson, 277.

[110] Beaglehole., Volume III., Part Two., 1049; 917, According to Anderson he was told that there would be about ten human sacrifices at the *'inasi*.

[111] Martin, 244.

tributes. It was their names that were praised and their storehouses that were replenished after the ceremony; three quarters of the contributions that were collected were given to the chiefs, of which half was given to the secular ruler the *hau* and a quarter to the sacred ruler the Tu'i Tonga[112]. The people supplied these chiefs 'not only with the necessities of life but with the luxuries, the honours and the wealth of the islands…'[113].

Even in the two main speeches made during the ceremony there was no hint of thanking the people for their effort. The focus of both speeches was always the Tu'i Tonga and the chiefs. If it was the past it was focused on the late Tu'i Tonga and the past chiefs. If it was the present it was focused on the current Tu'i Tonga and his chiefs. The second speech was made when the *kava* mixture was ready, and was directed to the people. Instead of thanking the people they were warned that the gods would no longer protect them if they did not observe the demands of the *'inasi* and respect the chiefs. This is how Mariner recalled the speech:

> …a mataboole[*matapule*] makes a speech to the people, stating, that as they have performed this important ceremony, the gods will protect them, and grant them long lives, provided they continue to pay attention to religious ceremonies, and pay respect to the chiefs.[114]

It is important to note that the observation of the religious ceremonies and honouring the chiefs were not distinguishable. Challenging the people to observe the religious ceremonies was just a differently worded way of challenging the people to pay respect to the chiefs.

Except for the Tu'i Tonga and the chiefs the *'inasi* was of little or no use to a hard-up multitude. Indeed Finau who was Mariner's patron chief saw the *'inasi* as 'great and useless expense' to the majority of the people. His son Moengangongo had the same opinion and completely abolished the *'inasi* just before Mariner left Tonga in

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[112] Ibid., 345.

[113] Cummins, *Tongan Society,* 79.

[114] Martin, 345.

1810[115]. According to Mariner getting rid of the *'inasi* for ever was very much in line with the wish of the multitude for it would relieve them of a burden that was 'extremely oppressive' especially in time of scarcity[116].

The central significance of the *kava* ceremony

An early development of Tongan cultural patterns occurred with the life of a sage called Lo'au. With regard to social life Lo'au 'corrected everything, and said that some things were wrong and some things were right'[117]. In most if not all versions of the myth of the origin of the *kava* plant there would always be a connection with Lo'au[118]. Lo'au introduced the *kava* as a drink and after that the *kava* ceremony became the central ritual in the Tongan culture and exemplified its rigidly stratified society. As Mariner recalled there was '…no public religious rite whatsoever, and scarcely any in private, at which the ceremony of drinking *kava* does not form a usual and often most important part…'[119]. The *taumafa kava* or the royal *kava* ceremony where the Tu'i Tonga presided was a mirror image of Tongan polity. The *taumafa kava* was traditionally seen as the gathering of the gods. That is each chief present impersonates his patron god[120]. This was witnessed by the missionary John Thomas at the *taumafa kava* where Taufa'ahau was installed as the Tu'i Kanokupolu on the 4th December 1845. When it came to Taufa'ahau's turn to drink the name that was announced by Motu'apuaka his spokesman was Taliai Tupou Tu'ikanokupolu. Taliai Tupou was the patron god of the Tu'i Kanokupolu chiefly line[121]. The crucial concept of hierarchical ranking is being displayed here at its best. The focus of any *kava* ceremony was the highest ranking person, who sat on the *'olovaha* or the

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[115] Ibid., 342.

[116] Ibid., 252.

[117]Gifford, *Tongan Society*, 68.

[118]Gifford, *Tongan Myths and Tales,* 71. Gifford noted this in the four versions that he recorded.

[119]Martin, 331.

[120]Gifford, *Tongan Society*, 159.

[121]Wesleyan Missionary Notices. Volume XI from the beginning., 1846, p.157.

topmost seat of the ceremony[122]. The Tu'i Tonga would be the chief presiding at the *taumafa kava* during the time of Lo'au.

The *taumafa kava* was a solemn and exclusive assembly of the most powerful and highest ranking chiefs in the land serving only to highlight the superiority and sacredness of the Tu'i Tonga[123]. This royal *kava* ceremony contributed to the political order in the land, but this order was based on the premise that the Tu'i Tonga and his chiefs were still the 'originators' of the 'cultural mat.' Although Lo'au's innovation was a milestone in the Tongan cultural pattern, as regards his aim he was no different from any other 'originator' of the 'cultural mat', which was solely to serve the interest of the chiefs. Clearly, it was the chiefs more than any others who gained the most from his innovation. It is unlikely that Lo'au invented the *kava* ceremony that has since become the central ritual in Tongan culture without having his own interest in mind. The origin of Lo'au is not known[124] but it appears that the name Lo'au emerged in tradition whenever there was a major restructuring in traditions and customs, and vanished whenever the task was finished. They were all respected as '*tufunga fonua*' or 'carpenters of the country.' If Lo'au was an historical person then certainly he must either have been a chief[125] or a 'puppet' in the hand of the chiefs, or if he was only a mythical figure then he must have been an invention of the chiefs.

The myth of the origin of the *kava* plant highlights the paramount value in Tongan culture which is that a person is to please and honour the chief. Regardless of any variant of the myth,[126] the honour value that was always highlighted was the dedication of the couple Fevanga and Fefafa who willingly gave the life of their only child to please the Tu'i Tonga. Most of the praise-worthy values in Tongan society

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[122]In every *kava* ceremony there is only one person sitting at the *'olovaha* which means there is always one person who is superior in rank to everyone else.

[123]I.C.Campbell.[first published in 1992] *Island Kingdom: Tonga Ancient and Modern.* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2001), 37.

[124]Gifford. *Tongan Society*, 130.

[125].Gifford, *Tongan Myths and Tales,* 71. Gifford claimed that Loa'u was a chief but not a paramount chief like the Tu'i Tonga.

[126]Gifford. *Tongan Myths and Tales*, 71-75. Gifford recorded four versions of this myth;. Bott, *Tongan Society*, 92-93. Bott recorded the version that Queen Salote wrote for the Tonga Traditions Committee.

of how one should relate to a chief, like *faka'apa'apa* or respect, *mateaki* or loyalty, *fatongia* or one's duty to the chief are all highlighted in the story. Hence the regal *kava* ceremony is not to be carried out casually for it is a socio-political and religious ritual symbolising the people faithfully serving their chiefs. It is no wonder that the late Queen Salote is quoted by Bott to have said, 'Other countries write their history in books, in Tonga it is written in the *kava* ritual'[127].

Casual brutality as a demonstration of power

Often the early Europeans would disapprove of the chiefs' brutal treatment of the people but on the other hand it could indicate the willingness of the people to give up everything even their lives as long as their chief was pleased; that was the greatest 'good.' There was hardly any complaint because everyone and everything belonged to the chiefs. Furthermore one's own identity partook of the identity of one's chief. The higher his rank and the greater his power the more secure one was.

Anderson of the *Resolution* described how cruelly the people were treated by the chiefs even for minor offences[128]. Murder was an offence if the victim was the same or higher rank. Likewise theft was an offence if the property was sacred or belonged to a person of higher ranking. Charles Clerke of the *Discovery* wrote that the principal chiefs[129] would order anyone to be 'put to Death instantaneously' and it would be immediately carried out with no appeal or question heard[130]. He wrote that while they were trading at the market place in Nomuka one chief ordered the people to leave the market. The people did retire but not quickly enough for the chief. He took a large stick and struck mercilessly at anyone in his way. One man who received a blow fell down speechless, with blood gushing out of his mouth and ears. Clerke was surprised that the chief showed no sign of remorse as if 'it was a Cock sprawling out before him'[131]. According to Cook the chief 'only laughed' when told

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[127]Bott, *Tongan Society*, 67.

[128] Beaglehole. Volume III., Part Two., 951.

[129] The principal chiefs that Clerke referred to were the Tu'i Tonga Fatafehi Paulaho, the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua Maealiuaki and the Tu'i Kanoukupolu Finau Tu'ihalafatai. .

[130] Ibid., 1310

[131] Ibid., 1309-10.

that he had killed the man. They learned later that the man had recovered[132]. The chiefs encouraged Cook and his men to be free to kill anyone they caught stealing[133].

Vason wrote that the chiefs treated the 'lower classes' '…with harshness, contempt, and brutality, as though they existed merely for the purpose of drudging for their support and luxury.'[134]. The LMS missionaries saw how when Tuku'aho[135] was not pleased with a man he ordered his hand to be cut off on the spot.

Another man was tied with arms extended and two women were ordered to burn him with a lighted stick under his arm-pits[136]. After their victory at Tongatapu Finau and his chiefs sailed to Vava'u and Ha'apai to celebrate. Vason witnessed how the chiefs 'drove the natives about like so many dogs'[137] and Mariner recalled that when he was on the island of Lofanga in the Ha'apai group Finau asked him to shoot down a woman who had become insane because of grieving for the death of a near relation, probably her child who was strangled in the hope it would lead to the recovery of Finau's father[138]. Finau and many others saw her as of no use to society and in any case Finau wanted to witness again a musket being fired. Mariner refused saying he could kill only the enemies and would not kill an innocent person in cold blood. After a few days the woman was walking on the beach and Finau ordered a native from the Sandwich Island who was at hand with his musket to shoot her:

> With his ready acquiescence, he levelled his piece and shot her dead upon the spot. Mr. Mariner was at a little distance…She had just been in the act of picking up a shell or something, as the shot struck her …The people in general were rather glad that she was dead, as she used to break in upon religious cava, and dance about to the annoyance of

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[132] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part One, 100. It is very unlikely that the man survived and the story was just to placate the visitors.

[133] Ibid., 101.

[134] Vason, 101.

[135] Wood, *History and Geography,* 69. He was the fourteenth Tu'i Kanokupolu who was murdered. His death caused the Civil War in 1799.

[136] Wilson, 253.

[137] Vason,100.

[138] Martin, 76.

> every body, sometimes with scarcely any clothes on, which is considered very indecent and disrespectful[139].

Anderson recorded on Monday 19th of May 1777 that while they were on the island of Lofanga a man was sent by Finau to guide and protect them. The guide, to show off the authority given to him by Finau, would barge into any house and pick up anything that he wanted without asking. He often stopped people on their way to barter and took their yams or coconuts. He even took some fish from an old woman which was most probably her food for the day[140].

The chiefs as violators of the established 'cultural mat'

Surprisingly, after the foregoing demonstration of the inbred insistence of the chiefs on established customs and traditions, it was principally they themselves who violated them,[141] and this occurred when they wanted change. Others may have entertained the thought of deviating from cultural expectations, but it was largely the chiefs who re-worked or disregarded the 'cultural mat.' The most powerful chiefs breached the 'cultural mat' the most, though they could not entirely disregard the Tongan cultural expectations of the day, since it was the existing customs which legitimised their exalted image in the eyes of the people. Cook wrote that Fatafehi Paulaho,[142] often talked to him and his men about the major role of Finau Tu'ihalafatai[143] who was probably the most powerful person in governing the country. Fatafehi acknowledged that if he 'was a bad man, Feenough[Finau] would kill him.' What Cook understood to be a 'bad man' was one who did not rule according to '…law and custom.' One sees that although Fatafehi was the Tu'i

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[139] Ibid., 77.

[140] Beaglehole. Volume III. Part Two., 874. The guide may have surprised Anderson but it was the normal behaviour for everyone and their possessions actually belonged to one's chief. Everyone was a 'trustee' of what belongs to the chief.

[141] Campbell, 113.

[142] Wood, *History and Geography*, 66. According to Wood this Fatefehi Paulaho whom Cook met was the 36th Tu'i Tonga who died in 1784.

[143] Bott, 56. The author is taking Bott's view that the Feenough[Finau] that Cook met was Finau Tu'ihalafatai.

Tonga, the highest ranking king, he had to govern the country according to '… law and custom' and Finau being the most powerful person had the final say in what was the 'law and custom'[144].

It was the chiefs more than the rest who introduced foreign customs and traditions into the country. The hierarchical ranking required that foreigners would perform certain functions for the high ranking chiefs such as hair cutting and conducting of funerals. Painting the face and wearing fierce-looking clothes during battle were introduced by young chiefs and their followers who had been over to Fiji[145]. Mariner wrote that while his patron chief Finau and his army were preparing to leave for Vava'u his son Finau 'Ulukalala Moengangongo[146] who had been absent for five years suddenly arrived from the Navigator Island or Samoa together with another chief called Vuna. The royal arrival gave rise to great feastings and festivity which temporarily diverted the focus from war. A royal wedding of the 'prince' with two daughters of chiefs was scheduled for the following week although Moengangongo had already come with two Samoan wives. Moengangongo decided that the 'ceremony should be performed, for the most part, after the manner of the Navigator's Islands'[147]. Mariner recalled that two parts of the Samoan ceremony were clearly left out. Firstly, the payment of valuables to the bride's father by the bridegroom and secondly the part of the ceremony which was to determine whether the 'bride price' was justly due[148]. As the 'prince' demanded, the wedding was for the most part according to Samoan custom but it was Samoan custom with a twist that favoured the Tongan 'prince.'

Their struggle for power led the chiefs to disregard the cultural expectations of the day. In most cases they would adhere to the customs only when it suited them.

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[144] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part One., 177.

[145] Martin, 68.

[146] From now on every mention of the name Moengangongo is referring to Finau 'Ulukalala Moengangongo the son of Mariner's Finau 'Ulukalala-'i- Feletoa. He is also known as Finau 'Ulukalala III.

[147] Martin, 108-9.

[148] Ibid., 112-3.

Finau was described by Latukefu as '…the most powerful, treacherous and dangerous man…'[149]. At the time it suited him to enact the customary tribute to his dead father and he went with several of his chiefs to the grave of his father to carry out the ceremony of *tuki*[150] before attacking the fort at Nuku'alofa.

As a sign of respect and humility they wore mats in place of the normal outfit with *ifi* or Tahitian chestnut leaves round their necks signifying grief and humility. Finau and his men including Mariner sat cross legged before the grave of his father. They beat their cheeks for about half a minute with no word being uttered. Then one of Finau's spokesmen addressed the spirit of Finau's father. 'Behold the man [Finau]…who has come to Tonga to fight his enemies: be pleased with him, and grant him thy protection; …he is not doing wrong. He has always held [Tu'i Tonga] in the highest respect, and has attended with exactness to all religious ceremonies'[151]. One of the attendants then rose up and went to Finau to receive from him his piece of *kava* root. The rest of the men who had *kava* root then deposited it on the grave in the same manner and then departed. Finau was renowned for his impiety but in this case he knew that every possible encouragement was needed by him and his men before marching on to battle.

The same reverence was recalled by Mariner on another occasion when it suited Finau. He and his troops were attacking the fortress of Feletoa[152]. Aware that paying respect to custom was crucial for winning of the battle, possibly to keep up the morale of his men, he made every effort to appease the gods. He expressed reverence for a chiefly burial place when one of his chiefly warriors Palavale confessed to clubbing a man to death at the sacred place called Nacao [Ngakau]. The burial place of a chief was considered sacred and it was sacrilegious to fight or show disrespect on it. The anger of the gods would be provoked against anyone who did.

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[149] Latukefu. *Church and State,* 15.

[150] Martin, 349. To show their respect and sorrow because of the loss of the chief they beat their cheeks with their fists. They beat until blood and tears flow abundantly.

[151] Ibid., 78-9.

[152] Wood, *History and Geography,* 37. Feletoa is a village in the main island of the Vava'u group. The fortress in Feletoa was claimed to be the largest fort in Tonga at the time which was capable of holding the entire population of Vava'u estimated at 8000.

Finau immediately ordered that the priest be consulted. On the priest's advice, a child of about two years old was strangled to avoid the wrath of the gods[153].

Clearly Finau and his men were frightened once Palavale had confessed his misdeed. They wasted no time but desperately sought reconciliation with the gods, otherwise the vengeance of the gods could mean their losing the battle.

On the other hand the same Finau was notorious for violating customs. It was the custom that the principal wife of the Tu'i Tonga should be strangled at his death but Finau vowed that his daughter who was the *moheofo* or principal wife of the Tu'i Tonga at the time would not be strangled at the death of her husband.

Because of his anger at the death of his beloved daughter Saumailangi[154] he determined to bury her not in the usual Tongan manner but according to the custom of Samoa. Mariner explained that Finau was resolved not to ' … bury her exactly after the Tonga fashion, but partly according to that, partly agreeable to the custom of Hamoa[Samoa]…'[155]. Finau ordered that nobody should wear the customary large and old ragged mats but instead everyone should wear a new *tapa,* which was the Samoan practice at the time. He also ordered that instead of wearing the usual *ifi* everyone should wear a wreath of flowers which is worn when rejoicing and celebrating. Finau forced his people against their will to celebrate the death of his daughter instead of mourning[156].

Angry with the gods for failing to heal Saumailangi he ordered two of his men to take a rope and strangle Tupou Tea the priest of Tupou Toutai[157]. During his daughter's burial ceremony Finau himself died. His son Moengangongo was told by the priest of the god Tupou Toutai that his father had died because of his disrespect for the gods[158]. He carried out the wish of his father and terminated the *'inasi* at Ha'apai and Vava'u for he regarded it as wasteful and taxing to the people[159]. He did

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[153] Martin, 140.

[154] Paul Dale. *The Tonga Book.*(London:Minerva Press, 1996), 193. In the Samoan language it means descended from the sky.

[155] Martin, 209.

[156] Ibid., 210.

[157] Ibid., 216.

[158] Ibid., 215.

[159] Ibid., 316.

not allow Fatafehi Laufilitonga[160] the heir to the Tu'i Tonga to succeed his father[161] . Vuna the viceroy chief of Vava'u being powerful often did not pay tributes to Tuku'aho in Tongatapu where the centre of polity was[162].

Everyone was aware that the one with most power often disregarded the 'cultural mat.' Finau sometimes disregarded the reverence normally ascribed to the two highest ranking male chiefs at the time, the Tu'i Tonga Fatafehi Paulaho and Veasi. He warned the Tu'i Tonga never to counsel or interfere with him in matters of war[163]. It was often in their struggle for power that the powerful chiefs breached the traditions. During the Battle of the Sea Flats of 1799 although it was considered disgraceful to exhume the dead, Ata in his anger at Finau dug up the bones of his father Finau 'Ulukalala-'i-Ma'ufanga and hung them in Pangaimotu[164]. In the same war Finau and Tupouniua,[165] scoffing at the crushed supporters of Tu'i Kanokupolu set up a white pig in Hahake or the eastern part of Tongatapu as the Tu'i Kanokupolu[166]. Tupoumoheofo[167] arranged that her twelve year old son Fatafehi Fuanuinuiava at a special *'inasi* ceremony was given homage, though this was contradictory to the Tongan custom, since the father of her son the Tu'i Tonga Fatafehi Paulaho was still alive[168]. She also installed herself as the Tu'i Kanokupolu and became the first woman holding the title. What she did was 'shocking in terms of Tongan custom[169]. According to Campbell she was later deposed after fighting with her brother Tuku'aho.

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[160] He was the only son of legitimate rank who was sixteen or seventeen years old in 1817.

[161] Martin, 316.

[162] Ibid., 75. Vuna the chief looking after Vava'u failed to pay tribute as he ought to have done to Tuku'aho who resided in Tongatapu.

[163] Ibid., 315-316.

[164] Wood, *History and Geography,* 30.

[165] Tupouniua who murdered the Tu 'i Kanokupolu Tuku'aho was a half-brother of Finau 'ulukalala-'i-Feletoa. The murder of Tuku'aho caused the major Civil War of 1799 that both Mariner and Vason referred to.

[166] Latukefu, *Church and State,* 16.

[167] Tupoumoheofo was the daughter of the seventh Tu 'i Kanokupolu Tupoulahi. She married the Tu 'i Tonga at the time Fatafehi Paulaho.

[168] Martin, 333.

[169] Campbell, 60.

Her son who later became the thirty eighth Tu'i Tonga ignored the custom that prohibited the Tu'i Tonga from being tattooed[170] and sailed to Samoa to have his body tattooed. During his absence his gods were burned in Vava'u but he remained indifferent, perhaps because at that time the Tu'i Tonga was only a figurehead. He could no longer influence what happened since the Tu'i Tonga line no longer had power and was of little significance in comparison to the Tu'i Kanokupolu[171].

Language, gestures and pithy sayings

As in everything the chiefs had the upper hand when it came to the Tongan language, which was a constant reminder that the chiefs soared above everyone else in status, power and wealth, and the rest of the people had no hope of rising from where they were then. The Tongan language upheld the wide gap between the chiefs and the rest of the people. The language was engineered by the 'originators' to maintain the status quo and to resist any change which might lessen the status of the chiefs. Normally the commoner was not expected to speak in the presence of the chiefs except to say '*koia'* or '*koe*',[172] acknowledging that he or she assents to what is being said by the chief. According to Mariner the *fono*[173] or meeting of the people, was a weekly or fortnightly assembly where the people were informed of instructions from the chief. It was one-way communication where the people gathered with their heads bowed and their hands clasped. As Gifford says, at the *fono* the people gathered to hear the 'orders of the chiefs, and not to debate'[174]. Equally as important as the utterance of the appropriate words to a chief were the appropriate gestures accompanying the words. One normally bowed or lowered oneself when addressing a chief. Vason observed that whenever the Tu'i Tonga appeared everyone, man, woman or child would instantly remove everything worn to the waist and immediately sit down with crossed hands and legs and remain so until the Tu'i

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[170] Martin, 289.

[171] Campbell, 67.

[172] It is still the practice that '*ko ia*' is the response to the chief and '*koe*' is the respond to the king.

[173] Martin,165. The word '*lao*' a transliteration of 'law' is now commonly used whereas in the pre-European contact period '*fono*' would be the word used for strict instructions from the chiefs.

[174] Gifford. *Tongan Society,* 124.

Tonga had passed by[175]. Another mark of respect shown towards the Tu'i Tonga and his family was that the 'inferior people' if they were carrying yams on their shoulder would lower them and hold them in their hands until the chiefly party had passed by[176].

This focus on the chiefs is also revealed in old Tongan sayings. Again, these sayings highlighted the superiority of the chiefs above everyone else. The chiefs were claimed to be more beautiful, more handsome, stronger, wiser and richer than everyone else. One cannot over-estimate the bearing that these sayings had on the mindset of the people.

The word '*polata*'[177] that symbolised weakness is applied to the commoners while the word '*fau*' that symbolised strength is applied to the chiefs[178]. Some examples are:-

(a) The residence of the chief was the ideal place for learning about customs and traditions. This was expressed in the saying '*Nofo 'i 'api Moli kae fu hala*'[179] or 'Staying at Moli and yet clapping wrongly.' Moli was the residence of one Tu'i Tonga and anyone who stayed there was expected to be well versed in the customs. This saying was an expression of disappointment and feeling for those who did not bother to learn while staying in Moli.

(b) The saying, '*Lea hange ha Pelehake*'[180] or 'Speaking like one from Pelehake' commended the people of the village of Pelehake as outstanding orators and communicators. This is because the high chiefs were residing in Pelehake at one time and the people of Pelehake were used to hearing the talk amongst chiefs.

(c) The story goes that a Tui Tonga Fefine[181] or the Woman Tu'i Tonga who was the highest ranking person in the country had an accident which ruined her beautiful face. Nevertheless the reverence rendered to the highest ranking person in the

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[175] Vason, 91.

[176] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two., 953.

[177] *polata* is the trunk of the banana or plantain plant. *fau* is fibre from the bark of a giant hibiscus tree.

[178] Gifford,. *Tongan Society*, 108.

[179] *Ko e Ngaahi Palovepi 'I he Lea faka- Tonga.* (Nuku'alofa: Siasi Uesilana Tau'ataina 'o Tonga, 2004), 45.

[180] Ibid., 44.

[181] The mother of Latuinipulu was the Tu'i Tonga Fefine when Captain Cook visited Tonga in 1777.

country never changed. The Tu'i Tonga Fefine did stay on the island of Tungua in the Ha'apai group and because of that everything in the island was considered to be of significant value. This is where the saying '*Tutungia 'a hulu*[182] *Tungua*[183] 'or 'Shrivelling of a Tungua leaf' came from. Even though the *hulu* is an old coconut leaf of little value but to start a fire with it is still of significance because it is from Tungua.

(d) The story goes that a Tu'i Tonga wished to marry Nua the daughter of the high chief Lo'au. The Tu'i Tonga in voicing his wish to Lo'au asked for a piece of yam, meaning Nua.

Lo'au replied that the yam was already old and had sprouted[184] meaning that Nua was no longer a virgin, but the Tu'i Tonga insisted that he wanted Nua. The Tu'i Tonga was aware that Nua was not a virgin and was old but she was still the daughter of Lo'au. The Tu'i Tonga went for chiefly birth above any other quality. His choice was not only to uphold his own status but more importantly that his offspring would have a chiefly mother[185]. A child whose mother and father were both of chiefly birth would rank higher than a child with only one chiefly parent. The phrase '*nge'esi taha',* or 'one-shelled' scoffed at someone with only one chiefly parent.

This was the beginning of the saying '*Neongo e fena ka ko Nua*'[186] which literally means 'Although she has sprouted yet she is still Nua.'

(e) The same emphasis on chiefly blood is found in the saying '*Pala 'a Kahokaho*'[187] which literally means, 'Rottenness of a *kahokaho*.' The chiefly yam *kahokaho* may be scratched or 'wounded' but the rest of the yam will not be affected and remain a good and edible piece of *kahokaho*. A person with chiefly blood would still be a far better choice to marry than a commoner.

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[182] '*hulu*' is the old coconut leaf.

[183] *Ko e Ngaahi Palovepi*, 45. *Tugua* is the island of the Ha'apai group where the highest ranking persons in the country like the Tu 'i Tonga Fefine and the *Tamaha* normally stayed.

[184] The Tongan word for such a piece of yam is '*fena*.'

[185] A saying which illustrates this is: '*Tama tu'u he fa'e*' or 'Child standing in the mother.' This means that a child of a chiefly mother to a commoner would still be seen as of chiefly blood while a child of a commoner to a chiefly father would be seen as a commoner.

[186] *Ko e Ngaahi Palovepi,* 2.

[187] Ibid., 2..

Furthermore, there are sayings that negatively portray everyone else but the chiefs. In comparison to the chiefs the rest of the population were ignorant, rude, weak, poor and utterly hopeless without the leading of the chiefs. Anyone seeking to rise up to the level of the chief was disapproved of.

(f) One of these sayings is '*Ngu 'a tu'a*',[188] or 'Muttering of a commoner', which explains that even though a commoner may disagree with a chief his disagreement is not significant because he or she will eventually carry out the task he or she was given.

Another saying of the same kind is '*Fiemu'a 'a e tu'a ki mu'a*'[189] or the 'The commoner trying to outwit a chief.' The chief was always seen as the strongest and the most learned whilst the commoner was seen as foolish and weak, so the saying ridiculed a commoner who tried to challenge a chief.

(g) Another saying making the same point is '*Tuki 'a tu'a*',[190] or 'Striking of a commoner', which referred not to a person hitting something or someone but was intended to mock someone who did not know what was he was talking about. No one trusted his story because he was a commoner.

(h) A commoner, unless being required to do so, would normally not come near to a chief. The wide gap between the chief and the commoner was hinted at by the saying, '*Tala pe 'i tu'a mama'o*',[191] or 'A story from a distance.'

The chief's residence was demarcated with a fence and it was only the chief's relations and spokesmen who went inside the fence. The commoners would reside outside the fence and never come beyond it unless asked. This meant that only the chief's relations and spokesmen would know anything reliable about the chief. This saying therefore doubted the truth of any story about the chief that a commoner told.

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[188] Ibid., 42.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid., 43.

[191] Ibid.

Conclusion

The foregoing exploration of the 'cultural mat' verified that, prior to the first European contact, what was commonly called *anga faka-Tonga*[192] or the Tongan way of life was the chiefly way of thinking and doing things. The Tongan views and values were basically the chiefly views and values. Those of the commoners were unvoiced and therefore held to be of no significance in society. The chiefs were the most interested parties and the originators of the cultural mat. The cultural mat was a tool in their hands to manipulate the remaining at least ninety five percent of the people. Undeniably Tongan traditions always benefited the chiefs and often at the expense of the majority of the people. The customs exhibiting the chiefs' superiority in all aspects of life were supported by the myths; a successful partnership in that the commoners accepted and feared them both as completely authoritative. This was the Tongan way of living that the early explorers and missionaries faced when they landed. They were well aware that to do well in the land they needed the backing of the chiefs. The following chapter looks at how Cook's name 'the Friendly Islands' for Tonga was a misnomer. It was the image that the principal chiefs wanted the people to impress upon the European visitors. While the chiefs wanted these foreign interactions to continue, they made sure that they would not be ruled by a foreign power.

[192] It is used interchangeably with *anga fakafonua* or the way of the land or country.

Chapter Three. Tongans: agents or objects in the text.

Introduction

The previous chapter has set out the core Tongan patterns of thought and action in the social and spiritual field which, as has been made clear, formed one seamless whole. The care with which that was done was not to set out 18th century Tongan ideas as a historically completed case, but rather to lay the ground for the contemporary case material on the FWC which will argue that the current organisation and processes within the FWC are based solidly on that pre-Christian whole.

The 'ritual and religion' aspect was not the only part of which we need to be aware , for the understanding by the missionaries of Tongan 'friendliness' and 'generosity' has also fed into the current 'cultural mat' or national myth, and in so doing enabled less positive or, in Christian terms, less pleasant aspects to be set aside. However, set aside does not mean of no further relevance, and in this case it underlies modern life. Tongans from the beginning of European intrusion had their own agenda and motives in conveying the image of warm hospitality, and I shall assert that this was masterminded by the chiefs to portray a peaceful people. Cook's name for Tonga, the Friendly Isles, did not represent other aspects of Tongan attitudes to outsiders and I shall argue that it enables a 'covering up' of less positive, or certainly very pragmatic, interaction patterns. Cook's idyllic and romantic picture was an inaccurate and confused representation of the Tongan people. Their primary intention was to gain from these foreign visitors. It is therefore essential to examine the contact narrative.

The so-called Friendly Isles

The evangelicals in London who formed the London Missionary Society (LMS) were encouraged by reports on the voyages of Wallis[1], Bligh[2] and Cook

[1] Wood, *History and Geography*, 17. On 13th August 1767, Wallis, the first Englishman to visit Tonga, arrived at Niua Toputapu which he called Keppel.

[2] Ibid., 24. In 1789 Captain Bligh in the *Bounty* called at Nomuka.

to send their first mission to Tahiti and the islands of the South Pacific.[3] The aim of this first mission that left London on 10th of August 1796[4] was to send missionaries to Tahiti, to the Marquesas Islands and to Tonga, where they left ten missionaries, probably because in Cook's report the Tongans were more kind and friendly than any other place that he had visited in the South Pacific.[5]

Cook's first visit was in 1773 and lasted six days. The second visit was in 1774, and lasted only for four days. His most significant and last visit in the *Resolution* and the *Discovery* was in April 1777 when he remained in Tonga for almost two and a half months. He was not the first European to visit Tonga but he was the first European to stay for a relatively long period and to write a more detailed account of the country and the people. George Forster, who accompanied his father Johann Reinhold Forster, the naturalist on board the *Resolution* during Cook's visit in 1773, wrote:

> The general disposition for trading, and the kind and friendly reception which strangers have almost constantly met with in every island belonging to this group, prevailed upon us to give these discoveries of Schouten and Tasman, the name of the FRIENDLY ISLANDS.[6]

The name was later used by the European explorers and missionaries whenever referring to the entire Tonga group. The image popularly presented was that in general the people were friendly and hospitable with genuine affection, and that their domestic relations were flavoured with merriment and humour. This "friendliness" became part of Tongan identity and ideology for most of the Tongans and non-Tongans too; it is still their self-perception.

To claim that the Tongans received their European visitors with no strings attached would deprive them of their national dignity and pride: it makes them seem naïve, child-like, even stupid. Their 'peaceable and friendly disposition' towards the early

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[3] Richard Lovett. *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895.* (London: Henry Frowde Oxford University Press, 1899), 117.

[4] Wilson, 8.

[5] Lovett, 140.

[6] George Forster [first published in 1772]. *A Voyage round the world;* edited by Nicholas Thomas and Oliver Berghof; assisted by Jennifer Newell. Volume I. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 256; J.C. Beaglehole. ed. *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery: the voyage of the Resolution and Adventure 1772-1775*. Volume II. (Cambridge, published for the Hakluyt Society: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 449. Cook also wrote of him calling the Tonga group the "Friendly Isles."

Europeans was more of a temporary measure of 'protecting' them from being killed by the Europeans. Tradition must have passed down that after the first European explorers Schouten and Lemaire who arrived in 1616 had been attacked in Niua Toputapu and Niua Fo'ou, the people were punished by the superior fire power of the Dutch. However whenever the Europeans were vulnerable the Tongans immediately struck back to exploit and rob them, and if they thought it was necessary to kill them. They were determined to set the pace and take the lead rather than let themselves be dominated. They acknowledged some aspects of the superiority of their visitors but they also took pride in knowing that they far outclassed the visitors in others. In this chapter it is proposed to show how they did this and the lengths to which they were prepared to go.

The Image Presented by the Chiefs

The convincingly warm, friendly hospitable image presented by the people would not have been possible if it had not been approved and masterminded by the chiefs for, as we have seen in the second chapter, Tongan life is organised by and for the chiefs as visible representatives of the unseen. The principal chiefs were successful in misleading Cook and his party into thinking that Tonga was a peaceful and loving country.[7]

In regard to orderliness King wrote that "…few even surpass them in the great order they observe on all Occasions…" This is because of their ready obedience to the commands of the chiefs.[8] The scale of the reception, especially the very presence of the principal chiefs, speaks of the value that the chiefs pinned on these early encounters with the European visitors. Cook and his men entered a highly stratified society and much of their time would be spent with chiefs. What they were exposed to most of the time therefore was the chiefly behaviour or the *anga fakahouhou'eiki,* the opposite of the commoners behaviour or "*anga fakatu'a.*" The principal chiefs did not rob their visitors:[9] they did not need to because such 'dirty work' would be done by commoners. Most of the stolen goods eventually ended up with the chiefs or at least the chiefs knew who had taken them. Anderson wrote that whenever things

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[7] Bott, *Tongan Society*, 8. This is noted by Bott when she wrote that Cook's picture of Tonga as "a peaceful and idyllic society was not correct."

[8] Beaglehole, Volume III, Part One, 174.

[9] Beaglehole, Volume III, Part Two, 1366.

were stolen from them either in Ha‘apai or Tongatapu they were soon recovered after they let Finau their chiefly friend know.[10] Twenty years later Wilson wrote that while one of the LMS missionaries was cutting firewood a large axe was snatched from him. The missionaries were later told that the stolen axe was now in the hands of the Tu‘i Kanokupolu who had commended the thief for his dexterity and sent him far away from the reach of the missionaries to Vava‘u.[11]A chief did not have to engage in barter because eventually the commoners would come to him with the foreign articles they had got from ‘trading’ and give them to him to pick whatever he wanted. Cook wrote that while they were anchoring at Lifuka the people would come one by one and squat before the Tu‘i Tonga and lay down before him the things they received from trading. He took only a glass bowl and everything was returned. [12] The chiefs wanted so much to maintain their good image that they tried to shield Cook from close contact with the commoners. The true attitude of the people, and therefore probably the chiefs, was exposed when Cook and his men wandered inland and alone, away from the vicinity of the chiefs, and were robbed and stripped: they were usually accompanied by guides recommended by the chiefs to protect them from being insulted and molested.[13]

Every early European, whether explorer, stowaway, or missionary, knew that the only way to survive or to be successful in anything in Tonga was to have the approval and the backing of the chiefs. They had no other option since everything in the islands of Tonga revolved around the chiefs. John Ledyard a corporal in the *Resolution* wrote of the difficulty of survival in the islands without the backing of two principal chiefs Finau Tu‘ihalafatai and Fatafehi Paulaho the Tu‘i Tonga:

> In short, without his [Finau] particular assistance joined to that of Polahow [Fatafehi Paulaho] our visit at this large populous island would have been one continual broil proceeding from the pilfering disposition of the inhabitants, our methods of obtaining satisfaction and their tumultuous and factious dispositions.[14]

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[10] Ibid., 887.

[11] Wilson, 268.

[12] Beaglehole, Volume III, Part One. 116.

[13] Beaglehole, Volume III., Part Two., 873.

[14] James Kenneth Munford. ed.[First published in 1783]. *John Ledyard’s Journal of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage*.(Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State University Press, 1963), 29.

Furthermore it was the gift of provisions from chiefs that kept Cook and his sailors well supplied. Clerke wrote that the chiefs frequently gave huge presents of yams and hogs and these presents were "always in the End, by far the greatest provision" they received.[15]

The collective character of the chiefs

Their self-confidence

One might expect the Tongans would flee or line up with their weapons to protect their shores or at least be apprehensive at the sight of Cook's two ships as they towered above the small canoes of the Tongans, but there is no reference to their being intimidated when they faced Cook's expeditions. The Tongans' confident reception of visitors was more a declaration that they were the owners of the territory and they chose to remain that way.

The Tongans were far from scared when Cook's first expedition in 1773 anchored at 'Eua. Clerke described the people of 'Eua as having "the happiest confidence imaginable," and when they sighted the European ships they immediately sailed to meet them about two miles from land. They leaped up the side and into the ship "like old friends and acquaintances." He regretted that because the crew could not comprehend the language of the natives they were deprived of the pleasure of conversing with "these good people." By the time they anchored there was a great number of canoes were alongside. Clerke described how they were welcomed on shore in 'Eua with "every demonstration of Friendship," and a great piece of "Cloath"[16] was presented to them as a gift. He was convinced that the reception they received was done with a "genuine Benevolence and goodness of heart". [17] On the same trip a man who seemed to be a chief whom Forster described as "free and unconcerned" readily went down into the cabin and where ever else they took him.[18]

At Tongatapu Forster wrote that many natives came on board "as freely as if we had been old acquaintances, and did not appear to have the least distrust." [19] Cook and his

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[15] Beaglehole., Volume III., Part Two., 1311.

[16] A piece of Tongan *tapa* cloth.

[17] Beaglehole, Volume II, 757.

[18] Ibid., 230.

[19] Forster, 244.

men left on the next day for the main island, Tongatapu, and half a mile from shore they could see the natives by the hundred running along the shore waving little white flags which Cook rightly took for peace signals and an invitation to come ashore. According to Cook the natives of Tongatapu were as happy and confident as the people of 'Eua.[20] They jumped on board and carried out their traditional welcome by giving their "present of Root," the *kava* root.[21] Twenty-four years later the LMS missionaries wrote that while they were heading toward Tongatapu a canoe of four men from 'Eua was paddling after them. According to Wilson the sight "…gave us some pleasure, as it both evinced their desire for our articles, and a confidence in us."[22]

Although the Tongans were well aware of the superiority of the European technology they never seem to have felt inferior to their European visitors. They were confident that the Europeans' need for food and water was more urgent than the Tongans' need for European nails, hatchets and knives. In any case to show a lack of confidence or any attitude of subservience would only make them look more vulnerable and would have encouraged their visitors to take advantage of them. Anderson was aware of the Tongans ability to transform these European encounters to their advantage.

> What effect our intercourse and the large supply of iron they have now got may have upon them is uncertain, but they seem of that disposition which converts every opportunity and example to its advantage and consequently may reap some lasting benefit from our visit.[23]

Hidden threat

Instead of scaring and chasing away their European visitors, the Tongans did everything possible to entice them to their shores, fully aware of the importance of appearing hospitable and friendly as the vital first step. One way of doing this was not to come with their weapons or at least to hide them from the sight of their European visitors. Anderson wrote:

> … from the time of the islands being first discovered they had never appear'd arm'd when they came to visit strangers, and when they

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[20] Wood, *History and Geography of Tonga*, 16. Abel Tasman in 1643 gave the name Middleburgh to 'Eua.

[21] Beaglehole, Volume II, 756.

[22] Wilson, 96.

[23] Beaglehole, Volume III, Part Two., 959.

> brought their weapons it was only to traffic with them-a circumstance seldom found amongst Indian nations perpetually at war, who always part with their arms rather reluctantly;…[24]

What Anderson did not know was that even though the Tongans did not carry their weapons they could get them in no time whenever there was a need. The lack of weapons would have been at the chiefs' behest, lest it either scare their European visitors away or be interpreted as a sign of insecurity. From this "unsuspicious" nature of the natives, Cook and his men assumed that the natives were not familiar with the "Idea of an Enemy." However when the crew went ashore they found large quantity of weapons such as clubs, spears and bows and arrows.[25] Cook and his men could not reconcile the quantity of weapons they saw with the seemingly peaceful climate of the country.[26] Cook did concede, however that:

> The art of War is not unknown to these people though perhaps they practise it as little as any nation upon earth; for except their occasional disputes with Fidge[e] [Fiji], before mentioned, they seem to have no enemies round them.[27]

Tongans wanted their European visitors to think that the weapons were for hunting, yet with poultry and pigs being tame, the only wild animals were rats and birds, caught in traps or nets. Cook and the earlier explorers like Tasman and Wallis each arrived in peaceful periods, yet a chief could call hundreds of men to war with no prior notice: weapons, each of which took a significant amount of time and effort to make, were for war. [28]

Cook and his men wrongly assumed that the Tongans were not aware of the "Idea of an Enemy" and concluded that the Tongans knew very little about the "art of War." The principal chiefs were successful in misleading Cook and his men in thinking that Tonga was a peaceful and pleasant country. A relatively small country like Tonga could not possibly have ruled sizeable portions of Fiji and Samoa without creating enemies and resorting to war, and that was achieved only through their warrior skills.

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[24] Beaglehole, Volume III., Part Two, 955.

[25] Beaglehole, Volume II., 809.

[26] Forster, 239-240.

[27] Beaglehole., Volume III. Part One., 174.

[28] Ibid., 169.

A temporary peace, when one chief had managed to become supreme, or a 'time of no fighting' did not exclude an ever-present potential for war.[29]

Deceptive Generosity

Another stratagem employed by the Tongans to attract their foreign counterparts was to shower them with gifts to lull any suspicions. Mariner arrived in Tonga in November 1806; thirty years after Cook's third and last visit to Tonga in 1777. [30] He recalled what his patron chief Finau 'Ulukalala-'i- Feletoa and other chiefs told him about the conspiracy to murder Cook at Lifuka.[31] Mariner's patron chief told Mariner that the conspiracy was masterminded by his father. Finau recalled that the "…people of Tonga behaved towards Cook with every external demonstration of friendship, whilst they secretly meant to kill him…" [32] Ledyard, however, wrote that the excessive generosity made the crew suspicious of the motive and the guards were always under arms. [33] Normally Cook and his men got these provisions by exchange but now they were being given everything free. There was no allusion to a plot either by Cook or his officers in their journals and they were certainly overwhelmed by the enormous quantity of gifts collected and the entertainment that they received from the people of Lifuka during their nine days there. The entertainment during the evenings consisted of a variety of games, fighting with clubs, boxing and wrestling matches, and dances.[34]

On Sunday May 18thCook wrote of the gifts as they were brought on board: "There was as much as loaded four boats and far exceeded any present I had before received

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[29] Martin, 75. When Cook visited Tonga it was ruled by the most powerful chief Tuku'aho whose seat of government was at Tongatapu. Mariner recalled that while he was in Lifuka with four of his companions they received an order from Finau to prepare for the annual attack on the main island of Tongatapu and to "get ready four twelve-pound carronades." Apparently this attack by men from Ha'apai and Vava'u on the main island Tongatapu had occurred every year for at least "seven or eight" years before the arrival of Mariner in 1806. Mariner learned this not only from Finau but also from Tupouniua , the Tu'i Tonga, other chiefs, and from several inhabitants of the island of Tongatapu and there was consistency in their accounts. One can only conclude that fighting was not unusual in the life of the three main islands in the Tonga group at least in the time of Finau 'Ulukalala-i'-Feletoa.

[30] Martin, 55.

[31] Ibid., 279-281.

[32] Ibid., 280.

[33] Munford, 36.

[34] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part One., 109-10.

from an Indian Prince."[35] The gifts that people brought were in response to a decree of Finau on the previous day. Finau had called a meeting of all the people in the northern part of the island of Lifuka [36] where he commanded them to welcome Cook as a friend and not to rob or mistreat him. Cook who sat at the front of the assembly with Finau and Tapa his spokesman recorded the speech by Tapa as translated to him by Omai:

> The purport of this speech as I lear (n) t by Omai, was that all the people both young and old were to look upon me as a friend who was to come to remain with them a few days, that they were not to steal or molest me in anything, they were tio [to] bring me hogs, fowls, fruit &ca to the ships where they would receive in exchange such and such things.[37]

It is interesting to note that this was the only occasion recorded by Cook where the crowd were gathered and a chief told the people that they should behave well towards Cook and his men. There had been incidents before of chiefs ordering the people to behave well but never as categorically as this incident and with so many people present.[38] People of the other islands in the Ha'apai group were present too. The display was a deliberate demonstration to Cook and his men that their safety and well-being were guaranteed. The unspoken implication in Tapa's speech was both that the majority of the people commonly stole from European visitors and that his authority was supreme.

It would be naïve to think that these gifts from the principal chiefs had no strings attached, or that they had no motives apart from respect and generosity. They wanted to show their status, wealth and power in the Tongan community and put Cook and his men under an obligation to reciprocate. Foreign possessions were not only tools of superior technology but, equally important in the eyes of the Tongans, symbols of power and status.

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[35] Ibid., 108.

[36] Ibid., 105.

[37] Ibid., 105-6. Omai was a native from Tahiti who was brought by Cook to assist in the translation.

[38] Lifuka was the first island in the Tonga group that Cook discovered and he named it the Friendly Island.

It is fair to note that one writer, Peter Suren, doubted the credibility of Mariner's account, arguing that there was never a conspiracy against Cook in Tonga.[39] Be that as it may, the Tongans were not entertaining their European visitors for nothing: the primary motive was what they could gain from them and they managed to convey the idea that, as Anderson said on leaving the islands in 1777, "…they have never appear'd in the smallest degree hostile…" unlike most of the inhabitants of South Seas,[40] and such a view advantaged Tonga.

Their pride and assertive self-interest

Samwell recorded that when the Tu'i Tonga Fatafehi Paulaho first met Cook at the Ha'apai Islands he asked Cook what he wanted from these isles. His question surprised Cook for he had not been asked it anywhere else in the South Seas. Of course no one else but Fatafehi Paulaho, the highest ranking king in Tonga would be able to ask that question with such confidence, [41]and by this question Paulaho was making it clear that he was the sovereign ruler and that everyone must respect him including Cook. Paulaho's question was a reminder to Cook and his men that they had taken much of the country's provisions on these visits[42] and Paulaho and his people were aware of it, and that the hospitality that Cook and his men received was organised by the chiefs. Although Paulaho was inviting Cook to come again, he would need Paulaho's permission before taking anything, would need to reciprocate with his best, worthy of the honour of having an audience with the king. Paulaho gave Cook as a gift a feathered head-dress, *pala tavake*[43] that is worn only by the highest chiefs.[44] As this was the expedition's first encounter with Paulaho the attendants were watchful that Cook and his men gave the respect that he deserved. When Cook invited Paulaho to go down into his cabin, he was warned this was

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[39] Peter Suren. *Essays on the History of Tonga.* (Nuku'alofa: Friendly Islands Bookshop, 2001), 90-115.

[40] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two, 928.

[41] Ibid., 1032.

[42] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part One., 102. It is almost certain that whatever island the Cook's ships sought provision from caused depletion in the island's food supply. When they anchored at Nomuka Cook wrote that they, "…had quite exhausted the island of all most every thing it produced…"

[43] Adrienne L. Kaeppler. *From the Stone Age to the Space Age in 200 Years.*(Nuku'alofa: Tongan National Museum, 1999), 47-9. "Made of tail feathers of the tropic bird and /or red parakeet feathers, they formed an overarching crescent from ear to ear that stood out some eighteen inches."

[44] Beaglehole, Volume III, Part One, 117.

inappropriate lest people walk over his head, going against the demand that lower ranks must always be lower physically than higher. Paulaho went down but Cook, knowing the rule, had ordered that no one should walk on that part of the deck which was over the cabin.[45]

The Tongan name for the Europeans was *papalangi* or "men from the sky" a simple statement of origin rather than a religious designation. The natives were well aware that they were superior to the *papalangi* in some respects. Samwell recorded that the small sailing canoes of the natives were "much quicker" than their ships.[46] King wrote that their men on shore were often beaten when they challenged the natives in wrestling and boxing and when they became angry the natives made fun of them.[47] This determination to remain on top was restated by their insistence on maintaining their story of origin which underwrote their right to possession of and rule over Tonga; the gods had decided that, and as representatives of gods, they had sole rights. Therefore they were owners and no one else. Mariner recalled a popular tradition on how Tonga was first inhabited. The tradition was that the Tangaloa ordered his two sons Tupou and Vaka'akau'ola his younger brother to descend and live in Tonga. Tupou killed his younger brother and Tangaloa punished Tupou.

> Go with my commands to the family of Vaca-acow-ooli [Vaka'akau'ola]; tell them to come hither. …Tangaloa straightaway ordered them thus:
>
> Put your canoes to sea, and sail to the east, to the great land which is there, and take up your abode there. Be your skins white like your minds, for your minds are pure; you shall be wise, making axes, and all riches whatsoever, and shall have large canoes.
>
> …but they (the Tonga people) shall not be able to go with you with their bad canoes. "Tangaloa then spoke thus to the others: You shall be black, because your minds are bad, and shall be destitute; you shall not be wise in useful things, neither shall you go to the great land of your brothers. How can you go with your bad canoes? But your brothers shall come to Tonga, and trade with you as they please."[48]

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[45] Ibid., 115-116.

[46] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two.,1016.

[47] Ibid., 1362.

[48] Martin, 306-307.

Mariner took pains to investigate further this "extraordinary story" for he could not see why Tongans should hold on to a tradition that degraded them as slothful and ignorant; even their chiefs were portrayed as descendants of the evil elder brother Tupou. The entire Tongan race being descendants of Tupou were cursed with poverty and ignorance right from the start. Perhaps Mariner speculated that the story was a corrupted version of a Biblical account such as the story of Cain and Abel, which the chiefs had heard from some missionaries or other European visitors, and had created a 'revised version' incorporating their own values and views. Mariner probably assumed that the wise and skilful younger Vaka'akau'ola represented the Europeans because when Tangaloa blessed the younger son he said "Be your skins white like your minds."

The majority of the respondents, the 'oldest men' in particular, insisted that this was not a story from the *papalangi* but a tradition that originated in Tonga. Contrary to the story which seemed to represent them as ugly, Mariner continued: They were adamant that they are "…by far superior to us in personal beauty; and though we have more instruments and riches, they think they could make a better use of them if they only had them in their possession." [49] Paul Dale tends to agree with Mariner that the story most probably originated with the missionaries and could have reflected the attitude of the first missionaries toward the dark skinned Tongans.[50]

Yet both Mariner and Dale interpret the story wrongly. Both brothers were Tongans and none of the known traditions claimed that the first inhabitants of Tonga were *papalangis*[51]. The tradition was not about Tongans versus *papalangis* but about chiefs versus commoners. Captain John Erskine of HMS Havannah who visited Tonga in 1849 noted that the marked difference between the chiefs and the rest of the people was, "superiority in stature and the lightness of colour on the part of the chiefs over the common people."[52] The LMS missionaries described Tupoumoheofo the daughter of Mumui the Tu'i Kanokupolu: "she has features and complexion very

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[49] Ibid., 307.

[50] Dale, 305-6.

[51] "*papalangi*" is the term used for a European or for any white-skinned person. It literally means "sky bursters." The Tongans assumed Europeans came through the sky from a far distance.

[52] John Elphinstone Erskine. J*ournal of a cruise among the islands of the western Pacific, including the Feejees and other inhabited by the Polynesian negro races, in Her Majesty's Ship Havannah.* (London: John Murray, 1853), 155.

like a European." This was because she hardly went out of the house and exposed herself to the sun.[53] James King a second lieutenant in the *Resolution* noticed that many of the chiefly women were fairer than the rest.[54] The highlighted differences between the two brothers in terms of intelligence, creativity, morals and even the distance between their islands of residence was a mirror image of the gap the Tongans commonly perceived to be between the chiefs and the rest of the people. Mariner acknowledged that there were several stories about the original inhabitants of Tonga and several creation stories, though most of them were vague and confused because they were told mainly as amusement when in want of a better topic for conversation. Nevertheless their story of origin was foundational to their very existence. It was more than a myth to them, being a charter of social existence and an affirmation of the divine ordering of chief and commoner, a 'story' that held the secret of who they were as individuals and how they related to each other and to the country as a whole.

By the wish of Finau Tu'ihalafatai the marines from both ships were taken on shore at Lifuka to do drill and provide entertainment on the evening of the 20th of May 1777. Anderson who was the surgeon in the *Resolution* estimated a multitude of two thousand were present though others put it up to six thousand. Whatever the exact figure was it is certain that the majority of the people in Lifuka were in attendance.[55] As soon as Cook's men finished their display they were asked by the natives to stay and see their own performance, as if "to rival or surpass us."[56]

Finau and one hundred and five of his men stood up to perform a dance called the *me'e tu'upaki,* [57]accompanied by drummers. Every dancer held a wooden bat, a *paki*, to use as they danced. Clerke wrote:

> The amazing exactitude of their various motions, both with this implement and every joint of heir body, and the perfect Time in their musick surpass'd every thing I had the least Idea of; their motions

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[53] Wilson, 252.

[54] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two., 1365.

[55] Ibid., 1361.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part One, 109; C.M. Churchward. *Tongan Dictionary*. (Nuku'alofa: Tonga Government Printing Press, 1955). *metu'upaki* is a dance in which short fat clubs or paddles called *paki* are used.

> were infinitely more uniform than any Company of soldiers I ever saw exercise in my Life.[58]

A good performance was a sure evidence of the loyalty and the respect of the people for their chief. Indeed, their principal chiefs like Finau were the principal performers. Cook wrote, "… [they] so far exceeded any thing we had done to amuse them that they seemed to pique themselves in the superiority they had over us."[59] King was aware of the same attitude, "natives seemd to have the consciousness of being superior to us in their amusements and they asked if they could see more of our dances."[60] The determination to be on top was a way of warning off their European counterparts.

Their scorn of the incomers' customs

Twenty years later, when the Tu'i Tonga at the time was given his wish for a cuckoo-clock by the LMS missionaries, he took it home and, curious to know what was inside, took it to pieces but could not reassemble it. He sent for the missionaries, but they too were unsuccessful. The Tongans then ridiculed the missionaries who were no better than them even though they had brought the clock. Piqued, the missionaries wrote that the people "…were naturally very conceited and this circumstance much encouraged their vanity; now they prided themselves in the idea that they were as skilful and clever as we are."[61]

They also derided European manners. Mariner recalled that although he and some other *Port–Au–Prince* survivors were given food by the people, most of the time they were left to find it themselves, being reduced to theft in the hungry months. Mariner's patron chief Finau asked him how one managed hunger in England, and was scornful to learn that each man would purchase food sufficient only for him and his family, and the occasional guest, but that no stranger would ever enter and eat uninvited. Finau laughed at the "…ill-nature and selfishness of the white people…" He concluded that the Tongan custom was far better because whenever anyone was

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[58] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two.,1302

[59] Beaglehole. Volume III. Part One., 109.

[60] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two.,1361.

[61] Vason, 61.

hungry he or she would only have to look for any place nearby where eating was going on and join the gathering without being invited or embarrassed.[62]

According to Mariner people would make a joke when a stranger came into their house to eat, "No! We shall treat you after the manner of the *Papalangis*; go home, and eat what you have got, and we shall eat what we have got!"[63] In fact the Tongans were putting Mariner and his men in their place, which was not as honourable men but rather as slaves who should not expect to be treated as special just because they were *papalangi.* Finau rubbed in the fact that as chief he could get food anywhere without asking. The missionary Thomas who came twenty years after Mariner explained that the Tongan who received a present of good food but ate it alone, and failed to tell others, was described as *kaipo* which means "eating in the dark." It was the custom that if anyone came during a meal a portion must be shared with the visitor and if other visitors followed the first would divide his share into smaller shares and distributed among the new-comers. To neglect this was called *kai vale* or "foolish eating."[64]

Mariner's efforts to put forward Christian doctrine met with equal scorn. While he knew the Tongan view that only chiefs had life after death, the commoner 'rubbish' ending at death, none (or certainly not the chiefs to whom we must assume he was talking) were at all impressed when he explained that the English believed that there is life after death for all, although that collective eternity is divided into eternal punishment or eternal pleasure. The natives responded, "Very bad indeed for the *Papalangis*." [65] We have no knowledge of what Tongan commoners made of a system in which chiefs as well as commoners faced either punishment or pleasure.

Mariner tried to talk economics but here again Tongans usually refused to accept that their European counterparts were superior. He discussed with Finau and another chief Filimoe'atu about the soundness of using money as a medium of exchange. Filimoe'atu, was quick to grasp why it was better than barter, but Finau was not convinced. He thought money was useless because it could not be converted into tools, knives, axes and chisels. He argued that if a man had a surplus of yams then as

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[62] Martin, 67.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Farmer, 150.

[65] Martin, 314.

in the usual practice he should just exchange it for something else like pork. Eventually, however, Finau agreed that money was more convenient to handle and unlike perishable goods one can collect large amounts of money and keep it for as long as one wishes. Nevertheless he was quick to point out that the danger of using money was the temptation for a person to amass and keep it for himself and not share it with others. In the native form of exchange, the nature of the goods, especially food, meant the chief must either exchange what he had, or freely share it with the lower chiefs and dependents. So Finau concluded, "I understand now very well what it is that makes the *Papalangis* so selfish - it is money!!" [66]

How the chiefs kept the upper hand over the Europeans

By shrewd barter over women and feathers-

The Tongans saw the arrival of the Europeans as an opportunity to get goods from them so as to set up an exchange market. Clerke wrote that whenever they arrived on an island one of their first tasks was to find an appropriate location for a market place where the natives could bring their goods for exchange. Usually the gunners of the two ships were delegated to the task.[67] Barter was the only form of exchange that the early explorers found in Tonga and the natives would always bargain for the highest value they could possibly obtain from their goods and services. Cook had a good opinion of them, "No Nation in the world understand Traffick or Barter which they call *Fagatou* [*fakatau*]better than these people, neither are there perhaps any Indians that traffick with more honesty and less distrust…" [68]

The chiefs could have easily banned trading if they had wanted to. John Williamson the third lieutenant on the *Resolution* wrote that after having walked "many miles" on the island of Tongatapu they asked some natives for refreshments but were warned by the natives that "every thing was taboo'd[*tapu*]." The king had laid a *tapu* on these foods and the natives were forbidden to touch or eat from them until further notice. The sailors argued that they were outside the *tapu* and the sanction applied only to the natives; but the natives were adamant that they would still not give in to

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[66] Ibid., 155.

[67] Beaglehole., Volume III. Part Two, 1311.

[68] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part One., 171

the need of the sailors. The sailors in dismay continued their journey in the scorching sun with no provisions or drinks.[69] The chiefs had to judge the need of the Europeans for food and water against the limited resources to supply them and by barter the rate of exchange was controllable. It did not take long for them to know what Cook and his men wanted most by the highest price they were willing to pay. Cook and his men were willing to pay the highest price for women, red feathers[70] and hogs.[71]

The Tongans' stubbornness showed their determination to establish that they did things on their own terms and could not be bought. No matter how hard the sailors tried to lure the girls on board, King noted that they could not just purchase any woman they want with their "riches," being sure that neither married women nor the daughters of the high chiefs ever prostituted themselves.[72] Samwell said that the red feather was the most treasured article in both Tonga and Tahiti because it was offered to gods but that none were available on Tahiti. Everyone on the expedition made an effort to get a supply because there was an abundant supply of red feathers[73] in Tonga although they were brought from Fiji.[74] Knowing Cook and his men's great interest in these red feathers, Tongans raised the value so high that it was no longer worthwhile to buy any more red feathers in Tonga "as the Hatchets & Shirts we gave them would fetch as much at Otaheite as the small Quantity of feathers they gave us for them." [75]

And over pigs and land

Tonga was a smaller country than most of the Pacific island nations Cook's expedition had visited, yet it presented the incomers with considerable differences from other places. They gave little if anything away, demanding immediate payment for both goods and services. In part this was plain wisdom: Tongans conserved their basic food resources against the regular risk of famine through hurricanes or war.

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[69] Beaglehole., Volume III., Part Two., 1342.

[70] Beaglehole, Volume III, Part One, 117.

[71] Beaglehole, Volume III, Part Two, 1032.

[72] Ibid., 1367-8.

[73] Beaglehole., Volume III., Part One., 164. The demand for red feathers was so high that when the Fijians refused to trade the Tongans would fight for it rather than returning to Tonga without it.

[74] Ibid., 171

[75] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two., 1014.

Moreover they knew that the sheep and other animals on the ships must have grass for survival so Cook and his expedition would eventually give way. The same with water when the price was raised; Cook had no option but to buy it.

Hamilton the surgeon on the frigate *Pandora* which came in search of the mutineers of the Bounty in 1791 wrote of how a party was sent on shore at Nomuka to cut firewood for fuel and grass for the sheep but the natives "would not permit a blade of grass to be cut off till they were paid for it."[76] James Morrison, one of the pardoned mutineers in the *Bounty,* observed that during their call at Nomuka the natives gave nothing free. He wrote:

> During our stay here the natives flocked to the ship in great numbers to traffic for hogs, fowls, yams, coconuts etc., all of which they seemed to know the value of, and would not part with a single plantain without something in return.[77]

The LMS missionaries reported an incident in which the cook's axe was stolen and in an effort to get it back they first tempted the natives with "a few glittering guineas" in the hope that the natives would exchange the stolen axe for these guineas. The captain then handed over ten guineas to the cook to persuade the natives to exchange the guineas for the axe. This was all in vain; the natives did nothing but laugh at the offer.[78] The missionaries noticed an obvious difference between trading with the people of Tahiti and trading with the people of Tonga; the Tongans were far sharper dealers, an article that would normally buy a hundred coconuts in Tahiti would only give them twelve coconuts in Tonga.[79] Anderson wrote that the natives did help in rolling down their water casks but otherwise they would not do even the smallest task for nothing,[80] or "part with the twig of a tree to us without asking something in exchange." [81]

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[76] George Hamilton. [First printed in 1793]. *A Voyage round the world in His Majesty's frigate Pandora performed under the direction of Captain Edwards. In the years 1790, 1791, and 1792,* (Sydney: Horden House for the Australian National Maritime Museum, 1998), 88.

[77] Peter Suren. *Essays on the History of Tonga*. Volume II. (Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga: Friendly Island Bookshop, 2004), 189.

[78] Wilson, 283.

[79] Ibid., 100.

[80] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two., 864 .

[81] Ibid., 959.

The naturalist Labillardiere[82] wrote that although they were discouraged from coming on board the natives were never put off. One reason was that in the market on the island of Pangaimotu there was little for sale but edibles at a fixed price while on board they often received a higher price for their bargain.[83] One day when the trading was successful and there were plentiful provisions, some articles were distributed amongst the crew to purchase whatever they wanted for themselves. The natives reacted by raising " their demands for their goods to a very high price, frequently asking ten times as much as before they had been contented to take."[84] The officer delegated with the task of buying provisions for the ship had a difficult time because:

> though he had fixed a regular value on every article, the natives, still in hopes of selling them dearer never parted with their goods till they had disputed a long time about their price.[85]

A cart that the French had brought from Europe was used to carry barrels of water from the shore to the ship. Twelve commoners offered to pull the cart for a payment of twelve glass beads per journey and then the number of workers was increased to twenty for the same payment, though it was not long before the natives demanded a higher price for their labour;[86] glass beads as payment was not worth their effort. And nor were beads and axes the only items in which Tongans had a keen interest. Mariner recalled that Captain Fisk of the brig *Favourite* gave Moengangongo a present of several pearl oyster-shells which were seen by the Tongans as "a very beautiful ornament and very scarce among them." Nice though they were, Moengangongo said he needed a supply of bullets for his guns on shore, to use in

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[82] Under Admiral d'Entrecasteaux arrived in Tonga in March 1793, berthing at the island of Pangaimotu for two weeks.

[83] M. Labillardiere. *Voyage in search of La Perouse performed by the order of the Constituent Assembly, during the years 1791, 1792, 1793, and 1794 and Drawn up by M. Labillardiere.* (London: John Stockdale, 1800), 340; Wilson, liii. An expedition led by Admiral d'Entrecastreux was sent to find the French explorer La Perouse. The French sloops *La Recherche* and *L' Esperance* arrived on 3rd March 1793 and they anchored at the island of Pangaimotu for about two weeks. The account was published by the ship's naturalist Labillardiere.

[84] Ibid., 373.

[85] Ibid., 341.

[86] Ibid., 350.

defending his kingdom against attack from the people of Ha'apai.[87] His wish was granted.

By lying

The chiefs habitually lied to their early visitors. In the case with Cook and his men it was from their most popular chief and close friend Finau. On the 6th of May 1777 Finau together with his spokesman Tapa gave Cook a false impression when Tapa introduced Finau as "King of all the friendly isles."[88] After nearly two months a large canoe came under the stern and the natives informed Cook that the chief they had on board was "King of all the Isles," Fatafehi Paulaho. That was the first time Cook was told that Finau was not the highest ranking chief. [89] In order to impress Cook of his power and wealth and to win Cook's friendship Finau told Cook that he was going to Vava'u an island which was two days' sailing away to the north, to get some red feathered caps for Cook and his men to take to Tahiti. Cook was interested to take the opportunity to go with Finau to see Vava'u. Knowing that Cook might discover his ploy he quickly explained that that there was no harbour or good anchorage for his ships. Cook gave in to Finau's insistence not knowing Vava'u to be one of the best harbours in the country. Cook later learned from Fatafehi Paulaho on his third visit in 1777, that Vava'u did have a good harbour and many streams of fresh water and would have supplied Cook with provisions.

Beaglehole speculated that Finau did not want Cook to go to Vava'u because of the provisions they would give to the ships but this thesis argues that Finau was just trying to impress Cook and the presence of the higher ranking chiefs like the Tu'i Tonga would definitely make him look small.

On Friday 6th of June Anderson recorded that a large canoe came with Finau who told them that he had brought several canoes of pigs and provisions from Vava'u but they were all lost because of strong wind and no one survived from the mishap.[90]

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[87] Martin, 264.

[88] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part One.,100

[89] Ibid., 115

[90] Ibid., 120.

Finally Cook and his men learned of what kind of chief Finau was[91] but they were willing to overlook it all because of the great service that he had given them thus far.[92]

By theft

Not only did they force up the prices, the Tongans also intentionally misled and robbed the Europeans, Samwell wrote:

> the only thing that interrupted the Harmony subsisting between us & the Natives was the frequent Thefts they committed both in the Ship and on shore; …the Natives in general behaved very civil to them, which was indeed agreeable to their disposition, but the strong Desire they have for Iron manufacture for all Kinds surmounts every other & makes them forget the rights of Friendship & Hospitality. [93]

The carpenters in Cook's expedition complained so often that the natives stole their tools that a sentry was placed over them.[94] Tongans tried to give an 'excuse' to convince the early Europeans, including Cook and his men, that Tongans saw theft as "an act of meanness rather than a crime:"[95] King was also convinced that 'theft' was not a serious offence in the eyes of the Tongan.[96] Mariner's view was most probably influenced by being adopted by a powerful chief, a chief taking whatever property he wished from his people. Similarly Vason, also under the protection of a chief, wrote of the honesty of the people and said that they would not steal from the plantation of another, especially from a foreigner like him:[97] but it was not his person but rather his close link with Mulikiha'amea which spared him.

Stealing from the Europeans was a form of control, possession, even a game: stealing from their chief was closer to *lese majeste.* Hamilton, the surgeon on the frigate *Pandora* searching for the *Bounty* and its mutineers in 1791, was not convinced that the name Cook had given the islands was the right one. He wrote:

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[91] Ibid., 163.

[92] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two.,886.

[93] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two.,1028-29.

[94] Ibid., 1029.

[95] Martin, 323.

[96] Beaglehole, Volume III, Part Two. 1366.

[97] Vason, 86.

> The people of Nomuka are the most daring set of robbers in the South Seas; and, with the greatest respect and submission to Capt. Cook, I think the name Friendly Islands is a perfect misnomer, as their behaviour to himself, to us, and to Captain Bligh's unfortunate boat at Murderer's Cove, pretty clearly evinces. Indeed Murderer's Cove in the Friendly Isles, is saying a volume on the subject.[98]

By using the Europeans' abilities

It was not only European goods that the Tongans desired, but also to learn their skills. One way to achieve that was either to persuade or force these European visitors to stay with them. For example Vason was a good farmer and during the "hungry season" his farm became a significant supplier of provisions for his patron chief Mulikiha'amea.[99] He could give food presents to his neighbours and still "the fruits were left to drop off the trees."[100]Vason was an exception: most early European men who stayed in Tonga were forcibly enlisted as warriors of a particular chief. In a country where the chiefs make use of *tapu* as a tool of control they would often devise a loophole out of these sanctions. One way was to use the European visitors. This was the case described by Vason at the first battle of the sea-flats. The royalists who were their enemies were running to the burial enclosure of the Tu'i Kanokupolu for safety. This is because it was sacrilegious to fight or argue within the boundaries of this sacred ground. Although Finau's men were willing to give their lives for anything that Finau ordered no one could dare disrespect the *tapu*. Knowing their safety is guaranteed the enemies made a mockery of Finau and his warriors. Then Finau came up with an idea that because Vason had different gods then he must unaffected by the *tapu*. Finau ordered Vason to throw a torch to the thatch. The enemies were all killed as they ran out from the burning enclosure.[101] Important to note is that regardless of whose brilliant idea was it only Finau could break the *tapu* by ordering Vason.

The chiefs were well aware that the participation of these Europeans on their side made all the difference between winning and losing a battle. It was common to

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[98] Hamilton, 82-83.

[99] Vason, 99-100.

[100] Ibid., 86.

[101] Ibid., 97-98.

include Europeans in the household of chiefs for they gave valuable advice and they were a sign of social prestige. Singleton told Peter Dillon of the chiefs' wish for some white men to live with them:

> It is necessary here to observe that the chiefs of these islands pride themselves much on having European resident among them; a feeling that gave rise to the following unfortunate affray: - The morning on which the ship Astrolabe was about to sail, two of the crew, unperceived by the sentinels, had leaped from the side into a large canoe, where they were concealed by the natives. The canoe immediately pulled for the shore, and shortly after a boat, with eight or ten men and an officer, put off for Pangaimotu to procure sand; but the canoe reached the shore first. The chief of this canoe having acquainted those on shore that he had two Europeans with him, the other chiefs became jealous, and said, "We must have some white men to live with us as well as you." The ship's boat had by this time reached the land, and the men on board being unarmed, were seized by the natives, and taken on shore. [102]

Finau had had this in mind when planning the selective massacre of the crew of the *Port-Au-Prince*. It was not only to extract every piece of iron and save the cannons for his future battle; he knew that the cannons would be useless without the Europeans to fire them. The ship was burned to get the iron and eight cannons were saved to be used by Finau in his future attacks. To man the cannons thirty-four men including William Mariner were left alive.

A new era of warfare in Tonga began when Finau 'Ulukalala-'i-Feletoa and his forces, which included sixteen Englishmen to fire eight muskets and four cannons, invaded the island of Tongatapu to attack the fortress of Nuku'alofa, [103] which was the strongest of twelve fortresses in the island and had resisted at least eleven years of attacks[104] but was completely destroyed by Finau and his men.[105] Some of the survivors described the destructive force of a cannon ball, which once fired would enter a house as if looking for its victims then go out to another house and continue to do so.[106] If Finau had followed Mariner's advice to lay siege to the rest of the

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[102] Peter Dillon. *Narrative and Successful result of a Voyage in the South Seas performed by order of the Government of British India to ascertain the actual fate of La Perouse's Expedition interspersed with accounts of the Religion, Manners, Customs, and cannibal practices of the South Seas Islands by the Chevalier Capt. P. Dillon.* Volume 1.(London: Hurst, Chance & Co., 1829), 267.

[103] Martin, 81.

[104] Ibid., 82.

[105] Ibid., 82-83.

[106] Ibid.

fortresses on the island[107] he would have easily taken the whole island of Tongatapu and made himself the most powerful chief in the entire Tonga group.

The chiefs' murderous determination to secure European goods

The Tongans would often attack and ransack the ships whenever they had the opportunity. This pattern of 'welcoming' foreigners is found in what Mariner recalled of events on the afternoon of November 29th 1806. The leaking English whaler and privateer *Port-Au-Prince* anchored for repairs at the island of Lifuka at the same spot where Cook had anchored in 1777.[108] In the evening some chiefs came on board with a large pig and cooked yams to welcome Captain Brown and his men officially. Finau ordered the people to act friendly though at the same time they were planning to kill the crew and ransack the privateer. With the Tongans was a man named Tuitui who used the little English he knew to try and convince the officers of the ship that the "natives were friendly disposed towards them."[109] A native of Hawaii who was brought by the *Port Au Prince* was not deceived and warned the officers not to believe Tuitui but to be on the alert, for the natives were hostile. Unfortunately for Captain Brown and his men they did not heed this warning.[110]

On 1st December 1806 Tuitui came on board to invite Captain Brown to go ashore for a tour of the island, which made the privateer and those on board more vulnerable to attack. Brown and his men were deceived by the hospitality and the friendliness put on by Finau and the rest of the chiefs. The situation was made worse when about three hundred natives were allowed aboard early in the morning to wander freely around the ship. At a signal the natives attacked and killed twenty-six of the crew including Captain Brown[111] and three who had left for the shore.[112] Presumably Finau's main purpose in ransacking the *Port au Prince* was to get the cannons for his future wars in Tongatapu. In 1802 the Boston whaler, the *Duke of Portland* called at Tongatapu on June 1802 and was attacked by some people of Hihifo after the usual

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[107] Ibid., 83.

[108] Ibid., 55.

[109] Ibid., 55-56.

[110] Ibid., 56.

[111] Ibid., 59.

[112] Ibid., 60.

generous welcome ashore by a chief. All the crew were murdered except three or four who including a woman named Elizabeth Morey who was taken on shore to be one of the wives of a chief named Teukava.[113]

Two years later the brig *Union* from New York called in Tongatapu on 2nd October 1804. Again the chief and the natives pretending to be friendly welcomed Captain Pendleton and some of his men ashore. He was killed and all the sailors in the boat massacred. The next day the brig received a message to send a boat to pick up a supply of hogs and yams. The commanding officer on guard on the brig was suspicious but it was soon surrounded by several canoes. Elizabeth Morey who was in one of the canoes called out warning the crew that the captain and party had been murdered. [114] She then swam to the brig while covered by the firing of the sailors and escaped on it.[115]

In following years many vessels were attacked and crew members murdered. Others narrowly escaped. Inevitably, the Tongans became notorious for massacring crews and ransacking foreign ships, mainly to possess the goods that the ships carried. The *Sydney Gazette* warned ships to look out for the islands of Tonga as it was a "nation of wreckers."[116]

But while the ransacking of ships went on, the chiefs were not ignorant of the long term effects of this ransacking of foreign ships upon their relations with the outside world. It could put off foreign ships from coming to trade with the people of Tonga and might cause these powerful countries to seek revenge. This is found in Finau's reaction to Captain Fisk of the brig *Favourite* warning him not to attack foreign ships. Finau stepped forward with tears in his eyes, held Mariners hand and asked him to tell Fisk, "…I shall always consider the *Papalangis* [the white people] as my relations…and rather would I lose my life than take any thing from them by force or

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[113] Martin, 199-200; Farmer, 66. Farmer mentioned that the survivors were Eliza and three boys.

[114] Henry Evans Maude. *Of Islands and Men: Studies in Pacific History*. (Melbourne. Oxford University Press, 1968), 142.

[115] Dale, 188-9.

[116] Campbell, 68.

treachery."[117] Most likely Finau was just putting on a show here but certainly like every other chief in the country he would want this tie with foreigners to continue.

A Balancing Judgment

It is no surprise that Cook and the majority of his officers would cover up any incident that would harm the reputation of the Royal Navy. M. E. Hoare in a footnote to his edition of J.R. Forster's *Resolution* Journal wrote, "Cook certainly played down unfavourable circumstances, including those involving his officers, people and 'gentlemen.'"[118] Captain Cook is usually seen as a great explorer who treated the natives with kindness and respect. Samwell wrote:

> Capt Cook kept up an amicable intercourse with the Chiefs by making them Presents & treating them at all times with Kindness and respect…hence it appears how necessary it is to cultivate the good will & Friendship of the Chiefs, which Capt Cook never failed to do…[119]

Nevertheless there were other views of Cook's behaviour. John Ledyard a corporal in the *Resolution* and John Rickman a second lieutenant on the *Discovery* were occasionally critical of Cook's severe treatment of the natives.[120] Rickman wrote:

> …one was punished with 75 lashes, for only stealing a knife, another with 36, for endeavouring to carry out two or three driking [drinking] glasses; three were punished with 36 lashes each, for having stones at the wooders; but it was still more cruel, a man for attempting to carry off an axe, was ordered to have his arm cut to the bone, which he bore without complaining.[121]

Another example of Cook's arrogance occurred in the early morning of Friday 20th of June 1777 when Cook learned of the theft of a young goat and two turkey cocks. He decided to hold important individuals hostage in order to get the natives to return the stolen goods. He immediately ordered canoes alongside the ships to be seized

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[117] Martin, 270.

[118] Peter Suren. *Essays on the History of the Discovery and Exploration of Tonga by Europeans.*(Nuku'alofa: Friendly Islands Bookshop, 2001), 110.

[119] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two, 1031-2.

[120] Suren,. 111, "Rickman's book was anonymously published and Ledyard's book was published in the USA. Both did not care much of Cook's or the Royal Navy reputation."

[121] Rickman, 121.

then went ashore and took the Tu'i Tonga Paulaho, Paulaho's brother, Finau and some other chiefs into custody. He put guards over them and soon afterward they were taken on board the *Resolution*. The chiefs were warned that they would not be released until the return not only of the goat and the turkeys but of everything that had been stolen from the ship.[122]

One could understand Cook's angry reaction to the theft, but to hold these principal chiefs hostage with the aim of recovering a kid and two turkeys betrayed more than a bad judgment. It was a calculated insult, deeply humiliating and unpardonable in the eyes both of the chiefs and their people.[123] Cook and most of his officers made light of the incident but it was a critical mistake.[124] Ledyard described how painful it must have been to Paulaho "to be confined by a stranger in his own dominions, in his own house, in the sight of his own people, and at the same time unconscious of any demerit."[125]

Rickman wrote that Cook even threatened to carry "fire and sword through the island, if were not, in four and twenty hours, restored." [126] When the people learned that their principal chiefs were being held hostage they immediately prepared to attack.

At least fifteen hundred men came with arms and the number kept on increasing.[127] Samwell wrote, "The Natives were much alarmed at this & great Numbers of them armed themselves with Clubs as if they intended to attack our people."[128]

As the natives began to sing their war song, the ships' crew were ordered to fire over their heads to scare them but it was to no avail until Finau rushed to some of the leading chiefs, seized their spears, broke several of them and put them under the feet

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[122]Beaglehole, Volume III. Part One, 134.

[123]Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two, 1029.

[124]Suren, 111. "The…situation in Tongatapu was, by the way, quite similar to the one leading to Cook's death[in Hawaii]. In both cases, Cook tried to take "kings" as hostages and the islanders gathered in order to respond by attacking."

[125]Munford, 39.

[126]Suren, 109-10. "That such a threat is not an invention by Rickman is shown by later events which took place on Moorea in the Society Islands. There a lot of houses were burnt down on the ground that some of the natives had stolen a goat."

[127]Rickman, 116-7.

[128]Beaglehole, Volume III. Part Two, 1029.

of Cook. The natives when seeing this then retreated but did not disperse.[129] The chiefs were released around four in the afternoon when the kid and one of the turkeys was returned and the other turkey was promised to be returned by the next morning. Finau apologised to Cook for the conduct of the people and but said that they had expected to be "destroyed all without exception, men, women, and children, and to lay waste the island." [130] The French naturalist Labillardiere recalled that when they visited Tonga in 1793 some of the natives especially the royal family spoke well of Cook, but many "spoke of him only with complaints of the rigorous treatment they had experienced at his hands." [131]

It has to be said that often what these early Europeans were accusing their Tongan counterparts of was the very thing that they themselves had been doing. Mariner may have found it "very ludicrous" to hear the natives making all sorts of excuses to Captain Fisk of the brig *Favourite*, trying to convince him that they were not responsible for wrecking the *Port-Au-Prince* and the murder of its crew,[132] but the *Port-Au-Prince* had arrived in Tonga after capturing, killing and plundering of Spanish ships and villages. This vessel, originally a whaler, had been fitted with guns so that it could carry out whaling and piracy at the same time. In the eyes of the English seamen there was nothing morally wrong about that because it had been commissioned by the King of England to seize and ransack Spanish ships.[133] So what was the difference?

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[129] Rickman, 118.

[130] Ibid., 120.

[131] Labillardiere, 382.

[132] Martin, 278-9.

[133] Ibid., 41-50.

Conclusion

There were already centuries of close contact between Tonga and the island nations of the Pacific especially the neighbouring Samoa and Fiji. The chiefs were already accustomed to the advantages and disadvantages of contact with the outside world. However the arrival of the early Europeans with their superior technology and fire power raised the interest of the Tongans in the outside world to a higher level. They wanted to learn more about the skills and own some of the goods of their European visitors. They were also aware that the long term effects of their deceitful practices would have on future encounters with the outside world. They would weigh up what ultimately would cost more, to attack or make friends with the Europeans. Although it was apparent that their foreign counterparts were far more advanced technologically still the chiefs insisted on doing things their own way. In other words they could accept the Western visitors as long as their freedom was safe guarded. While they wanted these foreign interactions to continue, the chiefs made sure that they would not eventually be ruled by a foreign power. The following chapter looks at how the Methodist missionaries who came forty to fifty years later were received by the chiefs with the same mindset.

Chapter Four. The impact of the chiefs on spirituality

Introduction

As shown in the second chapter, obedience to the gods was the same as obedience to the chiefs, political allegiance and religious allegiance being effectively the same entity epitomised by the position of the Tu'i Tonga as representative of both heavenly and earthly beings. It is no surprise that the chiefs' insistence that there is no separation between religion and politics was (and perhaps still is) one of the greatest challenges that faced the missionaries and the FWC for, ever since chiefs such as Taufa'ahau and 'Ulukalala Tuapasi were converted to Christianity, political *and* religious allegiance from the people tended to be seen as an automatic obligation. The strong position of Taufa'ahau, who was the first chief to rule the entire country after the arrival of Christianity, did not alter this pattern.

This chapter will show the sacred-secular worldview regarding the chiefs was critical to the ruling of the country especially in connection with the Tu'i Tonga. It will also demonstrate that the sacred/secular unity under Taufa'ahau who was later to be known as King George contributed significantly towards the rapid growth of the Wesleyan Church in Tonga.[1] This growth depended not only on the work of the mission but also the active interest of the chiefs in what the mission brought – as the last chapter showed; an interest which was both religious and political. But there was price to pay for this union. King George had established the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (FWC) in 1885, which meant that it was self-governing and autonomous although, as will be discussed in this and later chapters, independence from foreign control did not necessarily mean being free from the control of the monarch and the chiefs. As in traditional spirituality the chiefs continued to have the major say and were the focus in the FWC: this, I shall argue, may have been part of the price for the smooth Christianisation of Tonga.

[1] Latukefu, *The Case of the Wesleyan Mission,* 105-6.

The ideal of sacred – secular unity under the Tu‘i Tonga

Tradition, that is to say oral history which includes myth, has always claimed the sacred and the secular to be united or at least closely associated. The Tu‘i Tonga or the ‘king of Tonga’ was the most powerful person in the country who not only ruled but owned everyone and everything including the spirituality of the people. He was always at the apex of the sacred-secular unity, and to talk of the sacred and the secular as two separate modes is in a sense misleading.

However, the apparent change to the position of the Tu‘i Tonga in the fifteenth century suggests that there may have been a concept of the two separate spheres, but lacking data we can only infer this. It was the dominating power of the Tu‘i Tonga more than anything else that gave the sacred domain the status and the reverence it is said to have had. This is manifest in the traditional claim that the first person to rule the whole country, the Tu‘i Tonga ‘Aho‘eitu, was both the sacred and secular ruler and from then on for the next twenty-three generations, both were always united under the Tu‘i Tonga.

The popular explanation of the division of responsibility

This unified power of the Tu‘i Tonga remained until the reign of the twenty-fourth Tu‘i Tonga Kau‘ulufonua Fekai during the fifteenth century. At some stage in his reign, Kau‘ulufonua, as the story goes, created a second chiefly line, entitled the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua or “king of the line of Takalaua,” and installed his younger brother Mo‘ungamotu‘a as the first title holder. After the assassination of their father Takalaua, the change seemed appropriate as it lessened direct contact of the Tu‘i Tonga with the people thus giving him better security. The view of this development held by most writers on the history and culture of Tonga is well expressed by the late Sione Latukefu.

> The Tu‘i Tonga was both the temporal and the spiritual ruler…However, a succession of murders of the Tu‘i Tonga during the fifteenth century led the twenty-fourth Tu‘i Tonga, Kau‘ulufonua Fekai, to create the new office of *hau* (temporal ruler) to take over secular responsibilities while the Tu‘i Tonga became *‘eiki Toputapu* or sacred ruler.[2]

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[2] Latukefu, .*Church and State,* 2.

The Tu‘i Tonga delegated all responsibilities for ruling the country to Mo‘ungamotu‘a while he remained as the sacred ruler. The change was commonly portrayed as beneficial to Kau‘ulufonua for he was now left with little ruling responsibility but still ranked higher than the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua. It is therefore generally agreed by Tongans and most academic writers that this division in the sacred/secular unity at top level was trouble-free because it was initiated by the Tu‘i Tonga, who gained most from the change. The younger brother would now take most of the load of dealing directly with the people while the Tu‘i Tonga lived only to enjoy the homage of the whole country. This ‘respectable explanation’ was popular with a tradition that was and is proud of its chiefly heritage. It did little or no damage to the image that the chiefs normally wanted to portray. In fact, as argued by Campbell, it was an attempt “to dignify and legitimate an irregular political change.”[3]

Another explanation

There is, however, another and more credible account of the division. Mo‘ungamotu‘a, having had a successful revolution and coming out victorious, ordered Kau‘ulufonua to approve the new line and although the Tu‘i Tonga was still higher in rank he had little power in comparison to Mo‘ungamotu‘a, the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua.[4] It was most likely Mo‘ungamotu‘a not Kau‘ulufonua who created this split into sacred and secular roles. There had already been widespread opposition to the Tu‘i Tonga dynasty; the two previous kings Havea II and Takalaua, the twenty second and twenty third Tu‘i Tonga respectively, had been killed, and Takalaua their father was murdered for his cruelty. Kau‘ulufonua Fekai (*fekai* means savage) engaged in a lengthy hunt for their father’s assassins,[5] for he refused to share his

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[3] Campbell, 42.

[4] Beaglehole, Volume III. Part One., 177. Rank and power do not always go hand in hand. It was observed by Cook that the Tu‘i Tonga at the time, Fatafehi Paulaho, often talked to him about the major role of Finau Tu‘ihalafatai in governing the country. Fatafehi acknowledged that if he did not rule well according to the ‘custom’ Finau would get rid of him. In other words Finau being the most powerful though lower in rank than the Tu‘i Tonga has the final say in the ‘custom.’

[5] Campbell, 38.

authority and honour without a fight, exacting a humiliating and cruel death on any who opposed him.

It is unlikely that the ferocious Kau‘ulufonua offered to make his younger brother the secular ruler and thereby split the long tradition of sacred/secular unity held by the Tu‘i Tonga: his defeat forced him into it. The new secular ruler banished the Tu‘i Tonga to Samoa where Kau‘ulufonua and the next three or four Tu ‘i Tonga lived, some attempting to return by force. During the absence of these four generations of Tu‘i Tonga, the country was governed only by the Tu‘i Ha‘atakalaua, the first of whom Mo‘ungamotu‘a, eliminated rivals and redistributed the land to the chiefs who were loyal to him. He despatched governors in pairs to the main islands in the northern group of the country not only to support and protect each other but above all to check each other's disloyalty.

The daughters of the distant chiefs were brought to be his wives and the wives of his high chiefs. Such strategic political marriages created a closer tie between the chiefs and hence guaranteed the loyalty of these distant chiefs. He deliberately chose foreigners from Fiji and Samoa to take up some high chiefly positions and while the cultural diversity no doubt was enriching he did have immigrant chiefs who depended on him entirely for their rank. This is because he did not trust some of his chiefs with these high positions. In order to make it difficult for any attack he built his residence on the island of Fonuamotu in the lagoon at Lapaha and constructed a walkway to link it with the main island. [6]

Any subsequent Tu‘i Tonga had little chance of regaining supremacy, even though as the sacred ruler he still received homage and the *‘inasi* or the annual first fruits from the entire country, and was reckoned to be higher in rank than the secular ruler. Yet he was nevertheless at the mercy of the most powerful person in the land, the *hau* or the secular ruler, who could intervene in the sacred domain whenever he wanted to with little or no opposition from anyone. Yet beneath him, the sacred-secular unity of the chiefs had remained, it seems, more or less intact, there being no dividing of spheres lower down. It was within this pattern, and to these people, with a strong secular ruler who incorporated much of the ritual aspect into his role, validating it by

[6] Campbell, 38-39.

tradition in the usual manner, as Hobsbawm so ably points out,[7] that the Wesleyan mission, replete with Cook's 'memories' of the friendly Tongans, come to work.

The chiefs' influence during the early years of the Wesleyan Church

The Wesleyan Mission began in 1826. The main island of Tongatapu was ruled by a body of chiefs which was dominated by the chiefs from the Ha'a Havea. Laufilitonga, great-grandson of Paulaho whom Cook had met in 1777 and who was installed the last Tu'i Tonga in 1827. Eleven years afterwards the Reverend Stephen Rabone had contemptuously described him:

> This afternoon the Tu'i Tonga arrived here on a visit. This, the greatest personage in this island but what a creature of imagination, what a monstrous cypher. He had a handful of people only, cannot speak a word in reference to the Government of the Island - nor anything that concerns it. It is not lawful to eat in his presence or at best to face him eating or drinking – and there is language only applicable to this useless being- as much utility to the Island as a large mole to a man's face.[8]

The Tu'i Kanoukupolu line had been the secular rulers since the beginning of the seventeenth century, with their seat at Hihifo the western end of the main island Tongatapu. The title was vacant for seven years after the death of the last Tu'i Kanokupolu Tupouto'a in 1820. The Tu'i Kanokupolu title at the time was not hereditary and this body of chiefs were the 'electoral college' who in most cases chose the eldest son of the previous holder of the title. We can only infer that the chiefs of the Ha'a Havea would have liked to continue ruling Tongatapu. The setback was that Taufa'ahau the son of the last Tu'i Kanokupolu was now the ruler of both Ha'apai and Vava'u and had his eye on succeeding his father. They chose not to consider him as a possible successor because his father had been their traditional enemy and he, unlike his electors, had become Christian. They appointed Aleamotu'a in 1827, on the ground that he would not become a Christian and because he was a weak leader likely to act in accordance with whatever they wanted.

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[7] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. eds. *The Invention of Tradition.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14.

[8] Latukefu, *Church and State*, 84.

The significance of the sacred/secular unity under the chief was apparent in that the success of the Wesleyan Mission relied heavily on the relationship between the chiefs and the missionaries. The fate of Wesleyan Mission and the chiefs were closely woven together. On the one hand the chiefs gave not only greatest support in providing land and protection to the missionaries but also the biggest headache when they asserted that they should extend their rule into the church. On the other hand the missionaries depended on the chiefs for their protection from being robbed, but in giving spiritual and political advice to the chiefs took the risk of disagreeing with the ruler of the (sacred) land on which they lived when the chiefs did things contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

The Mission Process: Fatu

Young Walter Lawry, just out of probation, was the first Wesleyan missionary sent to Tonga. He landed at Mu'a in the eastern part of Tongatapu on 16th August 1822, with his wife, Charles Tindall a blacksmith, George Lilley a carpenter and Macanoe a young man from the Marquesas. They were given protection and land to build on by Fatu the son of the last Tu'i Ha'atalalaua Mulikiha'amea.[9] Lawry observed that the chiefs in New Zealand or the chiefs of the natives of Australia were "destitute of authority and importance" in comparison to the chiefs in Tonga. He wrote that a chief in Tonga "must be obeyed, or death is dealt to the transgressor."[10]

One day Fatu and his warriors were planning to sail to 'Eua to fight the men there. He asked to borrow Lawry's boat to take him and his men to battle which Lawry refused to do, because he was not sure when they were going to return from 'Eua and moreover the boat was used every day to buy timber for building the mission house: it is likely Lawry did not want the boat to transport people whose mission was not the saving of souls, if he was aware of the purpose. [11] Whatever the reason, Lawry's refusal was unacceptable to Fatu, any item on his lands being his to use. He and his warriors departed in another boat but, as expected, Lawry saw that they left "in great

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[9] Mulikiha 'amea was the last holder of the Tu 'i Ha 'atakalaua title. He was Vason's first patron chief and he died during the civil war in 1799.

[10] From the *Sydney Gazettte* of 3rd January 1823 quoted in the *Missionary Notices,* Volume IV, page 243.

[11] Lawry's Journal on 27th January 1823 as quoted in the *Missionary Notices,* Volume IV, page 311.

wrath."[12] Tension did not abate. One day when Lawry and his party were de-barking coconut trunks for the mission house, Fatu ordered the natives who were helping Lawry to stop. This was because Lawry had intentionally not stopped work during the burial and mourning ceremonies ('heathenish customs') for Fatu's sister. Lawry objected especially to the people's presentation of large gifts to Fatu and her living relations.[13] He and his workers were fortunate that Fatu did not order them to be killed for their disrespect in ignoring a mourning period especially that for a chiefly lady like Fatu's sister who was above him in rank.

In vengeance for one or both insults, clothes hanging outside to dry, saws, spades and carpenter's tools were stolen.[14] Lawry and the others, disheartened and believing they were no longer safe, considered moving somewhere else. On learning that, Fatu and another chief 'Uhila came to the mission house to apologise, saying that they were sorry for the hostility of their people, Fatu turning to the people and warning them that if he caught any of them stealing again from the missionaries he would make them slaves of the 'white men' forever. Lawry wrote of the incident that

> He [Fatu] appeared much afflicted at our loss and the wickedness of the people…Both Paloo [Fatu] and Oheela ['Uhila] said if we went away they would go with us. This event has even encouraged us: we think very little of losing the property which they have stolen, in comparison of having the Chiefs firm on our side.[15]

It is doubtful whether Fatu and 'Uhila had tried to protect Lawry and party: they knew the culprits, who gave them first choice of the booty. The assumption must be that they came primarily to encourage Lawry to continue living amongst them, their benefits from his presence being greater than the irritation. It is obvious that Lawry counted all these losses of little significance in comparison to the support that Fatu and 'Uhila promised him: he and his party would remain as long as they were confident that Fatu was on their side. However the ill health of his wife forced him to return to Australia on the 3rd October 1823. Macanoe had already died from illness but Tyndall and Lilley stayed on.[16]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Mr Lawry's Journal on April 24th 1823 quoted in the *Missionary Notices,* Volume IV, page 312.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Wood, *History and Geography,* 44-45.

Ata

John Thomas and John Hutchinson were sent as Lawry's successors. They arrived at Hihifo the western end of Tongatapu on 28th June 1826.[17] The original plan was to go to Mu'a as Lawry had done to but they were advised by Tyndall not to do so because Fatu had not, after all, treated them well. They were hosted and given land to build the mission house on by the high chief Ata.[18] As in the case of Lawry, missionaries were received primarily because they benefited the chiefs' position, each being allotted to a high chief for their protection, each host receiving gifts from the incomers and an elevated status. [19] Thomas was convinced that the chiefs welcomed them primarily to get their possessions:

> Most of the chiefs upon this island will say, how glad they would be to have missionaries; but the truth is they only want our property, and many of them cannot protect us from other chiefs; neither do they wish to change their religion; but whatever chief first receives a missionary or an Englishman all the property he has is considered as belonging to that chief; and Englishmen that come here from vessels are in general stripped of everything they have, and then clothed in *tapa*, and permitted to live amongst them. There is a great deal of cunning and artifice in these people.[20]

Thomas and Hutchinson toiled in Hihifo for at least three years but with little success because of Ata's hostility. Ata made it clear that he would not turn to Christianity.[21] He banned his people from attending the missionaries' teaching and those who disobeyed were ill-treated. Thomas and Hutchinson were so discouraged by the lack of response that they returned some of their property to Sydney and Thomas wrote a letter requesting his return. Thomas had learned that Ata was more than just a high chief; he was effectively the 'god' that the people in the area worshipped. The people, including the local priests, feared Ata more than the "'*otuas*" or the "spirits." In the presence of Ata the people would always say what he wanted to hear and rare was the person who would oppose or disobey him. While still at Hihifo Thomas wrote:

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[17] Although Walter Lawry landed in 1822, the arrival of John Thomas and John Hutchinson in 1826 is normally accepted as the beginning of the Wesleyan Mission in Tonga

[18]Wood, *History and Geography,* 45.

[19] Vason, 63; Wilson, 248.

[20] Letters of Mr. Thomas on April 11th 1827 as quoted in the *Missionary Notices,* Volume V, page 516.

[21]Mr. Turner's Journal on 5th July 1829 as quoted in the *Missionary Notices*, Volume VI, page 337.

> In this island the Chief is god to his people, who do not fear their Otuas (or spirits), but him: and to this slavish fear all are in bondage. Even those who are said to be inspired by their Otuas must yield to him; and the greatest flattery is practised by the people towards him. They dare not to oppose him, and it is therefore quite a new thing for anyone to refuse to obey him.[22]

Nevertheless Thomas was aware of the benefit of having Ata's backing for anything they set out to do. He was convinced that they would reap a great harvest if Ata became a Christian. He wrote, "I am perfectly satisfied that, as it respects the inhabitants generally, they are ready to receive our instruction; and if the Chief [Ata] were favourable, hundreds would sit at the feet of the messenger of the loving God." Ata's brother Tofua promised that he would become a Christian if Ata did. Tu'ivakano the chief of Nukunuku made the same pledge on the same condition, and so did Taufa a chief of the village of Pea:

> He [Taufa] frankly told me his mind [reported John Thomas]; he asked if Ata our chief prayed to God. I told him no, he said when he turned him [sic] and his people should turn also, that Ata was older than him, and was his relation….[23]

Although the missionaries were well aware of the need to maintain a good relationship with the chief it was never easy. One day Ata ordered a man to take his axe to Thomas and ask him to sharpen it. Thomas immediately sent the messenger back to tell Ata that he did not come to Tonga to sharpen axes. It must have been a blow to Ata's pride, as a chief, to be turned down by someone on his own land. To him the reason why the missionaries came to Tonga was of secondary importance to his own needs. In most of these encounters Thomas would affectionately but firmly declare to Ata in front of his people that he did respect Ata but did not fear him, fearing only God who sent him.

One day Ata's wife Papa decided to visit the mission-house, which had become an attraction for it was the only house of its kind in the country at the time. Being a chiefly lady she was free to do whatever she wanted, whenever, since everyone and everything in the district was ultimately Ata's possession. With that liberty and authority she did not bother to inform Thomas of her intention to visit the mission-house. Before this incident Thomas had often expressed his dislike of her, seeing her

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[22] Mr. Thomas' Journal on 9th April, 1829 as quoted in the *Missionary Notices*, Volume VI, page 298.

[23] Latukefu, *Church and State*, 46.

as idle, doing nothing but eat and drink. This opinion showed his lack of knowledge of the culture: being a chiefly lady she was not required to do any work, nor would the people allow her to work. In front of her people Thomas confronted her with his disapproval for not seeking his permission before coming. [24] It was a situation of misunderstanding - Thomas explained later that he had already informed Ata and Papa that they were welcome to come whenever they want to, but the problem on this unexpected visit was that she was accompanied by many people which made it difficult to move around the house.[25] Though Thomas never alluded to the custom of serving the visitors with food before they left, it would obviously have been an additional problem for Thomas and his wife when Papa and her visitors came. Thomas's tactless response was no doubt sacrilegious in the eyes of the people, for whom it was an honour to be visited by a chiefly couple: he was fortunate not to have been killed on the spot.

Ata's revenge was to forbid his people from attending either the worship or the school. He also ordered the missionaries to move out of his district. Thomas sought reconciliation and was forgiven by Ata and Papa. But as Ata remained determined not to allow his people to be taught by the missionaries, Thomas stuck with the decision to move to Haʻapai, the ruler of which, Taufaʻahau, had already invited Thomas to come to Haʻapai and teach him and his people. Turner noted in his journal on the 28th of July 1829 that Thomas and his wife had arrived from Hihifo with some of their property.[26] They worked with the brothers at the mission house in Nukuʻalofa for six months before sailing to Haʻapai on January 1830.

Aleamotuʻa

Two months before Thomas and Hutchinson arrived there were two Tahitian missionaries Hape and Tafeta of the LMS who landed at Nukuʻalofa on April 1826 on their way to Fiji. They were requested by Aleamotuʻa not to leave, but to stay and teach him Christianity. Aleamotuʻa's welcome for Christianity certainly had an impact on his people. There was a congregation of at least three hundred meeting

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[24] Ibid., 46-47.

[25] Mr. Thomas Journal on 9th April 1829 quoted in the *Missionary Notices,* Volume VI, page 296.

[26]Mr Turner's Journal on 28th of July 1829 quoted in the *Missionary Notices*, Volume VI, page 338.

regularly with the Tahitian missionaries in a house specifically built for worship. This was the first church building in Tonga.[27]

The next Wesleyan missionaries were Nathaniel Turner and William Cross who arrived in 2nd November 1827. On their first Sunday they joined the Tahitian teachers and their congregation at Mount Zion in Nuku'alofa. They were appreciative of the work already done and with the cooperation of the Tahitian teachers they decided to make Nuku'alofa their base.[28] After all that progress, from the end of 1826 Aleamotu'a was absent from all public worship. He explained to the missionaries that the non-Christian chiefs of Tongatapu had vowed to kill all the missionaries if he maintained his attendance. They saw the arrival of the missionaries as an insidious attempt by foreign powers to undermine their authority and take over the country.

Aleamotu'a's main worry was that the non-Christian chiefs would reject him as the possible successor to the title of the Tu'i Kanokupolu. He was installed on 7 December 1827 as Tu'i Kanokupolu but continued worshipping in secret. However six months later he determined to confront the intimidation of the non Christian chiefs and began to attend worship publicly.[29] He was baptised on 10th January 1830, taking the name of Josiah, together with his three sons and two daughters in the presence of a congregation of six hundred at the chapel in Nuku'alofa.[30]

The missionaries had already seen how the chiefs could influence their people to become Christians. In most cases the chief had only to give a command and the people would follow. In his journal for March 1831 Rabone wrote of his conviction that if Aleamotu'a had been powerful enough he could have just ordered the high chief Ata of Hihifo to become a Christian.[31] Then Ata, who had been a hindrance to the work in Hihifo, admitted that he would become a Christian if Aleamotu'a, now the Tu'i Kanokupolu, told him to do so.

> The King [Aleamotu'a] has paid us a visit from Nuku'alofa during the week. I begged him to speak to Ata on the subject of religion but he refused declaring it altogether useless but I do not think so, as Ata is known to have said that he waits for Tubou to tell him to *lotu*. And

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[27]Wood, *History and Geography,* 45

[28]Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 40.

[29] Campbell, 75-76.

[30] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 43.

[31] Hihifo is the Western end of the main island Tongatapu.

> besides we have seen the influence that other kings and chiefs have in the *lotu* and the readiness of their people to obey them when they command, but Tubou is not the man.[32]

Even though the conversion of Aleamotu'a gave the Wesleyan Mission a lift the effect of a chief becoming a Christian resulted in a challenge to both the missionaries and chiefs. The missionaries were beginning to recognise the danger to the church of domination by chiefs. The missionaries kept on reminding Aleamotu'a that he no longer had the final say in the new religion as he used to in the old, and that the church was not to be governed by him or anyone else. They found his increasing involvement in the affairs of the Mission annoying. In September 1833 Thomas complained of Aleamotu'a extending his rule to the church, "Tupou has behaved as though he wished to be a Pope," he wrote. In 1834 he described his increasing interference in the affairs of the church.

> Aleamotu'a has got the idea that it is his duty to govern in the Church of Christ, his place to appoint teachers or displace them, his place to take into society (=membership) "and put out".

Furthermore, Thomas blamed his fellow missionaries Turner and Cross for being soft on Aleamotu'a.

> …by yielding to Aleamotu'a's covetousness and fearing his displeasure, [they] have not a little strengthened him in his evil ways and thus made it more difficult to manage him…Tongan chiefs wish to be gods to their people and not only to govern their bodies but their consciences. I have made a firm stand and would sooner be ordered out of the chapel than allow him to govern in the house of God.[33]

John Thomas had been in the country for seven years now and had learnt that people's allegiance to chiefs covers both the 'political' and the 'religious.' The chiefs were traditionally the focus of attention in the old religion but Christianity had displaced them, even saying that as Christians the people would be spiritually independent of their chiefs. The chiefs were jealous, even angry, when they saw their people giving much of their time and resources to the missionaries and serving and obeying them as though they were chiefs. The missionaries were like 'white chiefs' competing with the legitimate ones for the allegiance of the people.

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[32] Latukefu, *Church and State,* 84. In this context the word *lotu* refers to Christianity

[33]Wood, *Overseas Missions,* 51.

The missionaries' attitude to some of the customs

The early missionaries were slow to distinguish between customs which were contrary to Christian principles and those which were merely contrary to their English upbringing. One practice they condemned was the practice of *tukuofo* at a funeral of a member of a chiefly family. The dead would be carefully wrapped up in fine mats and *tapa* cloth and laid on a bed made up of many layers of fine mats and *tapa* cloth. The higher the rank the more fine mats and *tapa* cloth would be used for the burial. An important part of the funeral was the collection and preparation of large quantities of food for the consumption of everyone. The missionaries could not see the rationale of 'throwing away' the *koloa faka-Tonga* or "Tongan valuables" and the large food consumption that accompanies it was seen as an offering to the dead. Yet their main worry was that it seemed that the *tukuofo* was a custom whereby the chiefs accumulated wealth at the expense of the commoners. The people under the rule of the chiefs would express their condolences by piling up large gifts of *ngatu* or *tapa* cloths, and fine mats and piles of food items. Being a chiefly funeral the custom expected everyone to present the best for it could be the best indication of their grief because of the loss. In acting 'on behalf of' the commoners in opposing the chiefs, they were patronisingly treating the former as passive unintelligent people, a theme on which we have already touched above. Thomas wrote, "I wish to see the *tukuofo*- quite put down, this is the craft by which many Tonga chiefs have their wealth. They would be glad to keep it up."[34] The missionaries were slow to grasp the fact that the people were only doing this of their own free will and were not driven by the chief. The occasion was also an opportunity to express their love and respect and also strengthen the solidarity amongst the *kainga* or relatives.

Worse than their intolerable attitude to the traditional practices was their disrespectfulness to the chiefs.[35] Often they treated people as their inferiors: their actions did indicate that all, including the chiefs, were under them as the new chiefs. Captain John E. Erskine in 1849 observed the prejudiced attitude of the Wesleyan missionaries at Neiafu the capital of the Vava'u group towards the local people whom they treated, people and chiefs alike. According to him they were more

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[34] Mr. Thomas Journal on the 24th December 1826 as quoted in Sione Latukefu's 'The opposition to the Influence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Tonga' *Historical Studies : Australia and New Zealand* 12 (October 1965 – April 167):260.

[35] Latukefu, *The Case of the Wesleyan Mission*, 108.

authoritarian than the LMS missionaries in Samoa. He wrote of one incident where, "one of the missionaries in my presence sharply reproved Vuke, a man of high rank in his own country, for presuming to speak to him in a standing posture…"[36] It is the custom that one would lower himself or herself when speaking to a superior person and the implication is that the missionary saw himself as a 'chief' superior to Vuke. It was apparent that some of the missionaries had preconceived notions that they had very little or nothing to learn from the locals. They were brought only to lead and their Tongan counterparts were at best their assistants. Their Tongan counterparts were at best second class English men. This is expressed in a statement by R.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 that time has not yet come to consent to native agents in Tonga [to] the exercise of this holy discipline over their fellow countrymen. They are valuable auxiliaries to our work.[37]

Finau 'Ulukalala Tuapasi

After Aleamotu'a was baptised he sent his relative Tupoutai to Finau 'Ulukalala the Tu'i Vava'u or king of Vava'u, urging him to become a Christian. He also sent his nephew Ulakai to Taufa'ahau, pleading with him to do the same.[38] 'Ulukalala was encouraged by Aleamotu'a's advice to learn more about Christianity. He asked a stranded English sailor to write a letter to Nathaniel Turner on 19th March 1829 expressing his wish for a missionary to come to Vava'u to teach him and his people:

> Sir, I am so glad to hear that you are at Tongatapu, teaching my friend Tupou to know the Great God. I hope you will be so kind as to send to Port Jackson for more missionaries to come to my land, to teach me and my people…I am tired of my spirits; they tell me so many lies that I am sick of them….My island, sir, will turn to the Great God, because I am the only chief on the island; I have no one to control me. When I turn, they all turn. To be sure, I did try to take a ship; but there will be

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[36] John Elphinstone Erskine[first published in1853]. *Journal of a Cruise among the Islands of the Western Pacific, including the Feejees and Others inhabited by the Polynesian Negro races, In Her Majesty's Ship Havannah.*(London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1967), 131.

[37] Charles F. Urbanowicz, "Motives and Methods: Missionaries in Tonga in the Early 19th Century," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 86 no. 2.(1977): 260-261.

[38] Latukefu, *Church and State,* 61

> no more of that…So no more from me, a wicked sinner. FINAU (his mark) XXX.[39]

Due to the shortage of missionaries Turner could not fulfil Finau's request at the time.[40] According to his letter he was convinced, like Taufa'ahau, that once he turned Christian everyone in Vava'u would do like wise. The same religious allegiance that Taufa'ahau demanded of everyone in Ha'apai including the chiefs was again the same allegiance that 'Ulukalala demanded of everyone in Vava'u. His confidence that all of Vava'u would follow him into Christianity rested on the sole fact that he was the king of Vava'u, all other chiefs being subordinate. 'Ulukalala turned Christian in 1831. He was baptised on 5th August 1832 with the name Zephaniah together with eight of his children.[41] He ordered the burning and destroying of all worshipping places and gods of the old religion throughout Vava'u. Thomas explained how 'Ulukalala put the gods to the test.

> …the king [Finau 'U. Tuapasi] gave orders, that seven of the principal idols should be placed in a row. He then addressed them in a language like this; 'I have brought you here to prove you; and I tell you before what I am about to do, that you may be without excuse.' Then commencing with the first, he said, 'if you are a god, run away, or you shall be burned in the fire which I have prepared!' The god made no attempt to escape. He then spoke to the next in the same way, and so on till he came to the last. As none of them ran, the king gave orders that the sacred houses should be set on fire. His commands were promptly obeyed. Eighteen temples, with their gods, were burned down.[42]

The Conversion of Taufa'ahau

The sacred/secular unity that began with the first Tu'i Tonga had been formally dormant for several centuries before the Wesleyans came, but the fervour of spiritual and political change with the advent of the incomers was ideal for germination. The two main requirements were for a powerful ruler who could unite the whole country under him and a new spirituality different from that of the Tu'i Tonga. This powerful

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[39] Extract of a letter of Mr. Turner on 3rd April 1828 as quoted in the *Missionary Notices*, Volume VI, page 53.

[40] Latukefu, *Church and State*, 66.

[41] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 54

[42] Latukefu, *Church and State*, 101-102

ruler was Taufa‘ahau and the new spirituality was Christianity: it was only a matter of time before the sacred/secular unity resurfaced. Taufa‘ahau frequently visited Tongatapu in 1827 and in early 1828 and had many opportunities to listen to the preaching of the missionaries. The conversion of his uncle Ulakai and great uncle Aleamotu‘a certainly encouraged him to consider accepting Christianity.[43] In Ha‘apai he made an English castaway sailor teach him and his people about Christianity and designated one of his houses as the chapel. The sailor taught them to read and write on the sand. Taufa‘ahau began to follow some of the teachings and coerced his people to follow accordingly.[44] West wrote that this was how Taufa‘ahau grew in the new faith.

> …from that time, he voluntarily abandoned various heathen amusements to which he had been addicted; and he began to observe, in some measure, the sanctity of the Sabbath day by ceasing from all ordinary occupations. So anxious was he to make a beginning in the service of God, and to initiate the instruction of the people under him, after the example of the missionaries in Tongatabu, that he employed the services of a rough, ungodly sailor, then residing under his protection, to trace the letters of the alphabet upon the sands of the seashore, for the benefit of those who wished to learn; and he ordered the same man to conduct prayers to the God of the foreigners, in a house which he devoted to that purpose.[45]

Taufa‘ahau visited Nuku‘alofa in January 1829 and after hearing Nathaniel Turner preach he expressed his decision to become a Christian because it would be beneficial for him and his people.[46] He delayed his baptism until the 7th August 1831. He was baptised with the name of George[47] together with three of his children at the chapel in Lifuka in the presence of a congregation of two thousand.[48] Latukefu wrote that “The decision of Taufa‘ahau to accept Christianity was the greatest asset the missionaries gained in their struggle to establish Christianity in Tonga.” [49]

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[43] Ibid., 62.

[44] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 46.

[45] Latukefu, *Church and State,* 62.

[46] Wood, *Overseas Missions,* 47.

[47] King George III was the king of England at the time.

[48] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 49

[49] Latukefu, *Church and State,* 61-62.

The Results of Taufa'ahau's conversion

Even though Taufa'ahau was now a Christian, he still clung to the traditional notion that obedience to the gods and obedience to the chiefs were the same thing: all under his rule should therefore follow him into Christianity. He asked Turner for a missionary to come to Ha'apai to teach him and his people. The missionaries waited for approval from the Missionary Committee in London, then recommended Pita Vi, a native of Ha'apai and the first Tongan teacher. It was a blow to Taufa'ahau's pride as a chief to be taught by a Tongan and he left for Ha'apai without Pita Vi. A storm on the way led him to think that this must have been a divine intervention, and he returned for Pita Vi.[50]

His plan to eliminate the local religion on Ha'apai needed no approval from either chiefs or people: he and his warriors would simply invade the sacred sites and wipe out anything of the old religion they could find. Together with Pita Vi they went through the entire Ha'apai group. In the course of this they went to meet a priestess of the god Haehaetahi. Here is what happened during their *kava* ceremony as narrated by Pita Vi to West.

> Hereupon the old priestess became inspired by Haehaetahi; and, in the meanwhile, Taufa 'ahau had prepared a great drinking-cup, large enough for four persons to drink from; for he knew he said, that 'Haehaetahi was a god fond of drink.' The cup was then filled and handed by Taufa'ahau to the priestess; but while her face was turned upwards, in the act of drinking off its contents, Taufa'ahau struck her a great blow on the forehead, which sent the god (or priestess) rolling on the ground. He then gave her another blow, and rising a shout of victory, cried out that the god was slain. Owing to this act, no god was again willing to appear openly throughout Haabai[51]

This act was to show his people the falsity and frailty of their gods. He and his men systematically destroyed the sacred houses of the gods. They burned the sacred clubs and the priests' *kava* bowls. In one place he strung up five idols by the neck and paraded them in the presence of the people to show how powerless the gods were. He demonstrated that breaking the religious taboos brought no penalty at all. It was not only the gods and their houses that were destroyed, but the people's faith in their local gods, persuading and eventually forcing them to renounce their allegiance. At

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[50] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 47.

[51] West, 364.

one island he went out with Pita Vi to the bush and collected objects that were previously used for worship in the local religion and burned them all. They then went to the sea and Taufa'ahau swam out to the deep, calling the names of the gods Haehaetahi and Taufatahi to come and get him but none came.[52]

On his command houses were built and gardens were grown on the 'sacred grounds' formerly dedicated to the gods. James Watkin in his journal of the 12th April 1833 described how the sacred sites were reclaimed.

> Part of one of these houses has been employed to erect a house which is appropriated to the good purpose of accommodating strangers and the ground that was devoted to the gods has been reclaimed for the use of man and is now covered with Banana and other trees bearing fruit to supply the wants of man. So that you see the Devil is loosing ground.[53]

To the missionaries Taufa'ahau was a messenger sent by God to pave the way for Christianity. But to most of the people of Ha'apai his behaviour was sacrilegious and undoubtedly some of the chiefs were considering revolt, but because Taufa'ahau was a fearless and powerful king of Ha'apai they had no hope of countering him. It took him at least a year to eradicate the local religion in most of the inhabited islands in the Ha'apai group, and when Thomas arrived at Ha'apai on the 30th January 1830 from Tongatapu only three islands out of the eighteen inhabited islands had not turned to Christianity. The island of 'Uiha was the last island in the Ha'apai group to convert in 1833.[54] While visiting Vava'u after being given the title Tu'i Vava'u, Taufa'ahau formed a plot to lure the warriors of 'Uiha away from the island and thereby making the fortress at 'Uiha vulnerable.

He sounded out a false alarm that he was in danger of being attacked by the men of Vava'u and sent a message to Malupo pleading for help.[55] Malupo was caught in the trap and sent 160 of his warriors to assist Taufa'ahau. When the warriors from 'Uiha disembarked at Vava'u they were quickly disarmed but no one was killed. They remained in custody while some of Taufa'ahau's men went over to 'Uiha and dismantled its fort. All of these warriors in custody eventually turned Christian: they

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[52] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 47.

[53] Latukefu, *Church and State*, 101.

[54] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 48.

[55] Both Taufa 'ahau and his father Tupouto'a were brought up by Malupo and the people of 'Uiha.

had no choice, which says nothing of their post-conversion belief. Soon afterwards Malupo accepted the new religion and built the largest and most beautiful chapel in Ha‘apai. A residence for one of the teachers was built on what was previously revered as sacred ground.[56]

Taufa‘ahau took the opportunity of ‘Uluakalala’s conversion to extend his campaign of uprooting the old religion to Vava‘u. He went with his men throughout Vava‘u, systematically destroying anything of the old religion they came across. Peter Turner explained how Taufa‘ahau and his warriors destroyed a god-house in Makave a village two miles from Neiafu the capital. When the priest saw them approaching he thought that they were seeking counselling from the gods and he therefore quickly entered the house to seek inspiration. Taufa‘ahau was infuriated by what he saw.

> He rose, went into the god’s house, dragged out the Priest, and anointed him plentifully with mud from the gutter-and threw him on one side telling him as an old deceiver ‘to have done with his foolishness.’ He then went into the house, brought out the god, wrapped in a bundle of native cloth and fine mats; and to the astonishment and dread of some, began to disrobe the god, fold after fold was taken off until the great god was seen in the form of a small spotted shell, which fell to the ground, to the surprise- of some, - the shame of others, to see how they had been deceived, and some laughed out right. Fire was set to the house, and its glory ascended in flame and smoke.[57]

‘Ulukalala died in 1833 but he had already chosen Taufa‘ahau as his successor. Taufa‘ahau therefore ruled both Ha‘apai and Vava‘u. The heir was his son Matekitonga but he was very young. The whole country was already united under Taufa‘ahau by the time Matekitonga was old enough to have been given the title.

By 1835 within a decade from the beginning of the Wesleyan mission every inhabited island in both Vava‘u and Ha‘apai had nominally accepted Christianity. Another factor which had contributed significantly to the spread of Christianity in Ha‘apai and Vava‘u was a revival that broke out in 1834, usually referred to as the “Tonga Pentecost.”[58] The ripple effect of that spiritual revival was to send out a first generation of Tongan Christians as missionaries to Fiji, Samoa and later to the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Such a rush of thousands into the

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[56] Latukefu, *Church and State*, 103-104.

[57] Ibid., 102.

[58] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 56-57.

Wesleyan Mission in so short a time is difficult to match in the Pacific. One cannot deny that an unknown proportion who were converted in Haʻapai and Vavaʻu were genuine in their commitment, though we do not know exactly to what they personally committed. The fact remains that the chiefs who became Christians like Aleamotuʻa, Taufaʻahau and ʻUlukalala Tuapasi played a major part in this rapid growth of Christianity in Tonga. Taufaʻahau stood above everyone in his influence on the country at the time. Rabone wrote:

> Perhaps no one ever obtained such influence in the Friendly Islands as he has nor is it likely anyone was ever half so much respected and beloved. The Christian love him. The heathen fear him and all parties respect him.[59]

Taufaʻahau became a local preacher on 9th October 1834 and his first sermon was preached in Makave on 17th October of the same year.[60] Taufaʻahau felt that it was not only his responsibility to rule but also set an example for his people to follow. He built a chapel in Lifuka, opened on 9th September 1835. It was the largest in Tonga at time and the communion rails were formed from spears previously used in war by Taufaʻahau and his family. Carved clubs formerly revered as gods were placed at the foot of the pulpit stairs.[61] While the construction was taking place Taufaʻahau found out that the pulpit was higher than his seat, as would be normal in a Wesleyan Methodist place of worship. Taufaʻahau saw this as disrespectful because the preacher would stand higher than the king, which custom forbade. In order to rectify the situation he ordered the workmen to raise his seat so that he could look down upon the preacher, though he later admitted that this was a place of worship and there was no need to elevate him above the rest. [62] It was a common sight to see Taufaʻahau leading his people in prayer; Dr. Lyth, a surgeon who spent a year in Tonga, wrote in his journal in February 1838:

> One circumstance connected with our voyage – struck me with admiration. Our royal Captain towards the evening summoned his men to the worship of God and again before sunrise- They sang a hymn together and they knelt down to prayer as the frail canoe urged

[59] Ibid., 51.

[60] Ibid., 57.

[61] Ibid., 51-52

[62] Ibid.

> its way thro' the deep, the King himself-the Father of his people – acting as Priest.[63]

While Christianity was gaining ground in Ha'apai and Vava'u, the majority of the people of Tongatapu were still followers of the old religion. Christianity was confined to areas under Aleamotu'a's influence. It was not only for religious reasons that the leading chiefs of the Ha'a Havea resisted Christianity but reasons of status and authority: only the traditional way legitimised them as chiefs and to accept Christianity could have meant losing their power. The future of Christianity was now bound up together with the Christian chiefs. The non-Christian chiefs saw Christianity as a threat to their rule, but more important opponents were the newly Christian chiefs, Aleamotu'a and Taufa'ahau. Three chapels were burnt down and Christians were continuously attacked in their plantations and on the road and the missionaries received murderous threats.[64] The non-Christian chiefs were plotting to replace Aleamotu'a with Fatu but they had to wait for backing from Ata who owned the place where the installation of the Tu'i Kanokupolu was normally held.[65] Aleamotu'a was well aware of what was coming so he wrote to Taufa'ahau for his help.[66]

Taufa'ahau's massacre of the heathens

On January 9th 1837 Taufa'ahau and his army from Ha'apai and Vava'u were sailing past the rebel fort at Ngele'ia. The fort was build by the two chiefs Lualala and Lavaka and it had become a threat to the Christians at Nuku'alofa. The defenders mocked and cursed him and his men. On the following day Taufa'ahau brought his army together and called them to kneel for prayer before attacking the fort,

> and told them that he had not sought to be engaged in this war, but the Lord had evidently led him to it in defence of his cause, and that, as they were about to engage, no man was to fear.[67]

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[63] Latukefu, *Church and State,* 67.

[64] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 64.

[65] Ibid., 63-64.

[66] Latukefu, *Church and State*, 107.

[67] Wood, *Overseas Missions,* 65.

It is apparent that Taufa'ahau saw their mission as both political and religious. Even though he was a Christian of six years standing he was a powerful traditional chief who demanded not only political but also spiritual allegiance from everyone. All inside the rebel's fort were slaughtered, men, women, and children. One account gave the number as 26 while another gave 40. The heads of those killed were sent to Aleamotu'a in accordance with the old custom of warfare. On 15 January they continued on to Te'ekiu and captured the fort of Motu'apuaka but only one defender was killed.[68]

On 25 January Taufa'ahau and his men moved on to attack the fortress of Hule owned by the chief of Nukunuku, Tu'ivakano. The non-Christian chiefs forced Tu'ivakano to flee because he had turned Christian. Tu'ivakano appealed to Taufa'ahau for help and together they surrounded the fort. Before the attack, the inhabitants were given warning to surrender and a pledge of pardon to anyone who would yield. The offer was refused. All three hundred inhabitants of the fort were killed, including men, women, and children. The missionaries did not express abhorrence of the massacre. They regarded it as a divine judgement, the non Christians reaping the harvest of their sins.

Rabone in his letter to Sydney wrote a report of the massacre:

> Most awful news. Not less than 300 men, women, and children have been murdered in the taking of the fort at Hule…It does appear that the Tongan heathen are given up to a reprobate mind and are bent upon their destruction for they have positively refused to *lotu* (=worship) and madly preferred dying in their sins.[69]

The missionaries did not condemn the killing of the inhabitants of Hule. They saw the slaughter as divine punishment of the heathens for their sins.[70] This slaughter at Ngele'ia and Hule was the worst ever carried out by Taufa'ahau and his men. Thomson claimed that the motive behind the massacre was religious but it was never as simple as that.

> It was a missionary war – a crusade in which the club and the Bible were linked against the powers of darkness; and no knight-errant ever

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 66.

[70] Latukefu, *Church and State*, 110.

> went against the Crescent with greater zest than the new converts showed in their quarrel with their heathen countrymen.[71]

Because of the sacred-secular unity it was both a religious and political war, and it was one which the missionaries, who felt they alone represented the sacred, supported. Perhaps they did not see what they were in fact supporting, the maintenance of political control over religion. Every Tongan recognised that the one who led the country led in everything and that included religion. The chief who led his people to war was the same chief who led his people to worship, so Taufa'ahau who led his warriors to capture the forts was also leading his people to Christianity. He did not stop there but went throughout Tongatapu seeking to destroy anything of the old religion they found. They destroyed the objects of worship and burnt down the god-houses. The *vaotapu* or the sacred woodland, where it was once forbidden to cut any wood or even go near, was cut down and sold to the sailors as firewood. Many of the warriors took home with them pieces of wood as souvenirs. Rabone in his journal on June 1837 described what they saw Taufa'ahau and his army do in Ma'ufanga:[72]

> Last night we walked out to the Mafanga of all others the most sacred place in these islands…King George…burnt down the spirit houses and now all appears desolation. He has planted bananas on the most sacred ground and I was glad to see that the Gods & Devils had not prevented their growth they look well and promise abundant fruit in their season.[73]

Aleamotu'a died on 18th November 1845 and Taufa'ahau was installed as the Tu'i' Kanokupolu on 4th December 1845 at Pangai Hihifo beside the *koka* tree where all previous holders of the title had been installed. Thomas preached at the ensuing service.[74] After this, Taufa'ahau was recognized in the laws and treaties as the King of the whole of Tonga. He was known as George Tupou I or King George. Some claimed that Laufilitonga, the Tu'i Tonga, was superior to King George, the Tu'i

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[71]Basil Thomson. [first published in 1894] *The Diversions of a Prime Minister* (London. Dawsons of Pall Mall,1968), 350-351.

[72]Latukefu, *Church and State,* 112. At a later stage Moulton opposed the King who demanded his recall from Tonga, together with other missionaries from Tonga.

[73]Latukefu, *Church and State,* 112.

[74]Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 97.

Kanokupolu but King George immediately went over to Laufilitonga and ordered him to disavow the claim which Laufilitonga obediently and publicly did.[75]

Political opposition from the chiefs of the Ha'a Havea ceased with the end of the last civil war on the 11th August 1852. In 1875 King George declared in Parliament that the dignities of both the Tu'i Tonga and the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua had been conferred on him and the Constitution of 1875 which henceforward became the basis of the Tonga government declared him to be the King of Tonga, incorporating and representing all aspects of Tongan life. Relevant to the argument of this thesis is the fact that Article 44 of this Constitution of 1875 states that "The person of the King is sacred….."[76] and whatever that means in the eyes of the lawmakers it was obvious that it fell in line with King George's control of the spirituality of his people.

King George as creator of Tongan church-state unity

One cannot deny that the Wesleyan Church greatly benefited from this union of state and church under King George. The 'honeymoon' is clearly expressed by hymn number 391 in the FWC hymn book. Interestingly, it was composed by an ardent opponent of the king, James Egan Moulton, the first principal of Tupou College, [77] before the two men had disagreed. The hymn is commonly known by its first line " *'Oku 'i ai ha ki'i fonua 'oku tu'u 'i 'oseni*" or "There is a tiny country in the ocean." At the time of its composition, Moulton was greatly in favour with King George, who gave his name Tupou to the Wesleyan Boys' College. King George requested the help of the Australian Mission to start a college and Moulton was send. As alluded to in the third and fourth verse the colonial powers at the time, like Britain, France and Germany were already in the South Pacific and most of the island nations like Samoa, Fiji and Tahiti were already colonised. So the hymn is sung with pride and gratitude more or less as a second national anthem. Its dominant line is that

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[75]Ibid., 98; Latukefu, *Church and State,* 150. The Roman Catholic Mission which was first established in Tonga in 1842 was also like the Wesleyan Mission, aware of the importance of converting an influential chief. Knowing that the Tu'i Tonga is the highest ranking chief in the country they made every effort to win him. Laufilitonga was converted and understandably the Catholic priests claimed that Laufilitonga is the rightful king of the country and not King George whom they called in the words of West to be an "ambitious usurper."

[76]Latukefu, *Church and State,* 263.

[77]Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 127. The college was officially opened in February 1866.

Tonga is the only country in the Pacific that has never been ruled by a foreign power. As the last line of the fourth verse expressed it, "Only Tonga still remains, attributed solely to King George and the chiefs' acceptance of Christianity.

2. *He ne tu'u ki ai 'a e lotu*, - Christianity arrived [in Tonga]
Omi 'a e kau faifekau – The missionaries came
'O fanongo 'e he motu –The island heard
Ki he me'a 'a e Toputapu – the message of the Bible
'O tafoki – They repented,
'a e hou'eiki mo e Hau – the King and the chiefs

In this verse Moulton describes how the *motu* or the 'island,' here referring to the whole of Tonga, *fanongo* or 'heard' the gospel. Even though the entire *motu* heard the gospel it is the 'repentance' of the king and the chiefs only that are mentioned; they stand for all. The crucial point in the spreading of Christianity in Tonga was the conversion of Taufa'ahau, but every Tongan singing the verse would know that the conversion of the king and the chiefs stood for the conversion of everyone in Tonga.

3. Foreign countries rushed to this part of the ocean
And put the people of the islands to the test
And many were the countries that were lost
4. Though Tahiti took to religion, this did not save her
Fiji did the same, but that did not save her either
Only Tonga still remains.[78]
5. *Lau pe 'e he palofisai* – According to prophecy
Toki 'olive 'e ua - The two olive branches
Pule 'anga mo e siasi – The unity of State and Church
Kae malohi ha fonua – The strength of a nation
Hota monu – Our blessing is
'Eta ma'u ha Hau kaukaua – that we have a mighty King
6. *Tama Tonga, tu'u 'o ngaue* - Men of Tonga rise up and work
Ho koloa ke fakamonu – Make good use of your blessing
Lotu ki he 'Eiki ma'u pe – Always pray to the Lord

.[78]H.G. Cummins "*Missionary Chieftain: James Egan Moulton and Tongan Society 1865-1909*." (Ph.D. diss., Australian National University,1980), 227.

Ke ne poupou ki he lotu – to help the church

'O malu'i – To protect

'O malu'i 'a Tupou – to protect Tupou

The fifth verse recalls a prophecy that spoke of two olive branches, one representing the *Pule'anga* or the government, the other representing the *Siasi* or the church, the implication being that one branch cannot be independent of the other for both were branches of the same olive tree. Because of the strong backing of King George at the time, Moulton and his fellow missionaries saw this 'marriage' of church and state to be exceptional, with Tonga a theocratic, and therefore a strong, nation like Israel in the Old Testament. The last verse summons the men of Tonga to stand up and work and put the resources that they have been blessed with to good use. They are besought to pray at all times that God will sustain the church and protect the king. That was Moulton's opinion at the time of the composition but apparently the King has his own perception of this unity of church and state.

King George wanted all his subjects to be Christians, and the church and the state being thoroughly Tongan, both fell under the sway of his rule. He had two main ambitions, to maintain Tonga's political independence and to make the Wesleyan Mission in Tonga independent of its parent church in Australia. The first was expressed during his reign (from 1845 to 1893) in popular phrases such as "*Tonga ma 'a Tonga*" or "Tongans for Tongans, " and "*Mate ma 'a Tonga*" or "Die for Tonga," "*Kei Tonga pe 'a Tonga*" or "Tonga is still Tonga!" The second ambition, after a short honeymoon, resulted in a serious falling out with the missionaries, especially Moulton the Chairman of the Wesleyan Mission. The disagreement was principally on the issue of 'control' in the church. Richard Amos who was a missionary in Tonga from 1847-58 informed the Missionary Secretary on February 1857 that the Wesleyan Mission was suffering "from too much deference to a chief and too much dependence on a chief."[79]

Shirley Baker, sent to Tonga from Australia as a missionary in 1860, did not agree with Moulton who opposed the King's desire for an independent Tongan church.[80]

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[79] Wood, *Overseas Missions,* 60.

[80] Moulton was one of a dynasty of cultured Wesleyan scholars and ministers, with a strong attachment to the principle of "connexion" linking Circuits and Districts to their Conference and to the authority this gave to ministers. Baker had had little formal and no theological education but he was intelligent, persuasive, a good administrator and acutely aware of Tongan politics.

Baker realised that the church in Tonga would have to go with the King's wishes, and gave him energetic support. In March 1874 the King and the chiefs met to discuss their complaints against the missionaries over control. A letter was sent to the District Meeting, calling for complete Tongan control of the Church. Curiously, the chiefs were asking for a separation of the Wesleyan Mission from the Tongan government and for the church to take responsibility for building schools and church premises, and no longer to rely on chiefs (the government) to supervise and organize the work for them. The chiefs reminded the incomers that slavery had been abolished by the King twenty years earlier but said the church was still practising it by subordinating the people to their will, because although the missionaries had defended the spiritual freedom of the people, or the right of people to choose, the people had used that freedom to serve and obey the missionaries. What appeared to lie behind the rather convoluted claims of the chiefs was probably jealousy coupled with a certain anxiety that the missionaries might eventually erode the chiefs' authority over the people.

In that the missionaries were presenting an alternative religious ideology and one not anchored in Tongan social structure and cosmology, the chiefs were correct, for a lack of spiritual control would, if total, undoubtedly affect their capacity to enforce 'political' decisions and orders. But given the missionaries sense of weakness in the face of the chiefs, such views were difficult for them to grasp, for the two sides were talking at cross-purposes. Missionaries had no power to act without chiefly permission:

> If a church has to be built, [Greenwood observed], it is the chief to command, if a schoolmaster's house has to be erected it is the chief…If the Missionary desire a thing to be done, he goes to the chief and respectfully asks him to attend to the matter, the chiefs commands the people and the thing is done. The power rests with the chiefs…[81]

Despite fifty years of Wesleyan Mission, the people's respect for their chiefs had hardly changed: they still obeyed and honoured their wishes. Yet the missionaries had also become chiefs in Tongan eyes, and while they used the chiefly system to get done what needed to be done, they appear to have failed to realise what they were buying in to, for themselves and the church: participation in the Tongan rank and

[81] Cummins, *Missionary Chieftain*, 247.

status system controlled by the King. The implications of this blindness, though not their unwitting complicity, became clear soon enough.

The divisive determination to keep Tonga's religious independence

In his opening speech to Parliament on July 24 1880 King George expressed his determination to make the Wesleyan Church in Tonga an independent church. He declared that neither he nor his family would contribute to the church funds until his request was granted. In December the same year he issued a proclamation:

> I, George Tupou …having made up my mind that my people and country shall be entirely free and independent, and having thoroughly resolved that Tonga should have an independent Church, take this opportunity of publishing my intention so that the leaders of the Church in Sydney, the missionaries and the whole world shall see that I am determined to have the separation. You chiefs and people, who hold any position, even to the lowest in the Government, or you who are in any way related to me, are to abstain from subscribing at missions collections, paying ticket money, building or repairing churches or teachers' houses, or cooking food to feed the preachers. Other people are to please themselves. If this Proclamation does not have the desired effect, I shall take other measures.[82]

The parent body, the Australian Wesleyan Methodist General Conference in May 1881 went as far as to agree that Tonga should be an independent District with control over its own finances.[83] This was not the end of the matter: the rift between Moulton and Baker was increasing.

Baker became the King's Premier in 1880, and the government took over the church primary schools without notice, consultation or compensation. The missionary collection for 1881 was forbidden and according to Baker's newspaper the church was to be subject to government control. Baker wanted to have Moulton the Wesleyan Chairman recalled and brought charges of misconduct against him. The charges did not stand and Moulton was not recalled. On August 1, 1884 the King wrote to the President of the General Conference saying that either they recalled Moulton or the Wesleyan Church would be detached from Tonga.[84] The Australian

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[82] Wood, *Overseas Missions,* 166-7.

[83] Ibid., 169.

[84] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 178.

Conference's investigative delegation arrived in Tonga four months after a schism had been effected. The King with Baker's cooperation established the King's church in 4th January 1885 declaring it to be completely self-governing and autonomous.[85] The first formal Conference of the King's church was held on 8th August, 1885 and it was declared the *Siasi Uesiliana Tau'ataina 'o Tonga* or "The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga" but it was more informally known as the *Siasi Tau'ataina* or the Free Church.[86]

The word 'free' was used because it ceased to be supported by or to send dues to the parent church in New South Wales: every connection to any church outside of the country stopped. The king installed Jabez Watkin, a former Wesleyan missionary, as its president and, reminiscent of his wars of conversion of earlier times, there was a country wide persecution of those who did not join the King's church. The remnant that sided with Moulton remained loyal to the Australian Conference though these dissidents, were mocked with the name *kau fakaongo,* or the 'subservient ones.'[87] It was small in numbers - about 4000 compared to about 18000 of the king's church.[88] They were brutally treated during the first two years of the king's church. In violation of Clause 5 of the 1875 Constitution,[89] which guaranteed religious freedom to everyone, sustained pressure was put on everyone to join the new church. It was the will of the king and those who did not were seen as not 'loving him.' Some were flogged and those who held government posts were dismissed. Private properties were damaged or destroyed and church properties confiscated. Heavy fines and long term imprisonments were implemented.[90] Wesleyans in the Ha'apai group were

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[85] The doctrines and disciplines of the Free Church of Tonga or the Siasi Tau 'ataina 'o Tonga were those of the Wesleyan Church in every respect. The official name was "Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga" but is well known by its shortened form "Free Church" The only difference was that the FCT had no overseas connection. Although there are now FCT congregations outside of Tonga at least ninety nine percent of the members are Tongans and the services and meetings are conducted in the Tongan language.

[86] Charles W Forman. *The Island Churches of the South Pacific: emergence of the twentieth century.* (Maryknoll, New York. Orbis Books.1982), 125. "This may be claimed as the first and almost the only occasion when Pacific islanders revolted against foreign tutelage in the church and established their own independent church structure."

[87] *fakaongo* in this context means to accept the authority of Australian Conference instead of the King.

[88] Charles W. Forman, "Tonga's Tortured Venture of Church Unity," *Journal of Pacific History* 13 (1978):5.

[89] Latukefu, *Church and State*, 251.

[90] Wood, *Overseas Missions*, 185-186.

deported to uninhabited islands and eighty of the island of Lofanga were taken to the rocky uninhabited island of Kao where the only food was coconuts and wild roots.[91] Ninety Wesleyans including children were banished to the Fijian island of Koro in February 1887 and remained there until 1890.[92] Sioeli Nau, one of those exiled to Fiji, wrote to Langham the Chairman of the Fiji Methodist District describing the dilemma that the people faced when the king established his church.

> It is our habit to obey our chiefs in all things. We cannot follow our own minds in anything. If our chiefs tell us to do this thing and it is quite clear to us that it is wrong we must nevertheless do it. Numbers have gone through fear alone. Their bodies have gone over – their souls are with our church [Wesleyan church]…[93]

The ministers of the Wesleyan Church were tempted with higher salaries to join the king's church. Women, children and students were also persecuted:

> I was at Hihifo. I remember a number of women being thrashed to induce them to go over to the Free Church. The Chief, Ata, flogged five or six women for refusing to go over…Between the floggings he asked if they would turn over. The instrument was a long horse-whip. One of them was a grey-haired old woman. I should think about sixty.[94]
>
> Twelve lads from Tupou College…were removed in irons to Vava'u. There, on March 1887, they were mercilessly flogged. It was one of the worst cases of savagery breaking out again in those days of unbridled license. One lad received seventy-five lashes; he uttered only the words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," before swooning. When asked, on regaining consciousness, whether he would become Free Church, he said, "No, never."[95]

According to the census at the time, of the three main groups of islands, more than ninety percent of Vava'u and Ha'apai and the majority of Tongatapu followed the King to his church.[96] A comment that probably best expressed the views of those

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[91] Noel Rutherford. *Shirley Baker and the King of Tonga.* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1971), 133.

[92] Allan K. Davidson. ed. *Semisi Nau: The Story of My Life*.(Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, the University of the South Pacific, 1996), 17.

[93] Davidson,14.

[94] Rutherford, *Shirley Baker and the King,* 133.

[95] Wood, *Overseas Missions,* 190.

[96] Manfred Ernst. *Winds of change: rapidly growing religious groups in the Pacific Islands.* (Suva. Pacific Conferences of Churches. 1994), 150.

who left the Wesleyan Mission to follow the king would be this, as cited by Rutherford.

> King George is our Chief, and we are bound to obey all his lawful commands. He expressed his will that we join the Free Church of Tonga. Was that command lawful or unlawful? If he had told us to go to the Church of Rome or in any way to abandon Methodism, we would have been justified in refusing, and we would have taken the consequence of our refusal. But we did not do this. The Free Church is a Methodist Church. We did have the same Bible we had before, the same doctrine, the same discipline, the same worship, the same God and Saviour Jesus Christ our Lord. The only difference is that we are independent of outside rule. Therefore the king's command was a lawful command, and to disobey it an act of rebellion.[97]

The Free Church of Tonga (FCT) became the most powerful and most numerous body in the country. King George was indisputably the ruler of the state and of the church until his death in 1893. Both the Free Church and the Church of Tonga were not good examples of how an independent church should be. There was misappropriation of funds at every level and there was little or no theological education. Ministers were ordained on the basis of financial contribution to the church, and favouritism, and personal service to the President, instead of merit. It was said that President Gordon-Kirgan of the Free Church began the practice of ordaining men for a pound contribution.[98]

Queen Salote and the reunion of 1924

When King George died in 1893 he was succeeded by his great grandson Taufa'ahau Tupou II. As King George Tupou II he continued to be the temporal ruler of the Free Church but chose not to exercise his powers over it. His interest was in being a king and not supervising any church. His daughter Salote, the great-great-grand daughter of King George Tupou I, was crowned Queen Salote on 5th April 1918 at the age of eighteen. She was not happy with the schism between the Free Church and the Wesleyan Church which both had the same origin, doctrine, and polity. But more importantly to her as the ruler was that the division had adverse effects on the social and political stability of the small island nation. As the temporal

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[97] Rutherford, *Shirley Baker and the King,* 129.

[98] Forman, *Tonga's Tortured Venture in Church Unity,* 17.

ruler of the Free Church and monarch she was convinced that it was her right to start the negotiation for the two churches to unite. Queen Salote believed, in the words of Wood-Ellem "that church and state should be the 'twin pillars' of the kingdom and *indivisible*(emphasis is mine)." [99] On 5th May 1920 she wrote to Jabez Watkin the President of the Free Church asking for a copy of the church's Constitution.

Watkin in his eighties, who was not in favour of the two churches reuniting lest he fail to be appointed president, refused her request giving the excuse that her predecessors did not ask for the Constitution.[100] This was an insult, even an act of treason to the young Queen Salote whose predecessors Tupou I and Tupou II were both recognised as the temporal ruler of the Free Church. To deny her right to be the secular ruler of the Free Church was to deny her as sovereign of the country. The Queen could not accept this denial by the Free Church of her role as its secular ruler, even its head. In her opinion the separation of the two churches had been caused mainly by the personal rift between the two missionaries Baker and Moulton.[101] Queen Salote's motive is commonly seen as solely religious but this thesis contends that, true to Tongan tradition, it was both religious *and* political expressing the sacred-secular union at all levels of the Tongan elite. Queen Salote explained in her speech in 1925, that she had worked so hard to bring the two churches together because she felt that their disunity threatened the unity of Tonga.[102] Her decision to act was aided by irregularities in the Free Church; an audit of their finances in 1923 revealed many missing accounts, and no record of the annual missionary collection for 1920 and 1921. There were also unauthorized loans and a degree of fraud.[103]

On the 10th and 14th September 1923 she called a meeting at the Royal Chapel in the Palace of both the chiefs and the clergy of the Free Church. At the beginning of the

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[99]Elizabeth Wood-Ellem. *Queen Salote of Tonga: The Story of an Era 1900-1965.* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999), 103.

[100] Ibid., 104.

[101] Shirley Baker came to Tonga first as a Methodist missionary but later became as the King's advisor to the displeasure of his fellow missionaries. He became the Premier and had a major role in the forming of Tonga's first written Constitution of 1875. Dr James Egan Moulton at the same time was the Chairman of Tonga District and also the Principal of Tupou College. Both the Tongan translation of the Bible (the Moulton translation) and the hymn book that the FWCT is now using were works of Moulton. One would assume that on a personal note the Queen would prefer her husband the Prince Regent Tungi, a member of the Wesleyan Church, and the royal children to attend a unified church

[102] Wood-Ellem, 119.

[103] Ibid., 106.

proceedings she reminded the meeting of her right as the head of the church and state to summon the meeting. She told the meeting that "today the two olive trees bow down to me." [104] Three months later on the 19th of December 1923 at the Wesleyan Quarterly Meeting of Tongatapu, she discussed her wish for the two churches with Roger Page the Wesleyan Chairman. Page accepted the Queen's offer to negotiate a reunion.[105] The first meeting between the two churches, with the Queen as the chairperson took place in the Royal Chapel on the 20-21st February, 1924. The meeting which was comprised of Page and Watkin and twelve ministers from each church agreed that the Wesleyan Church would cease to have legal existence beginning from May 1924 when it joined the Free Church under its original name Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. On the 22nd April 1924 the Queen attended the united Conference and gave "an impressive opening address," [106] She claimed that the thought of reuniting had already been favoured by King George as soon as the parent church in Australia recognized the Free Church as a self governing church. She therefore appealed to the Conference to join hands together in reuniting the two churches hence fulfilling King George's wish. At the end of her speech she handed Watkin a formal letter of dismissal.

On May 21, 1924 the united Conference agreed that the Queen should appoint the first President and she appointed Setaleki Manu. The following year and thereafter, the President would be elected by the Conference, provided the Queen approved of the choice. Two years later the two churches united the FWC was linked to the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australia.[107] The majority of the Free Church followed the Queen and joined what is now known as the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (FWC) which has become the largest denomination in the country. With the direct involvement of the Queen the FWC became a strong supporter of the traditional hierarchy of Tongan society. The ministers supported the chiefs just as the President supported the Queen.[108]

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[104] Ibid., 105.

[105] Ibid., 107.

[106] Forman, *Tonga's Tortured Venture for Church Unity,* 8.

[107] Wood-Ellem, 126.

[108] Wood-Ellem, 121.

Unlike the violent beginning of the Free Church, those who opposed the reunion were not persecuted but allowed to remain with Watkin as President. At the death of Watkin in 1925 the Free Church of Tonga became the first Christian church in the Pacific without foreign leadership.[109] Within two years of the reunion there were further splits. In opposing the Queen's wish for reunion a group led by the only high chief in the Free Church, 'Ulukalala Misini, separated themselves especially in the Ha'apai group. Pita Lilo who was the choice of 'Ulukalala was elected to be the first President of the Church of Tonga. They called themselves the *Siasi 'o Tonga* or the Church of Tonga (CT), also known as the *Siasi Tonga Hou'eiki* or the Church of the Chiefs.[110] The reunion led by the Queen may not have been entirely successful but it was successful in the sense that she was the temporal ruler of the biggest church, and used the FWC as an instrument to extend her influence: both sacred and secular reins were in her hands. Traditionally in her secular role she had to use the *matapule* (spokesmen) as intermediaries between her and the people but in the church she could talk directly to people who were not *hou'eiki* (chiefs). Gradually church and state came together again. The Queen was effectively the ruler of the FWC, as much as King Tupou I had been the ruler of the FCT, and 'Ulukalala Misini was the ruler of the CT.[111] There is no question that the Queen was behind nearly every significant innovation in the FWC during her reign. She was the main person behind the establishment of a theological institution which started in June 1948. She gave it the name Sia'atoutai or the "Preparation of the nets of the fishermen" in reference to the Lord's calling of his disciples to be 'fishers of men.' She introduced the *Ako lotu* or Christian Endeavour for women and men in 1935 and the *Kaluseti* or Crusaders for women only in 1955.[112] She also led the group of women intercessors called the *Ako Tapu* or *Ako'angelo* or "School for angels." Since then the Queen and her successors, regardless of gender, have always been the leader of the *Ako'angelo*.[113]

Elizabeth Wood-Ellem described Queen Salote's influence on the FWC:

> The Free Wesleyan Church was effectively the possession of the Queen, in the same way as the Free Church had been the possession of

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[109] Forman, *Tonga's Tortured Venture for Church Unity,* 15.

[110] 'Ulukalala was the only high chief who disagreed with the reunion.

[111] Wood-Ellem, 120.

[112] Ibid., 120-121.

[113] Ibid., 121.

> Tupou I, and the Church of the Chiefs was the possession of ‘Ulukalala. The Queen hoped to revitalize the spiritual life of the church, but was reluctant to introduce structural changes, thus keeping the church in a time warp from which even after her death, it would be difficult to escape. The Free Wesleyan Church conspicuously deferred to the Queen’s authority as leader of the church, and openly expressed its support in prayers and sermons. Each year she advised Page on the appointments of ministers to different parishes, and on promotions to positions of greater responsibility. [114]

Conclusion

The missionaries were allowed to disembark with their religion but they were received with exactly the same expectancy and attitude that the chiefs had for Cook and the early explorers in the previous chapter. The chiefs and their people were expecting to gain from whatever these missionaries came with, including Christianity. The Methodist missionaries and the parent church in Australia rejoiced at Taufa‘ahau’s conversion and hardly anyone doubted the sincerity of his conviction. But at the same time Taufa‘ahau was well aware of the political implication of his alliance with the missionaries and the new faith. The Biblical and political advice that he received from the missionaries was critical to maintaining a stable reign. But equally important to Taufa‘ahau and his successors was that whatever change the missionaries and Christianity would bring they would continue to rule unchallenged on their own soil, and rule over all aspects of Tonga, and the church whether the FWC or FCT or CT is no exception. In other words they were determined to be independent from any foreign control both politically and religiously. Even though there were foreign missionaries taking leadership roles in the churches, like Moulton, Baker, Watkin and Page it was the direct involvement of King George, Queen Salote and ‘Ulukalala Misini more than anyone else that was most significant in determining the direction that the churches took. This was the greatest challenge that the missionaries continuously faced; for the chiefs, continuing the long tradition with its interruptions and variations of a sacred-secular unity of land air and sea and all that exists therein, did not abandon that merely because they became observant Methodists. This battle between church and state, sacred and secular, which the missionaries themselves in a way contributed to by mimicking the

[114] Ibid., 120-21.

power and authority of the chiefs for their own purposes, remained, or remains, to be fought.

Chapter Five. The FWC and the State.

Introduction

It was established in the second chapter that religion before the arrival of Christianity was undeniably a realm that in practice brought concrete benefits only to chiefs, a mere five per cent of the population called disparagingly *kainanga 'o e fonua* or eaters of the land. This majority had little say: they carried out the wishes of the chiefs on pain of beatings, exile or death. Silent obedience on the part of the masses, people who had no soul and therefore no afterlife, was the only path for a commoner[1]. *Pulotu*[2] the heavenly paradise was reserved only for the chiefs, who controlled the lives of all others. It is into this enculturated base that the Wesleyan Mission was grafted, and the theme of this chapter is the fusions and the fissures between the two ways of being. This will be done without making the mistake either of assuming that the king and chiefs dictate everything which the local church or the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (FWC) as a whole does or, at the other extreme, of thinking that the king and chiefs have no influence in the administration of the FWC. By looking at practice, at nuances, we may well discern that while there is no written requirement to give special privilege to motions of the monarchy and the chiefs, royal and chiefly ideas may often be given extra attention.

In the cultural context what is unwritten or unspoken may be equally or more influential than what is written, being so thoroughly enculturated that little reflection occurs. As one informant explained it, "It is simply that the people of the church want to consult and get the king's approval because "*ko hono fonua mo hono kakai,"* or "it is his country and his people." The assumption is that cultural identity revolves around the king and the implication of his connection with the church is that he brings order, status, favour and validation to whatever the church does. As already shown in the previous chapter, in the first hundred years of the Wesleyan Mission at times it was not easy to disentangle opposition to the monarch from opposition to his or her church. That was because the two were united as one. Since the reunion initiated by the late Queen Salote in 1924 the FWC has always given the impression that it is on the side of the monarchy and the existing authorities, and to be a member

[1] Martin, 314.

[2] Pulotu or "the paradise beyond the ocean," is the underworld where the chiefs go when they die.

of the FWC means that one is a traditionalist. A retired minister of the FWC, when asked what role the FWC has in promoting Tongan society, characterised it as "the greatest supporter of the *status quo.* I dare say that the FWC is *the status quo.*"[3] This chapter goes on to show how this criticism can be justified. The first section looks at certain critical occasions where the church acted in accordance with the wish of the king and the chiefs rather than perhaps with the needs of all the people of God. The second section looks at the apparent fact that what is usually being carried out in the FWC is done by or for less than one percent of the church. In other words if the church is "the people," many of them do not count.

The FWC is often referred to as the S*iasi Fakafonua* or the "State Church" and this is used interchangeably with the description S*iasi 'o e Tu'i* or S*iasi faka -Tu'i* or "the church of the king."[4] It is even known as the "*Siasi Lahi"* or the "Big Church" highlighting the fact that it is still the biggest denomination in the country with at least forty percent of the total population, rather less than in the early years of the Wesleyan Mission in 1826. Since the reunion in 1924 the monarchy and the Royal family have always been members of the FWC. Both the king and the queen are lay preachers of the FWC. At least twenty seven of the thirty three nobles of the Realm and over half of the Ministers of the Crown are members of the FWC. Dr 'Alifeleti Malakai Mone, the President of the FWC, is the Royal Chaplain, the advisor to the king on spiritual and moral matters.

Cultural markers: the four Golden Strands

In most conversations on Tongan culture one hears the phrase "*faa'i kaveikoula 'o e mo'ui faka-Tonga*" or the "four golden strands of the Tongan way of living" being uttered with pride, especially when the conversation tries to pin down 'core values'. The late Queen Salote Tupou III declared these the four Tongan foundational values. As explained in the second chapter, the one who speaks with the most authority on Tongan culture is the one on whom the culture is centred. As referred to in the second chapter tradition claims that two to three cultural experts occasionally appeared at crucial points of history to give advice and initiate cultural reforms.

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[3] Personal communication with the author on 22/12/2004.

[4] The description *siasi lahi* or the largest church is also used for the FWCT is the biggest church in the country with at least thirty percent of the total population.

These experts were all given the name Lo‘au and it is very likely that they were powerful men at the time, if not principal chiefs. Queen Salote was acclaimed as the “Lo‘au”[5] during her reign and similarly any monarch would generally be expected to be the “Lo‘au” during his or her reign.

The ‘four golden strands’ or principal values are *faka‘apa‘apa* or “to show deference or respect or to do homage,” *mateaki* or “to be ready to die for one’s leader or group,” *feveitokai‘aki or* “to respect one’s feeling,” *fetokoni‘aki or* “to help one another.” As these values were put into written form at least a hundred years after the arrival of Christianity their articulation is influenced by a Christian gloss, yet they are deeply embedded in Tongan ways of seeing the world. The desire for a Tongan to live the Christian way is exemplified in that most people have now included *lotu*[6] or Christianity as an additional strand. For the same reason others included *‘ofa* or love and *loto-to* or a willing mind. Some even claimed “*koe Tonga mo’oni*” or the “true Tongan” is one who believes in God. This draws attention to the way that contemporary Tongan culture idealises and reorients these “golden strands” to harmonize with Christian teaching. Experience reminds us that often there is a gap between the ideals and living out these ideals.

Most of the informants, like Samiu Tukutau, a retired minister, believe that there is a fine line between the Tongan way of life and the Christian way of living. He claimed that in most cases the two are indistinguishable.[7] Some informants go further and assume that these foundational values already existed in Tongan culture before the arrival of the missionaries.[8] If the question arises “why was it that there were four core values instead of any other number?” The metaphor of the pillars of a house comes to mind, without which the house falls. These four values are the core elements of *anga faka-Tonga* or the “Tongan proper manner,” enunciated by the revered Queen Salote.

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[5] Bott, 92.

[6] The literal meaning is “pray” or “prayer” but in this context it refers to the Christian faith.

[7] Interview with subject number 17.

[8] Interview with subject number 47.

The Prime Good: *faka'apa'apa*

This core strand demands that people behave in a certain way towards their superior, whether king, chief, minister, teacher, parent, husband, employer, or anyone above them. Inseparable from *faka'apa'apa* is therefore the notion of rank and one's duty to his or her superior. The common understanding of *faka'apa'apa* is essentially based on the status of the person to whom *faka'apa'apa* is given. The implication is that *faka'apa'apa* often favours those in authority more than anyone else.

This is shown by the fact that regardless of whatever version of the "four golden strands" one accepts and advocates, *faka'apa'apa* is the first. It is shown in behaviour and is often regarded as the 'greatest good,' and the last one would abandon. As noted by Elizabeth Wood-Ellem *faka'apa'apa* is the key to Tongan proper behaviour.[9] At its simplest form it is often seen as showing respect for anyone but it commonly connotes a person of lower status respecting a person of superior status. An example of the normal use of the word *faka'apa'apa* is found in the relationship between a chief and his people: though it is usual to talk of the people respecting their chief, the reverse is rare .We may describe the chief as '*oku ne 'ofa'i 'a hono kainga* or "a chief who loves his people." We commonly describe the daughter as *faka'apa'apa* or respecting her father who is her superior but we describe him as *'ofa'i* or loving his daughter.

The meaning is made clearer by the explanation of 'Etimani Taufa a retired teacher of Tongan Studies at the primary and secondary level. He is convinced that the word *faka'apa'apa* originates from the *taumafa kava* ceremony at which the monarch presides. The word *faka'apa'apa* is a combination of the prefix *faka* which denotes likeness and the word *'apa'apa* which was and remains the name given to the two men sitting next to the monarch at the royal *kava* ceremony.[10] These two men, the *'apa'apa* are the joint masters of ceremony and it is their duty to ensure that everything in the ceremony is in order and worthy of the royal presence. They call

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[9] Elizabeth Wood –Ellem. *Queen Salote of Tonga: The Story of an Era 1900-1965*.(Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999), 271.

[10] C. Maxwell Churchward. *Tongan Dictionary.* (Nuku'alofa: Government of Tonga, 1959)

out directions to the gathering and immediately reproach anyone out of order. Every participant knows where to sit, what to say and when to say it. There was and is little room for mistake, that being an insult to the king.[11]

Orderliness or *maau* was a crucial element of *faka'apa'apa* and anyone who dared to disturb the expected order was disrespectful. As explained in the second chapter, the *kava* ceremony was the creation of a Lo'au with the primary purpose of consolidating the rule of the Tu'i Tonga. The seating for this solemn meal was arranged in order of rank, a constant reminder to the country, especially each chief, where one comes in the order of prestige.

From early childhood a Tongan is drilled in this attitude of *faka'apa'apa* or respect. In the various structures of society like the family, the school, the work place and the church one learns how to respect superiors and those in authority. The essential qualities of *faka'apa'apa* are obedience, submission, loyalty and doing one's duty to his or her superior. Uttering no word, asking no questions and raising no arguments are common expectations of *faka'apa'apa*.

Faka'apa'apa is principally about the respectful behaviour of the people to their king and chiefs, children to their parents especially their father,[12] a wife to her husband, younger to older, brother to sister,[13] students to teacher, or a congregation to their minister. One minister explained, when a person comes in to the presence of a chief he does not come to voice his opinion or ask a question but rather, "*…ko 'ene ha'u pe 'o tangutu pea punou 'o ku nima pe mo e fakafeta'i.*" or "to sit and bow, clasp his hands and be grateful for what he is being told." In other words it is a monologue where the chief does the talking while one nods in agreement. According to this informant the highest form of *faka'apa'apa* is to remain silent and, like it or not, accept what is being told by one's superior.[14] *Faka'apa'apa* is not limited to the context of being in the presence of a chief but is often found at every level of superior-inferior relationship and, moreover, it is increasing in modern Christian

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[11] Interview with subject number 8.

[12] *Faka'apa 'apa* to the father as the superior in the family is expressed in his having the final say. Customs demanded children not to touch his head or eat his food.

[13] The brother would avoid coming to a place where the sister is. In some families the parents and the daughters sleep in the main house while the sons sleep in a different house.

[14] Interview with subject number 19.

Tonga. This was noted by "Mary" an expatriate married to a Tongan, in Tonga now for thirty five years.

> Some of the things that were traditionally done for the king have now been extended to other areas as well. You get down on your hands and knees in front of the king, and if you happen to be the principal of Queen Salote College. These people are only showing their respect and their love but the idea of doing it did not arise from the people; it came from above. This *faka'apa'apa* is what is expected of ordinary church members where as the *hou'eiki,* royalties, *faifekaus* consider that they do not have to be loyal to their members. [15]

"Mary" who did not approve of a person going down on hands and knees in front of those in authority, or to anyone, explained that the rationale usually given, especially by those in authority, is that these people, like the pupils of Queen Salote College,[16] are all doing it out of love and respect to their principal and teachers to whom they bow when speaking. "Mary" disagreed, arguing that they did it out fear because it was imposed and expected of them by those in authority, a process with which the FWC appears to collude in this school which they own. The girls were and still are explicitly taught to bow on first entering the school: they do not come, proper girls though they are, with this trait embedded in their mind,

The common notion of *faka'apa'apa* was apparent when the author asked a *faifekau pule* or superintendent minister, what significant change he had observed in the course of church life. He said, "'*oku longoa'a ange 'a e ngaahi fakataha pea lahi 'a e fakaanga*." or "the meetings are noisier, and more critical than before." He further explained, "Nowadays you see the junior ministers daring to stand up and argue with the older ministers whereas before, the older ministers did most of the talking. I even see some ministers telling the President that he is wrong." [17] Unsurprisingly, the informants, disturbed and displeased by the junior ministers' increasingly vocal participation in the meeting, were senior ministers themselves. According to them the junior ministers should only listen and patiently wait for their turn to talk when the senior ministers had retired.[18] The older men prefer the church to be silent and obedient. The added implication is that the junior ministers are always wrong and the

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[15] Interview with subject number 75.

[16] This is largest Girls college in Tonga and it is owned by the FWC.

[17] Interview with subject number 19..

[18] Interview with subject number 20.

senior ministers are always right. They have nothing new to offer; the seniors know it all. The meetings should be a gathering to hand out instructions and information, and nothing more. This may be an example of equality and modernity challenging Tongan ideology, in the style of Gittins: but the 'owners' of the FWC, those who rise up the ladder, stick firmly to the Tongan model which privileges them. Were he merely to be explaining increasing noise compared with past monologues, he could have used 'lively' or *longomo'ui*. While the Constitution and Rules expect every quarterly meeting in the church to be conducted according to the rule of debate, nothing says only the senior ministers should speak or that no one should question the chairperson who is often the President. The rule of debate was purposely designed to provide equal opportunities to everyone in the meeting to speak. Nevertheless, if the younger do speak, they are judged improper by the power-holders.

In contrast, an inculturated Gospel, a recognition of the equal worth of all, demands that *faka'apa'apa* should be given to everyone regardless of status and authority. This does not mean that there is no rank in the institution, and no authority, for any institution inevitably includes both. But if the maintenance of the rank accompanies the silencing of all those below this may forfeit truth and honesty for the sake of peaceful and respectability. Moreover some remain above reproach and above the law, just because they are senior and respectable members of the church. To continue to give special treatment to certain people implies that these senior ministers and people of influence do not need the hard discipline of the Holy Spirit or the costly grace of God. This is neither Methodist nor Christian. Without equal respect for all we imply that our judgement of persons is based on their status. Respect is due to older people and to those in authority but the majority of the church also deserves respect. Similarly, respect should be shown by husbands to wives, parents and the elderly to children, teachers to students, a minister to his congregation and a chief to his people.

If the cycle of respect 'upwards only' is not broken then this will continue from generation to generation. Verses in Scripture exhort children to respect their parents, wives to submit to their husbands, the young to respect the elders and for Christians to respect those in authority. But Scripture also exhorts parents not to make their children angry and husbands to love their wives and even die for them. The point is

that one is asked to respect those who are below as well as above in the social scale. It is a two way process. Therefore by supporting and practising one way respect, to pick up on just one of the four pillars, the church ignores scripture: relying on 'Tongan values' in this all too common perversion denies both the equality of all and mutual submission.

The Methodist King as focus of "Tongan culture".

Nikolasi Fonua, a retired magistrate judge, when asked his view on the place of the monarch in Tongan culture with no hesitation explained that "the king is the heart of Tongan culture;"[19] most informants agree. This section sets out what it means to have a Methodist King with considerable power over both citizens and the church of which he is a member. As one informant explained that, even though people are now freer to express their opinions they still have that respect and affection for their king. He said "*ko e kakai 'ofa kitautolu ki hotau Tu'i*" or "we are a people who love our king." It is more of a "people and their king" than a "king and his people."[20] Everyone is under a chief and every chief is under the king, and though it is a highly stratified society everyone can be easily linked to the king. In trying to inform a foreigner about Tonga we often hear the proud core expression is "*ko e Pule'anga faka-Tu'i,*" 'it is ruled by a king'.

Like his predecessors the king is the head of the country and tradition expects that he should lead in almost everything in the country, even the church. Some of the informants asserted " *ko e fonua 'eni 'o Tupou*[21] *pea kuopau aipe ke fetakinima ma'u aipe 'a e lotu pea mo 'ulungaanga faka-Tonga*," or "this country belongs to Tupou and therefore the church and Tongan culture must always go along hand in hand." [22] It is worthy of note that this tendency to involve the king directly in the affairs of the church is not unique to the FWC as other churches do also but one expects his influence to be more in the FWC than in any other church. It is often the case

[19] Interview with subject number 30.

[20] Interview with subject number 37.

[21] Tupou is the name of the Tu'i Kanokupolu chiefly line in which the current monarch is.

[22] Interview with subject number 23.

throughout history that when a dispute within a church cannot be settled in court the distressed members would seek the counsel of the monarch. Like his mother Queen Salote the king did become the arbiter to church disputes. In the late 70s some dissatisfied members of the Free Church of Tonga accused the President of misusing his authority. After a court case the President was replaced by ‘Ahokava Latu. But the dismissed President and his supporters organized another conference and he was re-elected. The court did not recognize this election and another conference elected the son of the dismissed President Rev Semisi Fonua who is still today the President of the FCT. The dissatisfied group did not give up but sought the counsel of the king. The king advised the group to form a new church and he gave them the name Free Constitutional Church. Its first church conference was in 1987.[23]

One hears members of the FWC proudly saying “*ko e siasi ‘eni ‘o e Tu‘i*”or “this is the king’s church.” The king is also seen as the *tamai fakalaumalie* or the “spiritual father” of the country. A senior minister is convinced that the people of the church wish and expect the king to take the lead in almost everything in the country and especially in the church. He is not alone in this view.[24] Some informants acknowledged that the king is the “*taki ‘o e siasi*” or “leader of the church.” The statement “*ko kinautolu ke taki*” which can be translated “they were born to lead” is used to imply only the king and chiefs could lead and no one else.[25]

Dr Mohenoa Puloka, Principal of the Sia‘atoutai Theological College, explained that in his view the chiefs’ main obligation is “*kenau taki ‘i he ta sipinga lelei ke muimui ki ai ‘a honau kakai*” “to take the lead and set good examples for their people to follow.” He has encouraged Crown Prince Tupouto‘a, now King George Tupou V that it is his responsibility more than anyone else to lead his people in the “things of God.”[26] In almost every major project of the church the king is not only informed but his advice is sought. “Sarah” an expatriate expressed the church’s keenness to defer to the king by an anecdote:

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[23] Manfred.Ernst. *Winds of change: rapidly growing religious groups in the Pacific Islands.* (Suva: Pacific Conferences of Churches, 1994), 151-152.

[24] Interview with subject number 36.

[25] Interview with subject number 16.

[26] Interview with subject number 95.

> It is a Tongan cultural thing that you defer to the chief. You may think that you are free in your head to think what you like but your actual actions are determined by what the king says and what the royal family say. The high ranking officers of the church defer to the king's wishes in so many things. Now I have heard that various members of the royal family saying, "Oh we wish that Tongan people would speak to us quite honestly their mind," but the Tongan people know very well that if they spoke honestly they would be outlawed very, very quickly. Even me as a *palangi* I do not speak my mind freely here in Tonga. I don't speak freely my mind to any other than *palangis* who know about Tonga and to a few Tongans that I know who want change in Tonga and they want church and state to be quite separate. Because you can see that FWC going down, down, down. There is no excitement. There is no fervour. There is no spirit in your church. I remember some years ago the king proposed to the people of Mu'a to have a boat to carry people from Mu'a to somewhere in Nuku'alofa which would make money for them. But people prefer to come by bus and this plan of the king was a failure. The boat eventually was sunk but it was the waste of the people's [money]. Increasingly over the years I have noticed the king intervened in church matters.[27]

Probably the king thought ferrying people across Fanga Kakau lagoon from Mu'a to Nuku'alofa would be easier than the fifteen mile bus ride from Mu'a to Nuku'alofa. He suggested the idea to the FWC of Mu'a, who accepted it and bought the boat. However, most people still preferred riding in the bus and the venture failed, the local church bearing the cost with no further questions, the king as cultural icon being above reproach. It is normal for a local church to seek advice from the king but the people of Mu'a had a closer link, as the king is also the holder of the chiefly title Tungi who is the estate holder of Mu'a: in most cases whatever the king proposes the people of Mu'a accept. Had FWC members in Mu'a realised that the venture was unfeasible, they would not have suggested a better alternative, for that would have gone against *faka'apa'apa*.

The failure of the Mu'a people to suggest an alternative to the ferry boat highlights the limitation of the traditional meaning of *faka'apa'apa.* The silence and passivity of the people of the church at Mu'a is not true respect for the gifts of the people to God which their cowardice wasted. Inculturation confronts us to rethink, redefine and recover the true meaning of *faka'apa'apa* in the light of the gospel: new wine demands nothing less than a new wineskin. Inculturation demands that Tongan

[27] Interview with subject number 59.

culture must humbly accept the reality that the former meaning of *faka'apa'apa* is a contradiction of the deep values of the gospel, which should enlighten us to accept that everyone including the king is fallible and prone to make mistakes. The church is a gathering of the "people of God" which includes everyone regardless of status. It implies that everyone including the king needs to listen to the views of others. *Faka'apa'apa* should go down deeper than the level of mere performance. It should not be "closed" and "dead" but must be "open" and "living." True loyalty and respect must be founded on truth and love instead of fear and hypocrisy. Responding with a yes "*koia*" to the king and yes "*koe*" to the chief concerning the life of the church and of faith may be disloyal to God.

The FWC and Politics

That the FWC takes sides with the status quo is apparent when there is nationwide disagreement with the king and those in authority: any members disagreeing with the wish of the king and the authorities are seen as disagreeing with the FWC. As mentioned in the previous chapter the notion that unity of 'church' and 'state' makes a country strong is clearly expressed in Hymn 391 where it talks of two olive branches, the 'church' and the 'state,' of one olive tree. Such a picture implies there is no separation: any split entails the downfall of the country. It is therefore not surprising that when ministers of the FWC publicly expressed their discontent with the king and the government they were sneered at and seen to a certain degree as 'rebels', accused of interfering in politics and told to stick only to "*ki he ngaahi me'a fakalaumalie*" or "things of the Spirit." The implication is that politics is separate from the grace of God or perhaps that the grace of God as defined by the state is the proper way: no FWC minister should oppose the king and chiefs. For example, in March 1991 about two thousand protesters marched to the king in protest against the government's sale of Tongan passports to an estimated 426 foreigners, most of them rich Chinese from Hong Kong who were wary of what might happen when China took over Hong Kong from Britain in 1997. The head of the FWC, 'Amanaki Havea at the time, and the head of the Roman Catholic church Bishop Finau, were two of the prominent participants in the protest march. In November 1992 both Havea and the former FWC General Secretary Siupeli Taliai delivered papers in a Convention

on Tongan Constitution and Democracy held at the St Antonio Basilica in Nuku'alofa.[28]

It was a nationwide seminar organized by the Pro-Democracy Movement and the issues discussed were related to social justice, exploitation of the poor, land shortages, inequality, constitutional amendments and corruption. Some of the informants felt Havea, Taliai and other FWC ministers should not have involved themselves in the Convention because such actions opposed both the king and the government. Another minister, Simote Vea a founding member of the Pro-Democracy Movement who had been the General Secretary of the Council of Churches for a number of years also incurred discredit for his involvement. One informant, a minister, explained how some in the church demonstrated an intense dislike of Vea and any minister supporting political reform, "…they called any minister involved in the Pro-Democracy movement *ki'i vale* or an 'ignoramus,' *fiematamu'a* or 'disrespectful' and *fieme'a* or 'arrogant.' They are angry whenever they hear the word 'democracy' being uttered. They simply do not accept anyone speaking against the government." [29] Some in the FWC could not tolerate the fact that some of the FWC ministers were supporting the Pro-Democracy Movement. During the debate some of those annoyed by Vea and other Pro-Democracy ministers even moved that the FWC should straightaway forbid every minister from participating in politics in any form. This frustration caused the Conference in 1999 to pass a motion warning the ministers to be more cautious in their involvement in politics, and views expressed being his alone.[30] Politics, however, seems to mean 'opposition to the elite,' whom the FWC always supported: only opposition is 'misconduct.'

Again on the national scene, the most recent event when the FWC gave the impression of taking sides with the king and those in authority was in the protest demonstration of August –September in 2005, the largest ever to be held in the country. Beginning with the civil servants boycotting work, it lasted for seven weeks. The teachers and some students joined in and as a result all government primary and

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[28]Campbell, 242-243.

[29] Personal communication with the author on 23/8/2005.

[30] *Ko e Ngaahi Tu' utu 'uni Faka-Konifelenisi 1970-2004.* (Nuku'alofa: Siasi Uesiliana Tau'ataina 'o Tonga, 2005), 1-2.

secondary schools were closed for the duration of the demonstration. Patients were left unattended at the main Vaiola hospital as most of the doctors and the nurses joined the strike. Owners of private businesses and some Tongans overseas backed the strikers by financially supporting some of the families who were worst affected.

The main demand of the strikers was for a pay rise but what fuelled the civil servants was increasing dissatisfaction with the king and the royal family especially the Crown Prince. The people had been told that US $36 million of the fund derived from the sale of passports had been invested in the Tonga Trust Fund to be used in development projects. But in 2001 over US $20 million of the Trust Fund went missing, having been invested by an American citizen who some years earlier was named by the king as his "court jester." There is an ongoing allegation that the Crown Prince and his sister Princess Pilolevu have abused their royal privileges to gain profit for their businesses. The Crown Prince runs a television network and a domestic airline. He owns and distributes the country's only power supply. The Princess is the director and the major shareholder of Tongasat, a company which leases satellite positions in the sky above Tonga to communications companies. Some believe that these 'royal businesses' should not belong only to the royal family, but to the country as a whole. They have pushed for more transparency and more government ownership.

It was obvious that although the written demand of the strikers was for a pay rise, equally powerful was the unwritten discontent that has accumulated throughout the years. Certainly there is a desire for a more democratic form of government. An expatriate explained the position of the FWC as he saw it during the march and the strike that followed.

> Where are the churches in all this? The Catholic church is solidly behind the strikers; in fact the Catholic Bishop marched with them. Other churches are in sympathy, but our own, the largest church, the Free Wesleyan, is not just sitting on the fence, it is actively against the strike. Our current President, who is no longer so highly thought of, who happens to be the king's Chaplain, is currently out of the country as he is a lot, far too much in fact. He has not come rushing back despite the strike being on for two weeks.[31]

To the strikers the FWC's refusal to back their demand for justice, fair shares and the accountability of the royal family and nobility showed how out of touch the FWC is

[31] Personal communication with the author on 12/9/2005.

in comparison to the Roman Catholic Church. The presence of the Head of the Roman Catholic Bishop Foliaki and his fellow priests and sisters made the absence of the President and ministers of the FWC obvious. Even if the President had been in the country at the time it is doubtful whether he would have joined the march. As usual most of the ministers of the FWC wished to have nothing to do with the strikers. "Mary" who saw the protest march claimed that the voice of FWC was not heard during this time of national crisis.

> In the strike the Free Wesleyan voice was silent, despite the fact that it had thousands and thousands of the ordinary people taking part deeply involved in the march. It had no message for these people. The only ministers who were free to join it were the ones who had retired, like Lopeti Taufa [former President of the church]. The retired men felt they did not have the same constraints. But when we had that massive big march it was the largest grouping of people I have ever seen in Tonga. I stood upstairs here and watched it by pass Tungi Arcade. There would be a minimum of fifteen thousand people. Then I went across to the FWC office, and all they were doing - they were sitting there in their office some of them not doing much, I said "why did you not go over and even see the march" and they said "we were too busy" and I said "*this will be the epitaph of the FWC. We were too busy to care about the ordinary people.*"
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> And then did you hear about the motion from I think it was from Kolofo'ou to the Quarterly Meeting of the Tongatapu District that all employees of the FWC should be banned from taking part in any *tohitangi* or protest or anything like that. I think the Quarterly meeting threw it out. But the fact that this could come before the church is a telling sign of the state of the church [emphasis is mine].[32]

Being the largest denomination in the country the majority of the marchers were members of the FWC. One former President of the FWC was present but, according to "Mary," only because he had retired. Other ministers like the retired minister 'Aisea Kava conducted daily prayers with the protesters. The general feeling amongst strikers and supporters was that the FWC could have given much more support. Had the FWC supported the strike, it would have given weight to the cause. The President was not in the country during the first two weeks of the strike but later visited the protesters at Pangai Si'i. The two sides finally came to an agreement and the seven week strike ended with the government yielding to the demand of the strikers. Initiated by the king, on the first Sunday after the strike ended the FWC President called for a national service of repentance at Pangai which was attended by

[32] Interview with subject number 75.

the King and Queen, members of the Royal family and ministers of the Cabinet. As "Mary" related in the discussion about the protest march and the strike, there was a motion from Kolofo'ou demanding that no employee of the FWC should become involved in any protest: it is still expected to be an advocate for the status quo.

The protesters and their supporters asserted that the FWC was partly to blame for what had happened. They explained that the king and the royal family are all members of the FWC and they would not have fallen into these 'self-glorifying' business ventures if the church had been faithfully carrying out its prophetic responsibility to the king and the royal family. The protesters felt that regardless of whether the FWC agreed with what they did they should at least have expressed their sympathy by being present. In line with this thesis, one may suggest silence was support for the cultural status quo, that is, for the state.

Yet if they really love and respect their king and the culture and if they are Christian, then they must be willing to speak the truth in love even if it is against his wishes and the wishes of those in authority. In his email letter to Tongans who were overseas, a senior official at the Friendly Islands Bookshop at the time expressed shame and anger at FWC indifference as represented by the ministers towards the national crisis.

> I watched a vivid appeal from a person at Pangai Si'i asking for the Uesiliana *faifekaus* (Wesleyan ministers) to step forward and speak up. There has been a similar issue raised by many at Pangai and online as well. I sat in a *faikava (kava* ceremony) last night where the *faifekaus was* adamant that the strike was unprincipled and should not be supported by the church. As an employee of the FWC, I too question the absence of our *faifekaus*. I think the FWC is partly to blame for the crisis.
>
> We had opportunities to address the inconsistencies of the nation's leadership over the past decade and we did not. *Maybe a stronger voice from the church may have led to a more accountable decision-making today and avoided the whole crisis. I honestly think that many of our leaders in the church will be held accountable to God for what is happening in the country today – we see the results of our silence and we are paying the price.* I am also saddened because it seems that the view of the *faifekaus* (there are some who differ) is miles apart from that of the people in our congregations. This has happened in the overseas mainline churches and its happening in Tonga today. *It also resonates with what is happening in the Government and society where leadership seems at times to be a 100 miles from the people. The tragedy is it seems the church is no different.* The lack of any presence at Pangai Si'i, even if we disagree, affects the credibility of the church as a mediator or even as a prophet. Strong church

> leadership could have acted as a mediator. We are losing that opportunity and with it our credibility. Yesterday our employees from the Friendly Islands Bookshop,[33] Tungi Arcade and the FWC volunteered to donate towards the families involved in the strike who are struggling. I was surprised to see the willingness to put money with large contributions from some workers who do not make much money. Obviously these FWC employees have a different opinion from our *Faifekaus*…Maybe the *Faifekaus* are right and the people are wrong [emphasis is mine] [34]

The strike may be the last straw on the camel's back. The crisis could have been avoided if the church had been faithfully reminding those in authority that everyone is under the authority of God which demands that his church should look after and care for the poor and the voiceless. But because the church has worked closely since the beginning of the Wesleyan Mission with those in authority, it no longer naturally identifies with those at the fringe of society, and is no longer, therefore, the light and salt of the country. The cry by the church not to meddle in politics should be a cry of the church not to take sides with any political party but to stand up for the will of God to be done. The calling not to be involved in politics should not be an alibi for doing nothing and for not speaking against injustice and corruption at the highest level. The church must be bold to speak to anyone including the establishment when what is being done is contrary to the Gospel. The implication is that the church was silent in this national crisis because it was afraid to speak prophetically, because being prophetic means pain and unpopularity with the power-holders: because the church is the power-holder.

Increasing FWC support of the king

The Centenary Church service in support of the King and against its ordinary members, on the wishes of the King, was a political act of almost sacred-secular union. Such explicit FWC support is increasing without a public murmur. It was formerly the usual practice that after the benediction the congregation would respond by singing the prayer commonly known as "'*Eiki Mafimafi tali 'emau hu, 'Omi ha kelesi*," .which could be translated "Lord Almighty accept our petition, Grant us

[33] This is the main bookshop in the country which is owned by the FWC.

[34] Personal communication with the author on 20/9/2005

grace" But it is increasingly common now, especially in the Centenary Church, to sing the national anthem instead.[35] This is closely involved in the maintenance and even the strengthening of royal power. It is normal protocol that wherever the king is there are two spokesmen sitting on ground level at the left and the right of the royal dais. A retired President of the FWC explained that it is now common for two of the king's *matapules* or spokesmen, to come and sit as they normally do in the traditional pew, at floor level in front of the royal seating. This later addition, which he does not like, began in 2005. As part of their paying respect to the king they do not stand up, for it is disrespectful to stand in the presence of the king. The congregation, including the king and royal family, stand to sing the hymns and the psalms and the national anthem but the *matapules* do not. Everyone rises but them:[36] for them it is more important to honour the monarch than God.

A senior minister says that the President should not bow before the king or anyone else, especially when conducting and leading a service within the Church because he is a messenger of God, and God is above everyone including the chiefs and the king and the President. A person acting or speaking in God's name should not bow to anyone. If he bows the rest of the people in the church, seeing what he does, naturally follow him. In other words, there is FWC resistance to this increasing power but it is not publicly articulated: that would not be respectful!

It is true that most people would follow what the President does but it would be naïve to think this is only a formality. Increasingly those who assist the preacher by reading the hymns and scripture do bow towards the royal dais before and after their reading. Even with the benediction some have added to the usual grace familiar to the congregation and now say "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, bless His Majesty and the Queen and the Royal Family." The national anthem or "*fasi fakafonua*" is commonly referred to as "*fasi 'o e Tu'i*" or the "king's anthem."

In the conduct of funerals it is now increasingly the ministers' custom that after the benediction either in the church or at the cemetery the national anthem is sung. Some are questioning the change but the common rationale is that the national anthem is solely a prayer, whose purpose is expressed in one of the lines, "'*O ke tali 'emau lotu*

[35] Interview with subject number 52.

[36] Interview with subject number 50.

'o malu'i 'a Tupou" which literally means "answer our prayer and protect Tupou [the monarch]"[37]

The influence of the king over the FWC

One must note, however, that it is not necessarily the king who initiates or interferes in a certain situation, but his 'input' may come about from the peoples' desire to include the king in everything that the church does. What an informant told Morton thirty five years ago is still true now.

> The king is almost a god to so many people. I often hear some of our leading ministers use phrases like these, "the church of Tupou," "the land of Tupou," "the ministry of Tupou," (instead of the Gospel). I know a group of evangelists who when they went out to conduct a mission in some of the villages, they said, "we come in the name of Tupou." This sort of nonsense is not a teaching of the King or the Nobles directly; there is no need for them to say that, because it is already rooted in the hearts and minds of the Tongans, on the one hand they don't stop them because it makes them feel more comfortable.[38]

The rationale usually given for such high regard of the king in the church is that if one cannot pay respect to the king and chiefs whom they can see then how can they respect the almighty God whom no one can see? But this cannot be a passport for anyone with authority to live above the values of the Gospel. Nevertheless the consistent allusion to Tupou could be an indicator of dependence not on God but on the backing of the king to give weight to whatever they are doing. This high regard for the king in the church is seen in the ease with which the king both initiates changes in the church, when he wishes, or prevents change. The church may be resistant to change, one informant described the FWC as "dwelling in the past and unwilling to change and adapt to changing conditions."[39] However the FWC is willing to accept change initiated by the king. The king like his predecessors is still seen and respected as the "*Pani 'a e 'Otua*" or the "the One anointed by God" to rule the country.

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[37] Interview with subject number 52.

[38] Connan, 21-2.

[39] Personal communication with the author on 9/9/2005

The king's influence in the election of the President

The Constitution and Rules of the church since the reunion of 1924 still have the article which directed that the first President of the church was to be chosen by Queen Salote.

> The first President of the Conference shall be appointed by Her Majesty from among the ordained ministers in an appointment; thereafter there shall be an annual election by the Conference, with the Sovereign having the right of confirmation.[40]

Since then it is still the practice every year according to this article for the Conference to seek the approval of the monarch after they have elected the President. According to one retired President, when the king installs the elected President on the opening evening of the Conference he is doing it on behalf of the church, which he represents. He thus embodies both the FWC and the nation. [41] In opening the Conference the king would make a speech and a member of the Conference, usually a chief, would make a reply on behalf of the Conference. The king's speech and the response by the Conference are both printed word for word in the first few pages of the Minutes of the Conference. The date for the next Conference must remain tentative until the King's engagements are clear.

It would be naïve to claim that everything that the king suggests will be accepted; some things have been rejected. Yet it would be fair to say that at least ninety five percent of the king's suggestions have been carried out in the FWC. "Sarah" recalled an example of how the king made his choice known and affected the voting.

> The Church in Australia is independent of the State which I think is a good thing and also in England. The Queen of England is the temporal head of the Church of England and in theory she appoints the Archbishop but in fact they are elected. At the FWC Conference they elect their President then the king gives his approval. But the king makes known the person he wants and the people just vote for that person. So that Church and State come together. It is a Tongan cultural thing.[42]

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[40] John M Connan. *A Study in Authority and Power in the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga*, 1977-82(Leadership, Polynesia), (TH. M. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Mission, 1985), 107. This is a translation of this section of the Constitution and Rules of the FWC of Tonga regarding the installation of the elected president.

[41] Interview with subject number 50.

[42] Interview with subject number 59.

What "Sarah" alluded to as the "Tongan cultural thing" is the respect that the people give those in authority even to the extent of agreeing although they disagree: *faka'apa'apa* governs all.

There was a motion put to the Conference of 1989 to amend the Article mentioned above in the Constitution and Rules which requires that after the election of the President by the Conference the announcement of the result is withheld until the king has approved the result. As this was the first time for such a motion since the reunion in 1924 it was a bold move, for it challenged the key role of the monarchy especially in the opening of Conference and installing of the elected President. Presumably what lay behind the motion was the possibility of a monarch refusing to approve the President elected by the Conference. A senior minister, explained that it was not only the fear that the monarchy might clash with the choice of the Conference but equally important was the question of procedure if the monarch were not a confessed Christian, not interested in the church, or not a member of the FWC. Would it still be justifiable to seek the monarch's approval?[43]

As expected this became the main topic and discussion during the Conference of 1989. There was a heated debate and the majority rejected it as disrespectful. To them it was insult to the king to deprive him of an honour that the monarchs have been used to since the beginning of the FWC.

The Conference of 1989 decided to give the people of the FWC another year to reconsider the proposal for amendment. It was the main issue of debate in the Conference of 1990 and again it was rejected.[44] A superintendent minister or *faifekau pule* who would be representative of most of the informants explained why he had disagreed with the proposal.

> Why should we do away with the king's involvement in the church? Why should we separate the king from the church? Always remember that this is his country and his government. This is his church [FWC]. "*Ko e anga fakatamaiki ia - ke fakamavae 'a e Tu'i mei he siasi - ko honofakamatala mo'oni ia"* or "That is the exact description – it was a childish move to separate the king from the church."[45]

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[43] Interview with subject number 96.

[44] Interview with subject number 15.

[45] Interview with subject number 59.

The incident that gave rise to the motion is described by John M Connan in his Master of Theology dissertation titled "*A Study in Authority and Power in the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, 1977-82*." 'Amanaki Havea, the President at the time, received an invitation in 1976 to be the first Pacific Islander to be the Principal of the Pacific Theological College in Suva, Fiji. He accepted the invitation but awaited the approval of the Standing Committee and also the King to release him from the post of Royal Chaplain. The King consented to release him as Royal Chaplain and the Standing Committee agreed to release him to be the Principal of the Pacific Theological College for a five year term. Havea's appointment was effective from January 1st 1977 and therefore the position of President became temporarily vacant.[46]

According to Connan who was the acting President in 1976, he handed in his resignation to allow the Standing Committee to choose the person whom the Committee felt best able to lead the FWC in the next five months before the election of the new President in mid 1977. The Standing Committee chose the other potential candidate, the General Secretary Siupeli Taliai, to fill the position of Acting President. Because Taliai was the Acting President many thought that he would be elected President at the coming Conference. But in early 1977 the king's Private Secretary announced the appointment of Huluholo Mo'ungaloa as the Royal Chaplain. Mo'ungaloa at the time was the Director of the Young's People Department and a well known friend of the king.[47]

The decision by the king to choose Mo'ungaloa instead of Taliai came as no surprise for Taliai was renowned for publicly voicing his opinion when he did not agree with what the government did, deferring neither to the chief nor king. Many interpreted this regal move as an indication that he wanted Mo'ungaloa a close friend of his to be the President because it was the practice in the past for the monarch to choose the President of the FWC to be the Royal Chaplain. Before the election of the President in the 1977 Conference Taliai submitted a letter to the Conference declaring his unworthiness to become President. This could have swayed some to vote against him, though Taliai may have made the move out of consideration for the king's

[46] Connan, 55-57.

[47] Ibid., 57-59.

implied choice to avoid any commotion that might arise if he was elected. The vote was counted and Mo'ungaloa was elected President by an absolute majority.[48]

The king is free to choose whoever he wants to be the Royal Chaplain for this is a Government post and not under the jurisdiction of the President. Nevertheless the fact remained that some of those who voted may have been influenced by the king's having made his choice known by appointing Mo'ungaloa as the Royal Chaplain.

"Sarah" is convinced that the king's announcement of the Royal Chaplain in early 1977 was his indication that he wanted him to be the President.

> Increasingly over the years I have noticed that the king intervened in church matters. Another example was in 1977 when 'Amanaki went to Fiji to be the Principal of PTC – The king made his wishes about whom he wished to be the next President known by appointing Huluholo as the Royal Chaplain. By doing that he was making known that this is the person I want to be President. The only other was Siupeli Taliai but he was outspoken about the chiefs. Not the sort of person that the king would want. [49]

The influence of the monarch, together with what may be a certain lack of enthusiasm for evolution on the part of the FWC minsters, is also felt in the content of the prayer book, hymnal and liturgy. The Prayer Book which is appended to the Hymn Book and the Hymn Book had never been changed since its fourth printing in 1826. Similarly, the first edition of the Constitution and Rules which was printed in the reunion of 1924 is almost identical with the fourth revised edition in 1996. Any significant change would need to come from the top, especially from the king, as few are prepared to face the strong opposition initiation from lower down would engender: "*fokotu'u me'a fo'ou*" or "doing a new thing" is assumed to be improper or unnecessary. "Mary" explained how reluctant the FWC is to change and how the king initiates most of the changes.

> I think that this is where Tonga has missed out from the nineteen sixties, Vatican II and all the liturgical renewal movements overseas have left Tonga completely untouched. We are stuck with what was originally set out in the Prayer Book which was pretty well a direct translation of the old Anglican Prayer book of the early 1900's and we have missed the entire changes that have been happening in the mainline churches with the liturgy and just how we do things. To my sure and certain knowledge in the thirty five years that I have been

[48] Ibid., 62-63

[49] Interview with subject 59.

> here the only thing that has been added to the service because nothing has ever subtracted has been the Psalm and the change in the Lord's Prayer because this came from the king. Now the king is the one who decides what is orthodox doctrine in many ways.
>
> The king and the royal family, they are the ones that make the rules really. They are the ones who decide really what is normal protocol. I think in there are some fascinating parallels with Constantine when the church became mainline under Constantine how it changed so that people no longer had this personal experience it was all imposed from on top. And this is where the church is still trying to do it. We have this culture imperative. If you read Niebuhr's book, the Tongan Christianity is the Christ of Culture which means we have so combined the culture and the Christianity that we find it difficult to separate the two and unfortunately with this view the culture is always stronger and the culture tends to pull down the Christianity.[50]

Definitely the king and chiefs decide the rules as regards to "Tongan culture" and it is often the case, as noted by "Mary," that they also makes the rules in the church: they define both. This relation of Christianity and culture as found in the FWC is close to the position that Richard H. Niebuhr described as "Christ and Culture."[51]

Hymn Book

The FWC hymn book [52]is second only to the Tongan translation of the Bible as the main source of theology for the FWC. At least ninety percent of church singing is from it and it essential to collective worship, for not only is "anyone who claims to be a Tongan but cannot sing is not a Tongan,"[53] but post-service comments often make it clear that the hymns give more succour than the sermon. In the training of preachers, the appropriate choice of hymns is emphasized. At every major meeting of the church, whether district quarterly meeting or annual Conference, the central attraction of the evening's programme is the *po hiva* or the night of singing where at least ten choirs will sing at least an anthem. At a funeral there will always be an *'apo*

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[50] Interview with subject number 75.

[51] H. Richard Niebuhr. *Christ and Culture*. (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1952),154. One change which "Mary" noted is the new tune to which the Lord's Prayer is now sung to a tune the congregation can manage. The king composed a tune, first sung by a Centenary Church choir. The king never imposed his tune: one assumes that he intended it as an additional option, but once people learned that it was the king's tune most of them used it on every occasion.

[52] *Ko e Tohi Himi 'a e Siasi Uesiliana Tau'ataina 'o Tonga* which could be translated as "The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Hymn Book."

[53] Interview with subject number 61.

or night vigil prior to the burial on the following day during which members of the church, usually the choir, will sing hymns the whole night through. Each of the six weekly services has at least three hymns drawn from the FWC Hymnal, the only authorised source.[54] During the Sunday *lotu hengihengi* or dawn service and the Monday and Friday prayer services the congregation are asked to pray audibly or silently on a particular theme and while the congregation are praying members sing a few hymns, the *hiva fakahokohoko 'ofa* until no more prayer is heard. Singing at services, at prayer meetings, at District or annual meetings, at life-cycle services or just when waiting for a service to begin is thus integral to Tonga worship.

One sign of growth is the continuous production of new songs and hymns. Songs and choruses are increasingly heard in church but mainly sung by children and the youths during the Sunday school hours and the various *'apitanga* or camp meetings held throughout the year. However, the hymn book that the FWC has been using is now over a hundred years old and like every hymn book there are hymns that need amending, such as the sixth line of the first verse of hymn number 639:

Ko e 'Otua ko e Fauniteni - God is the Fountain
'O e lelei kotoa pe – Of every good gift
Hokohoko 'a e foaki – Constantly giving
Ki he me'a mo'ui e – To every living thing
Lave ai kitautolu –Ourselves included
Ko e kainanga 'o e fonua – Eaters of the land
Ko mamani 'oku fonu – The world is full
'I he 'ofa 'a e 'Otua – of God's love

The focus of the hymn is the enormity of God's love and one can appreciate the challenge that the author faced in attempting to explain such love. It is no surprise that the best picture that the composer could employ within the context is to explain the inclusiveness of God's love that it even goes down to the lowest rung of the social ladder, to the commoners who are the majority and usually categorised as the *kainanga 'o e fonua* or "eaters of the land." Lopeti Taufa, a former president of the FWC, explained that this phrase "*kainanga 'o e fonua*" should no longer be used because it implies that the commoners are *kelemutu* or worms rather than human

[54] *Ko e Konisitutone mo e Ngaahi Lao 'a e Siasi Uesiliana 'o Tonga*, 40.

beings created in the image of God. The old demeaning identity is surely dissolved in God.

Another example is hymn number 609 with five verses which is a favourite choice of preachers when choosing a hymn for the children. The first line states that the Lord is searching for children to be his own. *'Oku kumi 'e he 'Eiki 'a e fanau ma'ana*. In the last two verses the composer used the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:1-32 to set an example for the children to live up to. According to the lyrics the role model or hero that the children should follow is the elder son and not the prodigal son. Even to the extent of running down the younger son's return. One can only assume that this is an example of an 'over contextualized' attempt by the composer who most probably thought that the elder son was the closest of the two brothers to a Tongan. The seemingly 'obedient' and 'law abiding' elder brother blends in well with the 'orderliness' and 'no questioning of authority' and the 'earning by works' mindset of the culture. What the composer is trying to instil in the minds of the children does not fit in well with the context of the parable because the elder son could represent the hypocrisy and the shallowness of the Pharisees and the scribes while the younger son though naughty could represent the readiness of the tax collectors and sinners to repent. The parable was told as a response to the Pharisees and the scribes' criticisms of the Lord's dining together with the tax collectors and sinners. The father and the entire household including the younger son are enjoying the party while the 'law abiding' elder son simply cannot grasp why the entire household celebrates the return of a law breaking brother. In his anger he chose to remain outside the house. We can only give the composer the benefit of the doubt that maybe he thought that giving more explanation to the younger son may have misled the children to think that you can get away that easy with breaking the 'rules.' However one cannot deny that this interpretation in Hymn 609 does belittle the unconditional love of the father portrayed in the Lucan parable.

> *'Oua 'e hange 'e ko e tama ne maumau koloa*-Do not be like the prodigal son
>
> *'O ne foki ki 'api kuo mole kotoa*-Returning home with nothing
>
> *Pea tu'u 'ene tohi 'a homou hingoa*-Your names written in His book
>
> *'A e koloa kanokato 'a e 'Eiki Sihova* -The best of the Lord's treasures
>
> *Ka ke hange 'e ko e 'a e 'uluaki foha*-But be like the elder son

He ne to ma'ana 'a e me'a kotoa-He treasured everything given to him

Pea tu'u 'ene tohi 'a homou hingoa-Your names are written in His book

'A e koloa kanokato 'a e 'Eiki Sihova-The best of the Lord's treasure

After discussions on a new hymn book had begun, based on theological needs as well as collective pleasure, the king was consulted. He disagreed with the project, and so it foundered. "Sarah" recalled how her sister "Jane" and others had initiated the idea.

> Another example I will give you is when my sister "Jane" was here she and several other people worked together on a new hymn book because the hymn book that is used by the FWC now is a hundred years old and no new hymns have been added. So "Jane" and the others began to prepare a new hymn book and then the king said no. He didn't want a new hymn book and so the work was done but it was wasted.
>
> Simply because the king said that he didn't want it and the church didn't say 'well we want this hymn book we are going to have it regardless'. In Australia they learn gospel hymns and choruses. We had a new hymn book [there] in 1977 and we now want to make another new hymn. Twenty years later we felt the need of another new hymn book.[55]

At a Quarterly meeting at Sia'atoutai Theological College in 1998, the chairperson, in response to a query from the floor about the possibility of including additional hymns, informed the meeting that the King had already objected to the adding of new hymns to the current hymn book: additional material should be in a new and separate book. The chairperson was not only informing the meeting of the king's preference but at the same time curtailing the discussion, the king's view being clear. No one insisted on further discussion: everyone knows the expected response. Maybe the king would be willing to discuss the issue in open conference: but no one tries if they sense an objection on his part. Yet silence did not mean consent but fear of being different, of being honest, of being alienated. The king, by intention or default and certainly through the craven collusion of the FWC ministers, has prevented additions and corrections and thereby constrained theological development in Tonga.

[55] Interview with subject number 59.

Stationing of ministers

The President also seeks the monarch's approval on the *fehikitaki,* the appointment and stationing of ministers. Seeking such advice and approval on the *fehikitaki* is not written in the Constitution and Rules policy but started during the reign of Queen Salote.[56] Her advice were sought by the previous expatriate Presidents. While the President could both make and amend a decision, being the only person authorised by the Constitution and Rules to do so, the monarch de facto also made changes to Church decisions. The stationing of the ministers, usually for a three year period, is one of the major events of every Conference for there the ministers and the church learn where each minister will serve in the following Conference year. For the past twenty years it has been broadcast for the entire country to hear.

How often the monarch intervenes is unknown, but the following 1999 conference case is of interest. Two to three hours before the President announced the stationing he went to the Palace to submit the list to the king. Mohenoa Puloka was assigned to lecture at the Pacific Theological College in Fiji. The king made it known to the President that he wanted Puloka to work in Tonga, where he was needed, rather than in Fiji. The President made the amendment accordingly before returning to the Conference to announce his stationing.

Although Puloka had accepted and was looking forward to his new post, he treasured the King's gesture as a royal favour and honour as this was the only incident that he knew of the king requesting an amendment to the President's stationing of ministers. Since then Puloka has vowed to give up all thought of working outside of Tonga and will work in Tonga for the rest of his life.[57]

An example of the influence of a chief on the President's stationing was related by Rev Samiu Taufa, currently the minister of Te'ekiu in the Western end of Tongatapu. According to the stationing of the President announced on the last evening of the Conference in 2005 Taufa was supposed to go Vaotu'u, indeed he had already moved most of his things there. But Motu'apuaka[58] the chief of Te'ekiu sought the

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[56] This practice of seeking the monarch's approval in the stationing most probably began during the reign of Queen Salote.

[57] Interview with subject number 95.

[58] Except at the death of a monarch Motu'apuaka is the monarch's chief spokesmen during the traditional ceremonies.

help of the President to reconsider his decision and instead of Samiu Taufa moving to Vaotu‘u the chief asked for him to continue in Te‘ekiu for another year. The normal duration of a minister in a place is three years and Taufa is now in his fifth year in Te‘ekiu. This is because according to Taufa there had been a marked decline in alcohol-related problems in Te‘ekiu, and Motu‘apuaka attributed this fall in crime mainly to the faithful and dedicated work of Taufa.

Both Puloka and Taufa took these amendments as a privilege and honour as a royal and chiefly praise of their work. This would be the attitude of most in the FWC to the changes in the President’s stationing. The President still has the final say in deciding what is best for the situation but so far the king’s wishes have not been disregarded. Again, as with the hymn book, this is, or surely should be, an ecclesiological issue not a matter of state.

Liturgy for Baptism

Royal advice may, of course, be helpful to the running of the church. Puloka explained how the king noted that the FWC from the beginning had been an advocate of infant baptism but had failed to offer a liturgy specifically for the baptism of those not baptised during infancy. With the backing of the Conference Interim Committee Puloka was asked by the king (not the FWC President) to start writing the “*Ko e Litesia ‘o e Papitaiso ‘o e Kakai Lalahi*” or “The Liturgy of Adult Baptism,” [59] being largely a translation by Puloka from a liturgy for Adult Baptism that was written in German appended to a Bible, a gift to the king from the Republic of Germany. The king cherished this Bible for it was printed in 1610 which was four years before the arrival of the first European explorers Schouten and Lemaire in Tonga in 1616. Puloka was given permission to work in the Palace Office during the duration of composition. The Conference accepted Puloka’s work which was accepted for use in the FWC Conference of 2000.[60]

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[59] *Koe Litesia ‘o e Papitaiso ‘o e Kakai Lalahi*. (Nuku’alofa: Siasi Uesiliana Tau’ataina ‘o Tonga, 1999).

[60] Interview with subject number 95.

When in disagreement with the Church

The hymn book and stationing issues have already shown the influence of the king in worship and personnel, but his influence, the church's acquiescing response, is also felt in more mundane areas of church life. During a camp organized by the *Potungaue Ako Faka-Kalisitiane* or Department of Christian Education in 2001 Handel's Hallelujah chorus music was sung while some girls performed a Tongan dance.[61] The king in his speech when opening the occasion publicly expressed his dislike of the performance, a point brought up at the following Quarterly Meeting of the Tongatapu District. The meeting decided that the President of the church should go and apologise on behalf of the church to the king, [62]some ministers expressing their anger at the Director of the Department at the time, Mohenoa Puloka, who had composed and arranged the dance. Some said Puloka should be disciplined for what he had done, even suspended, others that he should reconcile the matter with the king and apologise on behalf of the FWC. Puloka argued that if it was the responsibility of the FWC then it was the role of the President: the meeting agreed.[63]

Yet one prophetic voice spoke up at the meeting:[64] the late Henele Puniani asked whether FWC exists to please God or to please the king. Puniani a minister and an evangelist who was known for helping orphans was bold enough to challenge the meeting with such a question, yet no one answered, and there was no further discussion. Yet Puniani would not have asked the question if the FWC (and the author includes himself here) was faithful to its call as a body of Christ, if it worried about pleasing God rather than those in authority. What Puloka did was radically new and was seen by some as "*fai me'a fo'ou*" or "doing a new thing." It was therefore to be opposed, especially as the king too opposed it. It may be that some took advantage of the king's displeasure, disagreeing with the performance themselves: but the FWC apologised for a decision, a presentation, it had earlier not opposed.

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[61] Before the arrival of Christianity the dances were mainly for honouring the gods of which the Tu 'i Tonga was the mortal representative.

[63] Interview with subject number 95.

[64] The author of this text was there, but stayed silent.

The influence of the Queen in the Department for Women

The Queen also impacts on the church. A senior minister who was serving in the island of 'Eua explained how the 'Eua District Meeting in 2005 proposed that a minister should be appointed as the minister for the FWC Department of Women or the "*Potungaue 'a e Kakai Fefine.*" The main reason for the proposal was the increasing concern that all Women's Department proposals were agreed on the nod because the Queen both heads and steers it. The continuous presence of a minister may afford a balance the department seemed to lack. The speaker explained that this FWC department alone was beyond the jurisdiction of the President simply because the Queen, "…she just wants to head, lead and decide on everything in the Department..." [65]

According to the secretary of the Department for Women, Katea Lutui, it was established in 1984 by the President at the time, the late 'Amanaki Havea. He chose the Queen to head the Department, which has continued. Initially a minister was delegated by the President to work as "the minister for the Department for Women."[66] Placing the Queen (the mother of the country or *fehuhu 'a e fonua*) at the head of a new department may well have given it strength and kudos as it established itself, supported by the FWC minister. However, the current President had not stationed a minister there for some time, hence the request, derived, it was implied, from the Queen's perhaps excessive influence. The President chairing the meeting asked for advice, saying the Queen had admitted more than once to him that she was just filling a gap but would be happy to step down once a minister was chosen as she was close to eighty years old. In the Tongan context her meaning was not easy to decipher. It could have been humbly agreeing to resign while not wishing to but at the same does not want to resign, yet equally that she objects to a minister being allotted. The latter was felt rather more likely and so rather than risk hurting the Queen's feelings, the meeting sympathised with the President and the matter was dropped. The Queen has contributed both to the FWC as a lay-preacher, ministers to widows and leads the Red Cross especially as regards to handicapped children. Yet this was a church-organisation issue on which, yet again, the FWC was not prepared to stand by what it wished to do.

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[65] Interview with subject number 97.

[66] Personal communication with the author on 12/3/2006.

Once the Queen had been invited to head the unit, the general understanding was that it was entirely up to her to decide which direction the department would take. Every Quarterly District Meeting reports its work since the last meeting and that includes the Women's Department. Sometimes the meeting interchangeably uses the title "Department for Women" with the "Department of the Queen" or "*Potungaue 'a e Ta'ahine Kuini*." That is not her usage or decision, but that of the unit. She is, moreover, an equal member of the FWC, with rights due as a member as well as those deriving from age, experience and standing, from which the FWC certainly benefits. Yet at the same time the FWC must be truthful in expressing their true feelings for the needs of the whole church regardless of the status of individuals.

The influence of the chiefs

Like the influence of the king and the queen the chiefs have their influence. This is the case especially if the chief is closely involved with what is happening in the church. This is found in the statements of two former missionaries to a question by Connan twenty five years ago regarding the influence of any particular group during their time in Tonga:

> The chiefly system dominated Tongan society, and much depended on the attitude of the chiefs in both the church and the community. Sometimes this influence was baneful. Although the chiefs were nominally only members of the Conference and other church meetings they tended to exert their traditional influence. The problems tended to be associated with the Churches reliance on, and subservience to, the King and the nobles. Decisions were often made on the basis of fear of consequences if the nobility were not acceded to.[67]

The influence of the chief on the church today would be rather less, but it is definitely there. Fehoko Fanaika a retired minister explained of the need for a minister when going to serve in local church for the first time to make it his or her priority to visit the chief and introduce himself. According to him the minister must consistently inform the chief of what is happening in the church, like the date of the church's annual collection or *misinale* as he or someone he chose would always be the chair person for the *misinale*. "We must not forget that the people are first people of the chief before they come to church."[68] One minister who is representative of

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[67] Connan, 22.

[68] Interview with subject number 70.

most of the informant ministers claimed that it is much easier to work in a village that is owned by a chief than a village that is not,[69] for the chief gave great support. That, of course, will always have a price. One minister explained that often when asking the congregation to give a hand in a major church project, he would ask the chief to speak on his behalf, showing respect and ensuring success. [70] Another explained that when a chief realised he paid his own local telephone and electricity bill, he immediately called a member of the church trust to inform all trustees that from now on the church would pay the minister's domestic bills.[71]

Honourable Fakatulolo the chief of the island of Falevai in the Vava'u group remembered his father banning the whole island from swimming in the sea on Sunday and advising the steward at the door of the church to discipline anyone who made noise during the service. Before the church choir went out to Neiafu the capital of Vava'u to sing in the quarterly meeting they had to come and sing before his father and if he was not pleased then they would not be allowed to go.[72] One minister explained that the chief volunteered every year to pay the total amount or the *'inasi* required for their *misinale*. Another explained the contribution of the chief or chief's representative in keeping the order. He described a church meeting he chaired where the chief's representative 'rescued' him. A man in the meeting began to raise his voice expressing his disagreement with him as the minister, but was immediately silenced by one of the chief's *matapule* or spokesman;

> Shut up and sit down! Who are you to do something new here? Once "Sione" speaks that is final. There is no need for us to continue. I have warned you.

"Sione," the chief's representative and oldest participant silenced the meeting and, in a sense, the minister too, who thankfully closed the meeting. [73] With such a support that the minister receives from the chief we can only assume that whenever there is need to speak prophetically to the chief it would be difficult.

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[69] Referring here to the villages owned by nobles and although the noble may not be a member of the congregation but he would still have a representative in the congregation.

[70] Interview with subject number 14.

[71] Interview with subject number 5.

[72] Interview with subject number 13.

[73] Interview with subject number 2.

Having looked at the way in which the state and the church interact in the public arena in terms of meetings, public performances, worship books and personnel, and having seen that the FWC has abnegated a good deal of its responsibility to lead theologically and therefore prophetically in favour of the readily available secular hierarchy of the monarch and the chiefs, gaining a good many practical benefits in terms of order, of stability, perhaps even placidity, in the process, it is time now to consider the FWC inside the walls of the church. It is here that the failure to challenge the deep structures of 'Tongan culture' as it is presented becomes most evident, here that the failure to accord equal values and sanctity to all becomes clear, and what better place to start than Communion.

The Holy Communion

In 2001 at the Sia'átoutai Theological College (STC)[74] The author was leading a Sunday morning service. The text was Luke 14:1-24 where Jesus was invited to dine on a Sabbath by a leader of the Pharisees (v.1). According to the Lucan writer, Jesus advised his host that in future he should invite not his rich friends and neighbours, but rather the poor, blind, lame, deaf and those who could not pay him back. Then he would certainly be rewarded in heaven (vv. 12-14). He later told the Parable of the Great Banquet which gave a glimpse of what the coming Great Banquet in the kingdom of God would be like (vv. 16-24): it was all about 'inclusion.'

The service ended with the Holy Communion. One of the students asked the author after the service why he kept the normal Tongan procedure of letting the staff and their families take their communion first. The student felt that the author should have left it open to whoever wanted to come and at whatever time he or she wanted to receive the communion, and made that free-order clear. He pointed out that the coming Great Banquet in the kingdom of God is inclusive but the Holy Communion we practise, although open to anyone, looked "exclusive," the Principal, the staff and their families receive first before the rest of the congregation?

There is no written rule and sometimes members of the staff and their families may choose to receive their communion later: but that is rare. There was an obvious inconsistency, even a contradiction, between the inclusive sermon on the Great Banquet and the STC administration of Holy Communion. The author had to think

[74] STC is the main theological institution in Tonga run by the FWC.

out how to reconcile the message that had been preached on the coming Great Banquet in the kingdom of God with the Holy Communion that that had been celebrated, acknowledging that I had missed a golden opportunity of witnessing by having those at the top of the community eating together with the rest at the same table. Indeed the author confessed to him that before mounting the pulpit steps he had been thinking about breaking from the normal procedure, but in the event did not have the courage to pursue his intention: He too was a hypocrite.

Holy Communion is carried out in every FWC local church in and outside of Tonga in this way, meticulously reflecting the social order. The chiefs, ministers and the elders will always receive their communion first before the rest of the congregation. The FWC congregations in New Zealand where most of the Tongans outside Tonga live are no exception, still observing 'Tongan order' when conducting their Holy Communion. "Mary" explained what she saw at one of the biggest FWC congregations in New Zealand.

> Okay this Communion was the big FWC in New Zealand. Wesley, yes that's the one and we were there. This was just in January 2006 and I was really quite shocked when I saw that first of all when the Queen received communion the two ministers that gave it, the Chairman of the District and the other one, actually knelt in front of the Queen to receive [give?] the Communion and my view was that maybe they should have stood as servants of God, as the shepherds of God that did not need to kneel. Secondly, it was announced publicly that after the Queen the next one to have communion would be the *hou'eiki* [chiefs] and the other *faifekau's* [ministers] and the *hoas* of the *faifekaus* [ministers' wives] and other important people and everybody else had to wait until later. I thought at the time that this was really a perversion of Christianity. That Christianity had become so much part of the culture that people could not separate the two.[75]

"Mary's" response to what she saw would not be the usual response by a member of the FWC. Most of my informants did not find anything wrong with the current practice. One informant, a former member of Parliament, saw no problem with the current practice of the Holy Communion.[76] To them the order had no effect at all on

[75] Interview with subject number 75.

[76] Interview with subject number 49.

their relationship with God and they see no need for a change of format. They are at the top.

What the Chairman of the District did would be the normal act of any minister of the FWC when giving the Queen her communion. Even calling out the order of receiving communion from the front as in New Zealand would be normal, for the minister must keep order. But whether he called it out or not would make little difference for each communicant knows the customary order and their place in it: if they do not the rest will immediately make sure he/she does, including at the Holy Communion. An expatriate "Peter" faced the same challenge. He explained why he did not welcome the possibility of becoming the President of the church:

> Let me just say when in 1980 there was the prospect or the outside possibility that I might have become President of the Church, I expressed to some people that would something of a problem for me because of the way that the king is served communion by himself because we are all equal before God. And while I certainly respect the king as the leader of the Tongan people I think at the Table of the Lord nobody is more equal than anybody else. And so that would have been a problem for me even though the Tongan custom would always be that the king eats by himself.[77]

Faka'apa'apa or respect to the chiefs is evident in how the Holy Communion is being done in the FWC. The very meal that the resurrected Jesus commanded his disciples to serve until his return is intended to be an inclusive meal where the Lord is the host and everyone is equal regardless of status. All the selected scriptural verses read during the communion remind us that all are equal in the face of God and no one partakes because of his or her status or merit. In contrast to this proclamation that everyone is equal the practice of the Holy Communion in the FWC is a mirror image of the culture with the king and chiefs are served first before everyone else. It is presented as though God is so 'respectful' of Tongan culture that he has favourites and is biased towards the elite of society. The Constitution and Rules demand that everyone comes to the front and kneels to receive the communion. There is no reference in the Constitution to the order of receiving Communion: the socially highest, whether monarch or chief, start and all following rank, echoing the order of initial salutation (*fakatapu*) and prayer.

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[77] "Peter" speaking to a tape interviewed by my wife on May 2006 at STC.

Instead of giving the Holy Spirit full freedom to minister, the Holy Communion is being reduced to a Tongan meal where the king and the chiefs always sit at the top table or top end of the feast where the best food is found. The practice of the Holy Communion is in direct conflict with the unceasing proclamation that everyone is equal in the sight of God. To them the order had no effect at all on their relationship with God. The practice of the Holy Communion therefore is no different from the cultural imperative where the one inferior cannot possibly eat together at the same table with the one superior. The FWC has failed to seize the one opportunity in the entire country since the beginning of Tonga to set up a feast where everyone partakes equally irrespective of rank and status. The FWC, pressured and shaped by the culture and gaining status and ease thereby, has eliminated the possibility in the Tongan context of demonstrating that everyone is equal in the sight of God.

The reiteration of exclusivity is exacerbated by the choice of words spoken by the celebrating minister in the words of institution. He uses different words for the king, for the chiefs and for the rump, the rest of the congregation. When offering the bread the normal word in the text are: "*to'o 'eni 'o kai*" or "take this and eat." When feeding the king the regal word for "eating" *taumafa* is used and for a chief, the honorific word *'ilo* is used. The rest of the congregation get the common word "*kai*" The king does not receive from just any minister, but just the President, usually also his Chaplain, or in his absence the General Secretary or a senior minister. "Sarah" said

> In the FWC the President gives the king communion and he gets down on his knees to give the king communion but he should not do that because when he is celebrating communion he is acting in the person of Christ. The person acting in the person Christ should not bow down to an earthly king. So it is something that I feel is not right.[78]

The President at the time decides how he serves them: in his capacity as the General Secretary Taliai explained that whenever he was given the opportunity to serve their majesties he served them standing and using the same words he used for the commoners.[79] According to him, the celebrating minister should not kneel to serve the king and the queen as this gives everyone the wrong perception of the Communion. He explained:

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[78] Interview with subject number 59.

[79] Taliai, it should be remembered was not appointed President as expected.

> At the table of the Lord, we all come to acknowledge that we have all been saved by grace. I am sure that is the reason why His Majesty and the royal family come and kneel down to receive the Communion. Please don't *faka-Tonga'i 'a e Sakalameniti [Tonganize the Sacrament]*. No kneeling from the *faifekau* before the Royal Family at the Holy Communion. Please give them the privilege of humbling themselves before the altar to acknowledge that they too, like any other sincere repentant sinner, have been saved by God's underserved grace.[80]

Taliai went on to explain that it is the responsibility of the minister if he wants to alter the usual way of serving the king and chiefs clearly to explain to them beforehand the meaning of the Holy Communion and why he is doing what he is doing. He did that with Princess Pilolevu and her husband and they seemed to appreciate it. An informant from the Royal family admitted that the manner in which the Catholic church let the people queue up in any order to receive the elements from the priests should be adopted by the FWC.[81]

A retired *faifekau Pule* or superintendent minister of the Tongatapu District explained that the king is well aware of how difficult it is for some ministers to be in his presence and would make it easier for them by quickly extending his hand to take the elements.[82] Former Presidents like the late Huluholo Mo 'ungaloa bowed before giving the elements, but the late 'Amanaki Havea stood to give them. Current practice, established at least twenty years by the last three Presidents, is for the celebrating minister to kneel down to serve the kneeling king. [83] Except for Taliai, "Peter", "Mary" and a few others, most of the informants see the current practice of giving 'special treatment' to the king and the nobles as appropriate, since *faka'apa'apa* 'proper respect' (one might ask for whom?) is the primary intention. Moreover according to them the celebrating ministers take their communion before everyone else including the king, so they are the first to disrupt the hierarchical ordering.

Holy Communion, the core feast, is yet to be inculturated. Instead of giving a foretaste of the inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God it has been domesticated to be more or less a Tongan meal. A demonstration to the monarch, the royal family, the

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[80] Personal communication with the author on 3/12/2004.

[81] A member of the Royal family talking to tape as interviewed by my wife on 21/6/2006..

[82] Interview with subject number 20.

[83] Interview with subject number 52.

chiefs and the rest of the people that everyone is equal in the sight of God has been robbed by the Tongan way with the willing collusion of the FWC.

The *fakatapu* or the prelude to preaching

Faka'apa'apa or respect is demonstrated before each sermon on the Word of God. In this *fakatapu. Fakatapu* or 'prelude,' the preacher pays respect to those present by acknowledging them before the sermon. Traditionally *fakatapu* is part and parcel of the protocol that one or a group of people has to go through when entering the presence of a chief. A minister said that to miss the *fakatapu* is a mistake that is difficult for the congregation to forgive, [84]for it is obligatory before speaking to the congregation. If he/she did not, the listeners would find such conduct arrogant and disrespectful, even though the same few names are always mentioned in the *fakatapu.* According to a lecturer at the Sia'atoutai Theological College "*fakatapu* is one's passport to the ear of the listeners." The reaction against failing to do a good *fakatapu* speaks of the value that the congregation puts upon it.[85] The king and chiefs still say the *fakatapu*, and as one would expect, the king's *fakatapu* is the shortest. Even if the preacher is not a Tongan the translator will always make up the *fakatapu* as if it had been uttered.

Normally one learns by observing how others do it and the minister looking after the congregation will advise if he sees the need for correction.[86] Even if there are no chiefs present in the congregation the preacher or speaker will still pay respect to the chiefs by saying "*tapu mo hou'eiki*" or "with respect to the [absent] chiefs." Most FWC preachers on radio or television say the *fakatapu* acknowledging the presence of king, the queen, the crown prince and the premier even though they are not actually in the congregation but they find it appropriate because they may be among the listening radio congregation.

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[84] Interview with subject number 45.

[85] Interview with subject number 98.

[86] Even if this coaching is not done, anyone who comes to preach or speak to the congregation would still say the *fakatapu*. This *fakatapu* before the sermon is not practiced in the indigenous Free Church of Tonga.

The 'proper' use of the *fakatapu* from the pulpit was a concern of the *Fakataha faka-kuata* or Quarterly meeting of December 2003 of the Tongatapu District. It was agreed that there should be a written document to guide preachers of the church on the 'right way' for a preacher to do the *fakatapu*.[87] The motion, indicating some preachers were not careful to do the *fakatapu* properly was from the congregation of the Centenary Church which the king and queen normally attend. As a result there is now a written list of names in ranked order on the pulpit in the Centenary Church which every preacher must follow in the *fakatapu.* The first acknowledgement of the *fakatapu* is always the highest ranking person present and that honour goes to God. This is followed by acknowledging those present starting from the highest ranking person. An example is the church in Fasi where Princess Pilolevu the current king's sister and her husband the Honourable Tuita, Minister of Land and Survey, attend.[88] Here is the *fakatapu* for that church:

> *Tapu mo e 'afio 'a e 'Otua* – my respect to God
>
> *Tapu mo e Ta'ahine Pilinisesi* – my respect to the Princess
>
> *Tapu mo e 'Eiki Minisita* – my respect to the Honourable Minister
>
> *Tapu mo Pahulu* – my respect to Pahulu [a spokesman]
>
> *Tapu mo e Faifekau* – my respect to the minister
>
> *Tapu mo e Setuata pea mo e Siasi* – my respect to the steward and the rest of the church

Those at the top of the social ladder are distinctly mentioned by names. The rest of the congregation are represented in the single word '*siasi*' or church. The question that arises is if the *fakatapu* is sign of respect then it privileges the elite including the clergy. Ninety nine percent of the congregation are the last to be acknowledged in a single word, *siasi* or church. This order obtains throughout the year and is rarely broken for even time pressure suggests it, the repercussions would be dire. Sometimes those at the top of the *fakatapu* would prefer the *fakatapu* to be short as the inclusion of others beside them belittle their presence by implying that those mentioned are of the same level with them: guilty of meanness of spirit as well as pride! An expatriate spoke of the experience at Sia'atoutai Theological College:

> I find the prayers very restricted and very limited and they are for the same people every single service and there is never any prayer at least

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[87] Interview with subject number 52.

[88] This is the local church where I attended from childhood until I moved to STC eighteen years ago.

> as far as I can tell, for I know very little Tongan, I have not heard any prayers for any other part of the world mentioned, it is always the same list of people, the Principal of the college, the Deputy Principal, the chief tutor, the ministers and the chief steward of the students and sometimes it goes on beyond that to the king and the government, but I have never heard any prayer in this College anyway that goes beyond and outside of Tonga. So the prayers are quite restricted it seems. Yes, then the protocol. You called it *fakatapu*. I did not know for many services what was happening at the beginning of a sermon because I was just assuming that they started preaching until I heard someone preaching in English then I realize that they have not started preaching, that the first few minutes is all saying that I am happy to be preaching in the presence of the principal, acting principal, the chief tutor, the registrar and all of that list of the same people again. Now I can see that about the Tongan culture and I can see it is the strong hierarchy of the Tongan culture.
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> But I do have some tension there because in a preaching situation I believe that I am preaching for God and in the presence of God and that it does not matter who is there in the congregation whether they are at the top of the hierarchy or the bottom of it. That the message is actually there for everyone and I suppose I have not been brought up in a hierarchical society. From my experience all are equal as it were in the sight of God and if I am preaching I do not have to acknowledge anybody's presence except God's so that particular issue I find difficult because it does not resonate with me but also because theologically I do not actually find that a sound position. So I still do not know what I am going to do when I preach because there are some things I can accept or adapt to at least but this one at the moment goes so much against my basic theological understanding.[89]

What this person witnessed would be the same in most if not all of the local churches in the country. Here the same people who are mentioned in the *fakatapu* are the same names as mentioned in the prayers in almost every service, and in the same order. Not only that, for only the local church is of interest. The danger of a church that often focuses on a few is not only that the recital becomes a formality, the one praying always is so conscious of the names to be recited that it is easy to forget about the rest. It encourages inwardness and a lack of concern for anyone else. As noted by this expatriate there is no other country but Tonga, and the prayers never go out beyond the walls of the particular church.

The right way of doing the *fakatapu* is also a core concern when training probation ministers. A senior minister explained that one of the ministers on probation was advised by a retired President of the FWC about the 'right' way of doing the

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[89] Interview with subject number 79.

fakatapu that it should be "*tapu mo*….,"[90] and not " *tapu kia* ….,"[91] as the former sounds more respectable.[92] A retired superintendent minister recalled that while he was studying at Sia'atoutai College the Principal, an expatriate, seeing the students' anxiety about getting *fakatapu* 'right' encouraged them to remember that the main thing is their sermon and if it helps they can leave out the *fakatapu* and get straight on with their sermon: but this was ignored.[93] The Principal, not being a Tongan, found it easy to omit it: his Tongan students did not.

The desire to have an "*'eiki*" or chief in every congregation

Most if not every local church in Tonga would like to have an "'*eiki* or a chief". The word *'eiki* implies favour, order, respect and status. The question is, why is it so desirable? If there is no noble within the congregation they choose someone of chiefly blood. This 'affinity' with an *'eiki* is also very evident in the FWC congregations overseas like New Zealand, Australia and the United States where there are few chiefs: the congregation insist on 'electing' an *'eiki*. In some Tongan-based churches an *'eiki* is chosen from another church: the Siasi Konisitutone[94] chose Princess Pilolevu who is a member of the FWC as their highest *'eiki*. When the last 'Ulukalala died in the 1960s who was the son of 'Ulukalala Misini founder of the Siasi 'o Tonga (CT) the leaders of the CT decided to seek the permission of the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV that some member of the royal family become the patron chief for the CT. The late king appointed his youngest son 'Aho'eitu who is now the Crown Prince. One would expect every prayer that is made from the front of every local church to mention the name of Prince 'Aho'eitu.[95]

It is common for the local church to be known by the highest ranking chief in the congregation as in the case of the Siasi Tonga Hou'eiki it is sometimes referred to as

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[90] The literal translation is "with respect with "

[91] The literal translation is "with respect to."

[92] Interview with subject number 45.

[93] Interview with subject number 20.

[94] Free Constitutional Church..

[95] The honour of being the patron chief for the CT now goes to the Crown Prince's son Prince 'Aho'eitu.

Siasi ‘o ‘Ulukalala or “the church of ‘Ulukalala.” With the patron chief now being Prince ‘Aho‘eitu it would commonly referred to as the “church of ‘Aho‘eitu.” A group from the FWC in the village of Malapo that is owned by the noble Luani always mention that they are representing “the church of Honourable Luani” and similarly a group from the FWC of the village of Pea which is owned by the noble Lavaka identify themselves as the group from “the church of Lavaka.” It does not necessary mean that the noble actually attends that particular local church but that the church is in a village belonging to a chief who is a member of the FWC.

Representatives speaking on behalf of a group from the FWC in Fasi when introducing themselves always mention who they are by saying *“ko e siasi ‘eni ‘o e Ta‘ahine ko Pilinisesi Pilolevu,*” that is “this is the church of Her Royal Highness Princess Pilolevu” for she is the highest ranking chief attending the church. In Tatakamotonga III which the king’s nephew ‘Etani Tuku‘aho sometimes attended, anyone speaking on behalf of this FWC congregation would usually mention that they are a group representing the “church of ‘Etani Tuku‘aho,” Tuku‘aho being the highest ranking person of chiefly blood attending. This may reflect the tradition of only entering the presence of the king accompanied by a relation of the king.

The need for an *‘eiki* to be present is best illustrated in the *kava* ceremony where the presence of the *‘eiki* automatically puts everyone and everything in order. The entire conversation is largely led by the *‘eiki* and those near him at the top end of the ceremony while the rest listen. Once the most superior *‘eiki* is seated it makes it easier for the rest, because they immediately know where to sit in the hierarchical seating arrangement. Even if a higher ranking person comes in later everyone knows who should move and where, in order to make a place for the incoming person.[96] One informant explained that in a Tongan gathering like the church “*kuopau pe ke ‘i ai hanau ‘eiki* or “they must have an *‘eiki*.” It must be understood that it is not necessarily the *‘eiki* who wish to be involved in church life or rank: people wish it. The phrase that applauds the presence of a chief in a *kava* ceremony is *fotunga tonu* which literally means ‘right face’ or *fofonga poto* which means ‘wise face.’ The church then is said to be fofonga poto when there is a chief.[97]

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[96] Even though it is more obvious in a *kava* ceremony regardless of the context everyone is aware where he or she in relation to others.

[97] *Koe Ngaahi Palovepi*, 29. One Tongan myth lauding *‘eiki* is the story of a boat sailing to Fiji from Mo‘unga‘one. When the Fijians sailed near the boat they found the Tongans eating and could tell from

Economically the presence of a chief means that those hosting will have to provide gifts worthy of the chief: almost any expenditure is worth it to express their joy that an *'eiki* is present. Sometimes a chief will try to avoid going to an event knowing that his presence would bring additional "economic demands to the hosting family." Whatever the occasion - daughter's twenty first birthday, a wedding, a funeral - the event is estimated by the answer to the question "*ko hai 'a e hou'eiki na'e me'a ai* ?" or "who were the chiefs that were present ?" The presence of the king or chief gives status and recognition to any occasion: what joy there is to announce "*na'e 'afio ai 'a e 'Ene 'Afio*" or "His majesty was present." The same apply to the church: the desire for a chief means a church bears all 'costs' to get or retain an *'eiki*.

Such yearning to be so connected is not confined to the church setting: it lies at the core of the Tongan cultural mat. As explained in the second chapter, a person's status traditionally depended on the closeness of ties to the Tu'i Tonga, that is, to chiefly blood. An incident during the last day of the celebration of the eightieth anniversary of Queen Salote College [owned by the FWC] in March 2006 illustrates the people's joy and appreciation at the presence of a chief.[98] It was a festival of food and entertainment with at least a thousand guests. The President and the General Secretary and the leaders of various church departments were there including current and ex-students of Queen Salote College. It is a common sight during a celebration where a chief is present for people to do all sorts of determinedly ridiculous and humorous performances to show both their relationship to and appreciation of the presence of the chief. Families who had a member or members who had been at the College performed a dance and at the same time collected funds for the College amid the joyous celebration. A minister requested Princess Pilolevu, guest of honour, to graciously allow her niece Princess Latufuipeka to come and dance for the family. She spoke from the microphone beginning with a plea of introduction. She said, "You know that the Tongilava's Jesus is Kaitangi and therefore I plead with your Highness for Princess Latufuipeka your niece to come and dance for the family." Kaitangi is the residence in which Princess Latufuipeka's mother grew up and it has been the tradition for the Tongilava family to serve the Kaitangi chiefs. The lady

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how they sat that there was no chief in the boat. The chiefs then felt free to kill all in the boat. The saying that arose from the occasion was, "*Na'e taa'i 'a e vaka Mo'unga'one ko e 'ikai hano 'eiki*." Or "The Mo'unga'one boat was smitten because it had no chief." Like most traditions in "Tongan culture" it elevates the *'eiki*.

[98] The author was present at this celebration.

minister is here flowing with the mood of the hour, saying that they were actually honouring the chiefs at Kaitangi to the extent they *worship* them hence the phrase "Tongilava's Jesus is Kaitangi." In other words according to that FWC minister the Tongilava's deity is Kaitangi. Not the usual heretical phrase likely to be uttered by a minister but everyone listening and laughing understood her meaning: the Tongilava household was and is still proud to serve the chiefly residence of Kaitangi. Not many would ask the Princess to come and dance for them but the Princess and those present were aware of the kinship of the Tongilava household and the royal family, in particular the chiefs of Kaitangi: the minister would not have requested it had she not been confident of this connection. As part of this boasting "nonsense" some of the women from Tongilava fell flat on the ground begging Princess Latufuipeka to come and tread on their backs: she came.

The *faikava tali malanga* or the *kava* ceremony before the service

As alluded to in the second chapter, Mariner during his time in Tonga (1806-1810) recalled that the drinking of *kava* was often if not always the most important part of any religious ceremony either public or private.[99] The main reason is because the *kava* ceremony maintains the status quo and every performance serves only to reaffirm the importance of one's responsibility to be loyal or *mateaki* to the social structure. So is it with the church. The elders of the church see the necessity of holding a welcoming *kava* ceremony for the preacher called the *faikava tali malanga* at least an hour before the service.[100] The significance of this *kava* ceremony is shown by the fact that all students, male and female of, the Sia'atoutai Theological College are taught how to comport themselves during this mirroring of Tongan polity. Far more than a drink, *kava* is a cultural mode of maintaining order, one's identity and the status quo, displayed in the seating and the talking by preacher, chief and senior elders.

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[99] Martin, 331.

[100] Interview with subject number 80. Interestingly, *kava* drinking for whatever reason is forbidden in the Assemblies of God and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. According to them, the body is the temple of God and should not be corrupted by such 'unclean drink'; Interview with subject number 81. Father Line Folaumoeloa said the Roman Catholic Church used to have a *kava* ceremony while awaiting the Mass, but it was discouraged because some abused the occasion by drinking too much and fell asleep during the mass.

Every Sunday in most local churches some of the elders and young men gather around a *kumete* or *kava* bowl at the minister's house or any venue near the church to await the arrival of the preacher, at least an hour before the service begins. Normally the *faikava tali malanga* must be held if the preacher is *malanga ha'u,* a visitor who must be respected.[101] A well prepared and well attended *faikava tali malanga* on the prepared place before the church is an indication that the elders and the men are looking forward to this meeting which, were it held elsewhere, even in the church, would signify inadequate hospitality.[102]

In some churches the men start preparing straight after the *lotu hengihengi* or dawn service, at least two hours before the preacher arrives. It is thus they who prepare for and welcome the visitor, he who fits into their space, [103] Indeed for some it is they who host the first part of the service at this *matapa*, or prescribed entry point, it is the *'uluaki pangai 'o e lotu* or "the first *pangai*[104] of worship" which enables the awaiting elders and men organise impressions for the visiting preacher. In some places the elders and in many places the local chief critically watch the visiting preacher to see whether he knows where to enter and where to sit and how well acquainted he is with the etiquette of the ceremony.[105]

The value placed on the *faikava tali malanga* is shown by the irritation caused when the preacher for whatever reason failed to attend it. There is no written rule that every preacher must attend this *faikava tali malanga* and occasionally the preacher goes directly to church to the annoyance of the waiting elders. Few wise preachers neglect the *faikava tali malanga.* Fakataha Molitika, a retired minister, recalled how he was told off for not going to the *faikava tali malanga*. During his first preaching trial, he went straight to the chapel for a needed final preparation before the service. After the service he then came before the *kau sivi malanga* or the panel of ministers who critically assessed and gave their opinion of how he conducted the service, the main shortcoming being his failure to attend the *faikava tali malanga.* He was told

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[101] At least twice a month a visiting preacher would come to preach.

[102] Interview with subject number 23.

[103] Normally in such an occasion a woman would mix the *kava*.

[104] *pangai* is commonly seen as the area where people are received when coming to see the monarchy.

[105] Interview with subject number 57.

never to be so disrespectful again for the *faikava tali malanga* symbolises the country welcoming the gospel, and that before the gospel arrived there was the land.[106]

Is the land still first? If the *faikava talimalanga* represents the country welcoming the Gospel and every performance a reliving of that first acceptance of the Gospel into Tonga, one would expect women and even children, equally children of God, to be present to join in the welcome, in the first part of (Christian) worship. Their absence suggests they are not part of the land, only the men are. While one or two women are present to make and serve the *kava* drink, and certainly no children, participation in this *kava* ceremony or in any *kava* ceremony is in general recognized as a man's privilege. Most of the ministers interviewed said that the *faikava tali malanga* is not 'an introduction' to the coming worship inside the church but actually is the beginning of the service, and that that is why it is necessary for the preacher to attend it in the prescribed way, and moreover that to have the service without a *faikava tali malanga* means that that the service is not complete. If this is truly the case, if it is truly Christian, then women and children must be part of the *faikava tali malanga* for they are full members in Christ. They need not to drink if they do not want to nor be present for the whole session: but the first *kava* serve, the "*kava* of the Gospel," necessitates their presence. If it is not part of the Gospel welcome, it should perhaps not be before the church: if it is, then all should joyously and without rank (though due regard for age and honour) take part. After the first serving,[107] called the *kava 'o e kosipeli* or "*kava* of the gospel", one of those present will say a prayer asking God to bless and empower the preacher for the service. Even if the preacher cannot take the *kava* mixture[108] for any reason, his or her presence especially during the *kava 'o e kosipeli*[109] in honour of the preacher is much appreciated.

In some places the gathering may ask the preacher to sit at the *'olovaha*[110] but the preacher always reserves it for the *'eiki* of the church.[111] The seating arrangement is

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[106] Interview with subject number 67.

[107] Everyone sitting at the *kava* ceremony would be given a bowl of *kava* mixture to drink.

[108] Someone else in the gathering would willingly drink the *kava* if the preacher chose not to drink the *kava* mixture.

[109] *kava 'o e kosipeli* literally means the "*kava* of the gospel," and is interchangeable with *kava 'o e lotu*.

[110] Seat of highest honour in the *kava* ceremony.

[111] Sometimes to test whether the preacher knew what he ought to do the men would insist that the preacher should sit at the *'olovaha*.

according to rank especially at the top end of the *kava* circle. The conversations in the *faikava tali malanga* are led by the *'eiki* and his two *matapules* and the preacher. The rest do not take part and it would be seen as disrespectful for one sitting at the bottom end to participate in the conversation except to answer questions: it is here that the young men learn the manners required in *kava* ceremony watching and learning twice each Sunday. The fact that the *faikava tali malanga* is an ideal "training school" is more the case with two indigenous churches the *Siasi 'o Tonga Tau'ataina*(FCT) and the *Siasi 'o Tonga Hou'eiki*(CT).[112] where the *faikava tali malanga* is more solemn, indeed, lacking a theological college of their own, attending the *faikava tali malanga* is a 'training school' where the experiences and wisdom of the elders are often shared.[113]

The hierarchy of seating arrangements in the church

An architect who is a member of the FWC said that every architect designing a church building for the FWC is aware that the chiefs are to be seated in the front, separated from the rest of the congregation to the right of the pulpit.[114] The layout is intentionally chosen to blend with the hierarchical framework of society and stresses order, formality and authority. The people know exactly what and what not to do. In the Centenary Church which is the main local FWC church in the country the king and the royal family are raised above the rest of the congregation to the same level as the pulpit. The Royal seating is high enough for everyone to see whether the king is present or not. The rest of the chiefs are seated next to the royalty with a partition between and at a lower level. Some chiefs may have preferred sitting together with the rest of the congregation but they have little choice for the church has already built a special seating for them. Furthermore the chiefs are aware that they make it difficult for everyone if they refuse to go and sit in their allotted place. But for a few exceptions the pulpit is always placed in the centre at the far end of the church building. Preaching and all other talking at the front is done from the left and not

[112] Both indigenous churches were breakaways from the FWC.

[113] Interview with subject number 62.

[114] Interview with subject number 58.

from the more usual right side lest it show disrespect to stand so close in front of the chiefs: the font is also on the left. In the Centenary Church when the king or queen is present those reading bow to the royal dais before and after reading.

An expatriate minister commented on the hierarchical arrangement of the Centenary church. He also recalled an experience where he was preaching at the Centenary Church and the translator refused to translate because of the possible implication of the story he told. This was in the middle of a sermon during a church service and the pressure to perform according to the demand of the culture cannot be underestimated. He chose a story to illustrate the point that everyone is a sinner before God regardless of status, appropriate in his eyes but definitely not in the view of others including his translator, who felt the story, illustrating every person there is the same before God could have been seen as an insult to the king. The implications of his refusal to translate the dangerous words is that that the king is not a sinner like everyone else and even if he was a sinner he was a better sinner, or a better class of sinner, than everyone else. Another implication is that the 'word of the culture' is equal or superior to the 'word of God.' Needless to say that at heart of tradition, at the heart of Tongan knowledge of the world, the king and the land he and the welcoming men before church represent *is* sacred. The minister explained the situation:

> So that becomes an issue for me, even the business of - suppose - the king sitting by himself and the *hou'eiki* near the king and the *hou'eiki* on the other side of *Saione Fo'ou[referring to the Centenary Church]* even though I was there as a *palangi*. That's where we sat, among the *hou'eiki[chiefs]* and the *hou'eiki faifekau[honourable ministers]* so that because the issue for me is just how within the church we treat people when we are all equal before God. There was one sermon I gave once in *Saione Fo'ou* which the translator said he could not translate because I told the story of the Emperor Franz Josef's body being brought to the great cathedral in Vienna and as the cortege approached the cathedral, they knocked on the door and a voice inside said "who is there?" From outside the leader of the cortege said "Emperor Franz Josef Emperor of all Austria and Hungary" and the voice from inside replied, "I do not know him". And the second time much the same thing happened but the third time the response given to the question was "Franz Josef a humble sinner" and the doors of the cathedral immediately swung open. And that to me says that we are all humble servants before God.[115]

[115] Speaking to a tape on May 2006 as interviewed by my wife.

The *Uikelotu* or Week of Worship

The first week of the year is a week of prayer or *Uike lotu*.[116] There are morning and afternoon prayer meetings every day from Monday morning to Friday evening. The prayer meetings are well attended and the church is normally full especially during the afternoon meetings. This is an important week to for the church for here they seek God's protection and blessing for the rest of the year. They ask God to protect the land from natural disasters and for a fruitful harvest.

The *uikelotu* is also called a *uike tota'u* which literally means the 'week of planting' and the picture portrayed is that a 'good *uikelotu*' implies a 'good harvest' in whatever they do. All the schools in the country are still on their main holiday and during the *uikelotu* the government normally allows the civil servants to leave work an hour earlier than their normal closing time to attend the *uikelotu* if they wish.[117] At least half of the country takes part in it; the FWC, the Siasi Tonga Tau'ataina and the Siasi Tonga Hou'eiki are all involved. It is a time of the year when family members living overseas come to Tonga to reunite with other members of their family. It is also a week of feasting in most churches where some families take the opportunity to host a *fakaafe uikelotu* to which they invite the church. The themes for the *uikelotu* are already decided and distributed from the Head Office of the FWC by December of the previous year.

As in most concerns of the church there has been little change in the themes from year to year but in the last seven years the theme for the first service is essentially thanking and praising God for the past year.[118] The theme for the evening service is repentance and the renewing of one's commitment to God. The theme for Tuesday morning in the last seven years specifically asks the church to pray for the King, the Queen and the Royal Family. The theme for the evening service is to pray for the leaders of the government, the Premier, the Parliament and the chiefs of the country. On Wednesday afternoon there is prayer for the FWC and its work in Tonga and overseas. The titles of the President, General Secretary, heads of the various

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[116] *Uikelotu* literally means "week of prayer."

[117] There are three main churches holding a *Uikelotu* during the first week of the new year is the Siasi Uesiliana Tau'ataina, Siasi Tonga Tau'ataina, and the Siasi Tonga Hou'eiki.

[118] Ko e *Tohi Fanongonongo ' a e Siasi Uesiliana Tau'ataina 'o Tonga*, Novema, 1958, page 1; *Ko e Tohi Fanongonongo, Tisema,* 1970, page 2; *Ko e Tohi Fanongonongo,* 1984, page 1-2; *Ko e Tohi Fanongonongo*, Tisema, 1998, page 3; *Ko e Tohi Fanongonongo,* Tisema, 2002, page 12.

Departments and the paid workers in the church are mentioned. The church says, or it is assumed that it is the only the institution that cares for those who are not members, who are utterly absent in this important inward-looking week in which the upper fragment somehow 'represent' the vast majority and on whom eight of ten services of the *Uikelotu* focus. The rest of the congregation comes under the word "us" or "church." But the poor, the orphans and the widows; those who are not yet part of the church family, and those who do not attend church are not mentioned or alluded to at all in these themes of prayer. This neglect highlights the general attitude of the church. They are not forgotten but neglected. So why should these people come to the Week of Prayer or even to church? Why should they bother to come to a place where they are not valued? If they are valued then why are they not mentioned?

This is not to belittle the importance of praying for leaders, who are mentioned in almost every service throughout the year, but rather that the ordinary people get little space, and responsibility for the poor, the orphans and widows, not to speak of the 'potential congregation' of the marginalised, get scant mention. Prayers are hardly made for those who have not heard the gospels.

The FWC Calendar

Faka'apa'apa or respect for the king and the royal family is also shown in the 65cm x 45cm single sheet calendar freely distributed by the FWC church to every family of the church at the beginning of the year. It is not surprising that this is the most popular calendar, pinned on the wall in the house of most families in the church. Printed on it is the lectionary for the whole year and the *kaveinga 'o e mahina* or the theme for each month, and highlights the special Sundays or *ngaahi Sapate Fakamamafa* throughout the year.

The calendar is divided into twelve rectangles, each representing a month of the year. Printed beside each day of the month are the 'important events' in the history of the country that happened on that day. As expected at least eighty percent of these 'important events' are directly connected with the present monarchy and the royal family and the past monarchies and their families. On the top of the calendar is the

caption "*Tohi Mahina 'a e Siasi Uesiliana Tau'ataina 'o Tonga*"[119] sandwiched between the photographs of the four monarchs beginning on the left with King George Tupou I. then followed on the same level by King George Tupou II and Queen Salote Tupou III and the reigning King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. The reigning monarch and the royal family is at the bottom of the calendar.

This has been the layout of the calendar for the past fifty years. Lopeti Taufa recalled that when Rev Alfred Mackay was the President of the FWC from 1946-56, he decided to change the format and instead of the photographs of the three monarchs he substituted a photograph of the President of the Australian Mission- perhaps a tactless choice for a Free church. The people of the church expressed their disapproval of the change and in the following year the usual layout of photographs of the monarchs was restored.[120] Not only has there, that year apart, been no change, it is essentially the same as the Government's calendar, church plant replacing government ones, with the monarchs opening church buildings and schools and gracing the church events with their presence The calendar is filled with birth, wedding, and death dates of the king and the royal family. The criterion for what is to be included in the calendar mirrors the "culture" so the focus will obviously be on the monarch and the royal family. Preserving this layout exemplifies its importance; the leaders of the FWC are aware that it is well received by the people with no questions raised. It seems that while ministers have no hesitation about educating people in sermons about the don'ts of drink, pornography, strikes and the like, teaching about the church year, about the place of the church as the people, all the people of God, seems to be less important a topic. Interestingly no one has found the calendar significant enough to bring it up in the in any of the local church meetings: it reflects, indeed it is, the State, and the state, of Tonga. But where are the remaining ninety-nine percent of the FWC?

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[119] Calendar of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga.

[120] Interview with subject number 50.

The use of chiefly language when speaking of God.

Because the traditional religion was dominated by the chiefs, missionaries had no option but to use chiefly concepts and expressions to convey their Christian ideas. Yet perhaps more than words of power in their own language, English, the use of hierarchical Tongan words in liturgical behaviour, hymns and Scripture all incorporate words and phrases traditionally reserved for the chiefs in this linguistically ranked language. The still current Moulton translation of the Bible, the largest Tongan book, uses explicitly chiefly words in describing God and Jesus.[121] In the FWC, the chiefly elevation and separation from the plebs is perhaps increased by the growing responsive reading of the Psalms at every Sunday morning service.

A minister's choice of words and manners are those normally used in the presence of the King: words normally used in prayers are those used when addressing a chief. *Folofola,* the chiefly term for word, was used for the 'word of God' instead of the common word *lea*. An example is the first sentence in the Johannine gospel where the word used in translating "logos" is *folofola*. Similarly *ta'ata'a*, that is used to describe the chief's blood, was used to describe the blood of Christ instead of the common word *toto.* So whenever Jesus is described as the Son of God the word *'alo* is used: he is the King's son instead of the son of the people, *foha.* As to other descriptions of Jesus, sometimes words used for the chiefs are employed and sometimes they are not. A later translation of the four gospels published in 1990 made it a rule to use chiefly words only for God but not Jesus.[122] Translators still preferred to use the word *'alo* when describing Jesus as the Son of God but when God is speaking of Jesus, then the word *foha* is used. The word *pangai,* the name for the traditional space where people are received for an audience with the king, is also used to acknowledge the presence of God in a particular area. Often one would refer to the church as the *pangai 'o e 'Otua* or "*pangai* of God." The *kava* ceremony in honour of the preacher is called the *pangai 'uluaki 'o e lotu* or the "first *pangai* of worship." As we have gathered, that is a gender-divided worship.

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[122] Personal communication with the author (one of the three translators) on 6/6/2005.

As mentioned in the second chapter a chief would usually prohibit or put a *tapu* on anything, mainly food, to stop inferiors touching it. This usage of the word *tapu* still exists but was adopted to identify what is being dedicated to or separated for God. Sunday is usually referred to as *'Ahotapu* or "the sacred day." The Bible is called *Tohitapu* or the "sacred book," the house of God is called *fale Tapu* or "sacred house" or *potu Tapu* or "sacred space. Sometimes the preacher will include in the prelude the phrase "*tapu pea mo e Faletapu 'o e 'Otua* or "with respect to the sacred house of God." Commoners could not place a '*tapu*' on items. The chief's placed is picked up on in the sense of under the power of, God, *Toka*[123] *'i Ma'ananga,* or "sleeping in *Ma'ananga.*" The residence of a chief, a Lo 'au, was Ma'ananga and he himself was felt to have known almost everything that was happening around the country even when he is inside his house. Now the saying is used to describe God as being omniscient – but it is still used for the chief's residence. Another chiefly link for God is expressed in the comment describing a talented and skilled person as *ala i sia ala i kolonga* or "one who can handle well tasks in *sia* and also tasks in *kolonga*." This saying originates from a pastime of the chiefs called *heulupe* or the "trapping of pigeons."[124] There were two main places, the "*sia"* which is the mound where the pigeons were caught and the *kolonga* where the birds were prepared for the chiefs to eat. The saying commended the chief who could play the game well; he was successful both in catching pigeons at the *sia* and turning them into a tasty meal. The saying *Ala i sia, ala i kolonga* is thus used mainly to describe the omnipotence of God.

In Revelation 7:17 the writer speaks of the Lamb leading his people to springs of living water, which Moulton translated as *Vaiola*" which literally means "healing streams." According to Tongan mythology *Vaiola* was a healing spring in Pulotu "the paradise beyond the sea" and "anyone" who jumped into *Vaiola* would come out of it young person again and healed of any illness. This picture of *Vaiola* was also used by the composer of hymn number 563 where the blood of Jesus is described as the *Vaiola 'o mamani* or "*Vaiola* of the world."[125] But one must not forget that *Pulotu* was reserved only for the chiefs: anyone is not everyone.

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[123] *toka* is the chiefly word for "sleep."

[124] *lupe* is the Tongan name for a pigeon.

[125] Vaiola is the name of the main hospital in Tonga.

The word "covenant" or "testament" as in 'New and Old Testament' is translated by *fuakava,* "the first drink of *kava*." The New Testament is the *Fuakava Fo'ou*[126] and the Old Testament the *Fuakava Motu'a*.[127] According to tradition a high chief or king[128] held a *kava* ceremony with his warriors in the island of 'Atata before launching an attack on one of the forts in Tongatapu. The king offered the honour of drinking the *fuakava* or the first *kava,* reserved for him, to any of his warriors who would make the first kill in the coming battle. One of them took the challenge and drank. The king and his men were the victors and he asked who made the first kill or *ko hai na'a ne ta 'a e 'uluafi*. The man who took the first drink of *kava* proudly replied "how can one forget the *kava* in 'Atata?." From then on this response has become a saying that describes anyone who has lived up to his or her word- but it is linked to a culturally divisive context. This notion of keeping one's word, this "covenant" symbolised by the drinking of the *fuakava* was adopted by Queen Salote. She encouraged the newly-wed couple to have a special *kava* ceremony after the wedding ceremony in church. In this special *kava* ceremony the bride presides at the *'olovaha*[129] and the husband sits at the *to'ua* or the area where the *kava* mixture is being made, waiting to stand up and serve his wife. When the *fuakava* or the first *kava* is called the husband stands up with an empty *kava* cup and walks to the *kumete* to fill it. He then walks to the *'olovaha* to serve his wife. The *fuakava* in this context is a cultural symbol of the covenant that they have made as a newly married couple.

Interestingly as noted by H.G. Cummins some missionaries expressed their concern about the usage of the chiefly language when speaking of God or Jesus Christ in the late 1840s, and when a revision of the New Testament was made most of the chiefly words were replaced with common words. However, when a complete revision of the New Testament was made in 1849, the missionaries were once again forced to use the chiefly words, for the people would not use any other translation. Thomas Adams who was in charge of the revision had to explain to his superiors in London that they had to revert back to the respectful language that the people normally used when addressing their high chiefs for that is the form that the people used daily. It was the

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[126] *Fo'ou* literally means "new."

[127] *Motu'a* literally means "old."

[128] One variant claims that this story is about King George I and his brave warrior Longani.

[129] The most honoured seat in the *kava* ceremony.

only translation they accepted. [130]That may well have been the case in 1849, though we do not know the extent even then to which chiefs spoke on behalf of 'people' then, but times surely change and the words used reflect pre-Christian Tongan socio-religious ideology.

Conclusion

The FWC, inspired, empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit, might be expected to have brought renewal to people and their lived culture, to recreate a "Tongan Christian culture" with social relationships that focus not only on the few with power and wealth, but give equal or more attention to the majority whom that Tongan tradition overlooked and neglected. Currently, however, the church is seen mainly as the 'tower' for those who 'succeed' morally, socially and economically. The impression is that those who do not so succeed are ignored. Thus church attendance holds no attraction for those on the lower echelon of the social ladder, believing that the church is no different from any other cultural gathering, a place for the *'eiki* and the followers of the *'eiki.* Furthermore, by its close association with, even dependence on, the powerful and wealthy, the church is likely to fail to speak prophetically to them, and a church without a prophetic base may not be expressing the Gospel. Prayers are said, Bible passages are read and a sermon is preached but the focus of the gathering for worship, as in every other cultural gathering, still remains on the wealthy and powerful few. In fact within the church the elite of society are given more attention *than in any other context*. This gives the impression that the Gospel brought by the missionaries, some of whom saw this problem, was biased towards those with power and wealth. As presented by the FWC it still is. Therefore the FWC misrepresents the 'body of Christ', a symptom of the church's far from healthy relationship with Christ who is the head of the Church. While proclaiming from the pulpit that everyone is equal in the sight of God the church makes little effort to put this truth into practice.

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[130] H.G. Cummins. "*School and society in Tonga, 1826-1854: A study of Wesleyan mission schools, with special emphasis upon curriculum content and its influence on political and social development.*" (Master of Arts. diss., Australian National University, 1977), 251.

After this narration of the FWC's practice in the last two generations, a list of questions derived from the actual practices within the Church has accumulated. While the next chapter will discuss these in more detail, the core questions are collated now. When will the church be bold and faithful enough to speak against the wish of the king and the chiefs when it is needed? Will it be faithful and truthful enough to tell the king that it does not agree with his choice? Is it the Church of the king or the Church of God? Where is the place of the Holy Spirit in this? Who is the Head of the church? Must the will of the king or anyone else of status and power be consulted before the Holy Spirit? Is it the Holy Spirit we are pleasing or is it man as represented by the King and people of power and status? Are we to wait for those in authority to make the initiative or are we to wait upon the prompting of the Holy Spirit? Lastly, does the church actually make use of the King by putting him (and thereby themselves) in the position of unchallenged leadership. Surely he, the chiefs, the ministers, are just human beings, like everyone else in the church.

Chapter Six. The minister; chief or servant.

Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrates the influence of 'Tongan culture' and the state, as represented by the king and the chiefs, on the FWC. This influence was shown to be sustained by the *faka'apa'apa* or respect given by the people to the king and the chiefs connected to rank and duty especially to superiors. While this attitude is highly praised within Tonga, it is often taken advantage of by those receiving it. Equally important is the fact that *faka'apa'apa* may be distorted by its donors, being not just 'due respect' but a twisting or suppression of issues which should be aired for the good of the church of God. The implication is that while *faka'apa'apa* is sometimes about maintaining a 'good' image, the wish to avoid any taint of social opprobrium may lead it to lack integrity. One expatriate observed how *faka'apa'apa* is exploited at every level of society.

> A major weakness in Tongan culture is an 'unhealthy' respect for those in authority. In a family there is a strict hierarchy of authority. Everyone has a place and knows his/her place in the hierarchy – there is little equality in a Tongan family. In society, there is overdue respect for chief/king: regardless of whether that person is educated and able and competent, their position must be obeyed[1].

This 'unhealthy' and excessive respect to authority is mainly because few Tongans can bear the consequence of being alienated from the overall social structure. As explained in the second chapter, though most of the 'cultural mat' is not written it does not mean that it is less demanding and less real, indeed unspoken and unwritten norms and demands woven into the 'cultural mat' may be far more controlling than any written policy or rule. It follows that one is constantly pressured to conform to these norms and expectations of the 'cultural mat': swimming against the tide of traditions in order to freely express opinions demands convicted courage and commitment to God.

[1] Personal communication with the author on 14/3/2004.

Faka'apa'apa to the minister

Were there a clear sacred-secular split, this excessive respect might not deeply affect the FWC, but given that the state has, as has been shown, appropriated the FWC, its ministers share in this respect pattern regardless of whether the minister is of chiefly origin[2]. 'Integrity' thus becomes a matter for the church, and this chapter will discuss the position of the minister as representative of the FWC in terms of his role as servant or master of the congregation. It thus touches on issues of power, authority, traditions and sets these against the core doctrines of the church, at the core of which, apart from credal expectations, is the equality and salvation of *all* through faith and not works.

A typical comment is against criticizing or even disagreeing with the minister, the *faifekau*,[3] the role of congregant being to accept. The laity should not 'touch' (that is, trouble or intrude into the space of) the anointed of God or *pani 'a e 'Otua:* examples are cited of the sad end of those in the past who were in the habit of criticizing ministers[4]. To a certain degree the minister is regarded as a chief while the President is regarded as a high chief if not higher. This should come as no surprise considering the sacred/secular unity shown in the previous four chapters. The minister has been 'invited' by the organizing elite to enter the top end of the strongly hierarchical structure, but there is a cost.

It is important to realise that *faka'apa'apa* is applied to ministers not merely when they do their job but, as might be expected in a society where rank runs through each action, also in daily life. I remember speeding down the road and was stopped by three policemen on the road for exceeding the speed limit. But once realizing that I was behind the wheel, instead of charging me they apologised and said that they were just stopping me to remind me to slow down as I might have an accident. I drove on unpunished, being above the law. That experience is not unique. Other ministers have also been treated generously by the traffic police but also in other contexts where there is the tendency for the people to be 'biased' towards the

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[2] Approximately five percent of the ordained ministers are women. The first woman to be ordained was Sela Taufatofua Manu in 1992.

[3] The literal translation is "one who does what s/he is told to do."

[4] Personal communication with the author on 6/11/2005.

ministers or at least give them a second chance. As we shall see, some sections of society in Tonga are given no chance at all by the church.

The *faifekau* has privileges that are unique. Firstly, the minister represents one category whom all levels of society regularly hear preaching by a standing[5] minister at least once a month. An example, though exceptional, was the funeral of the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV on the 19th of September 2006 where the President of the FWC in his full priestly robes addressed the entire nation while standing from the Royal Cemetery. Tongan manners would not normally grant that honour for anyone to stand and address the king and the royal family and the chiefs. While the minister stood then and stands when preaching in the Centenary Church, this is balanced by the fact of the king's pew being at the same level with the pulpit at the Centenary church, alluded to in the previous chapter. Rare indeed would it be to find ministers preaching from the pulpit and holding the king and chiefs and ministers of the Cabinet responsible for what they believed was their abuse of authority and contradicting the will of God, even through a general comment which may touch them[6]: pastoral duty to the state seems to outweigh pastoral duty to God.

According to one informant "the *faifekau* when preaching is the only chief of the hour", because of the message he brought[7]. Because of that a retired President of the *Siasi 'o Tonga Tau'ataina*(CT), believed with clear logic that the minister should not do the *fakatapu* or the prelude[8] because it is a human invention or '*ko e me'a pe ia 'a e tangata'*, and not of God. He argued that the minister is God's messenger and no one is above God including king and chiefs when he is preaching. But in doing the *fakatapu,* as one informant explains, the speaker is admitting that he or she is lower than those who are listening or ''*oku ma'ulalo 'i he kau fanongo*'.[9] It is easy for the retired President to say that, considering that the king and the royal family do

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[5] As a sign of respect one would sit down instead of rising at the presence of a chief.

[6]I remember during one of the FWC conferences in the presence of the late king, queen, chiefs, ministers of the government and the Conference the late Sione Kami during his sermon told the late king that he does not favour the usage of the word "royal" in naming the Royal Beer. Kami was referring to the first and only beer manufacturing business in the country at the time,'Royal Beer' with the Crown Prince (now king as a major shareholder).

[7] Interview with subject number 26.

[7] Interview with subject number 60.

not attend his church. Nevertheless, the ministers still do the *fakatapu* and the retired President is always mentioned, though he usually does not head the list. Secondly, during the Holy Communion the celebrating ministers take their communion first before everyone else in the congregation including the monarch and the chiefs. This is against the imperative of (or a nod to alternatives in) the pattern explained in the second chapter where the meal mirrors the social structure and the highest ranking person would always be given priority: the relative rank of the Tu'i Tonga has varied. Thirdly, other than the ministers of the Cabinet it is only the *faifekau* who may be addressed with words that are used normally for the chief.

Keith L. Morton, as quoted by Connan, described the usual *faikava tali malanga* or the *kava* ceremony in honour of the one preaching. This was before the Sunday morning service at the village of Puke three miles from the capital Nuku'alofa. Regardless of social origin once a person becomes an ordained minister he is given the respect more or less given to a chief. Even though this occurred at least thirty five years ago as regard to the respect and status given to the minister there have been few changes.

> The congregation of the Puke church [a small village just outside Nuku'alofa] attempts to have an ordained minister come and deliver a sermon at least once a month. On such occasion the visiting minister receives treatment appropriate to a noble. Kava is prepared for him prior to the church service and a feast contributed to by most of the community is held after the service. His advice and comments on church affairs, politics, technology, and any other subjects are closely attended and almost always accepted as the best available[10].

Ministers treated as chiefs

During the early years of Christianity Tongan cultural patterns as represented by the chiefs welcomed the *faifekau* at the top end of the social echelon; as observed by Morton above in the *kava* ceremony the minister is often treated like a chief. But this treatment of ministers as mentioned in the third chapter was nothing new. One exceptional case was the Conference of the Free Church in 1922 where Watkin the President was treated as though he was the Tu'i Tonga when he was carried ashore in

[10] Connan, 22-23.

his boat and the presentations made to him were far more than that those given to Queen Salote[11].

In regard to the relatively low stipend given by the church[12] the minister is among the lowest paid individuals in the country but he or she is undeniably a member of the elite. Like the chief, the minister is placed on a pedestal by the people, who actually have no option if they wish to stay Christian. Like the chief, the minister and his family are mentioned in almost every prayer that is uttered within the church. His children are given priority when it comes to assisting during the service like reading the scriptures and the hymns. His wife is expected to lead in nearly everything to do with the women in the church. He sits separately from the congregation on the left front of the church while the chief faces him on the right. Though he does not own it, the home of the minister always stands out as one of the largest and most beautiful houses in the village and is still referred to as *loto'a* [13] a name that is normally used when referring to the king's residence[14]. One informant recalled that entering the minister's compound was just like going into the chief's residence where one must wear a *ta'ovala*[15] and sit down when eating or smoking. This practice, which mimics an audience with a chief, still continues in some villages.

The respect attributed to the minister is demonstrated in most *kava* ceremonies where the minister attends the *kava* ceremony before and after the church service at the church compound. The first place to the right of the *'olovaha* is taken by the chiefs' spokesman and next to him is the seat for the minister[16], which is undeniably a seat of high regard as articulated by one informant "this seat is for chiefs". Sione Kaufusi, a teacher of Tongan Studies, claims that this tradition of honouring the

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[11] Wood-Ellem, 105.

[12] The minister's pay is called a *me'a'ofa* or "gift."

[13] *loto'a* literally means "within the fence"

[14] The minister's home was usually one of the few or the only one in village or island to be fenced, which indicates the extra respect given to his place.

[15] Ping-Ann Addo. "God's Kingdom in Auckland: Tongan Christian Dress and the Expression of Duty." In *Clothing the Pacific*. Chloe Colchester. (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 146. *Ta'ovala* or waist mats are worn as a sign of respect. Tradition says that the *ta'ovala* began with a group of fishermen who were lost in the sea for weeks because of a storm. As a result their *tapa* wrappings were ragged and torn out. They drifted to shore with hardly anything to wear and decided to use the sails or *la* of their boat before disembarking to meet their chief.

[16] The seat is called the *vaha'itaha*.

minister with this seat of honour began with Taufa'ahau honouring Pita Vi who was his mentor during his early days as a convert to Christianity[17].

The high regard reserved for the minister is also seen by the way in which the minister is normally addressed. The word ''*eiki*' or chief is often attached when addressing like ''*eiki faifekau*' which can be translated 'honourable minister'. Sometimes the words *taula'eiki* or priest and *tangata'eiki* or gentlemen are used, the word *'eiki* still denoting the high regard attributed to the minister. As shown in the second chapter, religion was the sphere mainly of the chiefs, and the chiefs or their blood relations were the priests of the gods but more importantly were nevertheless usually subordinate to the chiefs. Not many ministers are chiefs, but the respect, the language, the obeisance accorded them elevates them to this rank and this, I assert, continues in the FWC.

Like the chief, the presence of the minister in most gatherings is usually acknowledged, the support and presence of the *faifekau* giving credibility and status to any occasion, and is often included in the *fakatapu* at the start of most gatherings. In every feast in the village the *faifekau* would be at the top table and is often the guest of honour. Speeches would be carried out in every feast: the minister usually makes the closing speech. Most public functions are opened and closed with a prayer spoken by the minister. Even at informal gatherings where the minister is present his opinion on any subject is favourably appreciated. This is exemplified in the *fakataha faka-famili* or family gatherings or reunions where the minister, though maybe only a junior member amongst the *kainga* or relations, always has a special place of honour and attention. He is '*ko e tokotaha faka'apa'apa'i mo 'ofeina taha ia 'i he nofo*' or '… the most respected and loved person in the community'[18]. The minister is not always either respected or loved but, given the respect code, dissention or dislike is firmly suppressed, which means that where there might be sound reasons for dissention, it will remain unresolved.

The minister, the leading coordinator and organizing facilitator, is often perceived as the most influential individual not only in the church but in the whole community, he

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[17] Interview with subject number 18. The last Tu'i Tonga Fatafehi Laufilitonga gave the *'olovaha* or the seat of top honour which is supposed to be his to the Catholic priest. This is still the practice at Lapaha.

[18] Interview with subject number 12.

is an *'eiki*. This is used by other officials, just as the minister uses the chief. An *'ofisa kolo* or town officer told the informant minister that because the people would attend to the words of the minister more than anyone he often sought the backing of the minister in any village project. According to him "his presence makes the difference between success and failure of the project" and he is "the most influential person" in the community[19]. "*Kuo pau ke ne ta sipinga ke muimui ki ai 'a e kakai",* or "He must set the standard for the rest to follow" as a minister explained, a man who contributed a big pig or *puaka toho* to the village's collection for the death of the late Honourable Ma'atu in order to set the standard". He also took part in feeding the village's rugby team during the rugby season and was convinced any ministerless village would be impoverished[20]: elevation, even with 'freely given' patronage, also brings risks.

This elite treatment that the minister receives often becomes an obstacle to the fostering of a servant attitude. One informant explained that a friend of his who is an Australian minister was serving food with the cooks from the kitchen during an Easter camp in Australia. The *faifekau* came and told him to stop serving and join him at the top table with other Tongan ministers for the whole camp was waiting for him to be seated before the grace is said. Seeing his puzzled look his fellow cooks informed him that this was "the Tongan way": people serve the minister at the top table, he does not stay in the kitchen serving the people[21]. Whatever the chores are, whether it is farming, washing, cleaning or cooking, the common response is for anyone but the minister to do it[22].

It is no wonder that one minister sarcastically described ministers as *fu'u mamafa* or "too heavy", like a chief, being neither light enough to do the task of a servant nor approachable. Another informant admitted that it is difficult to find a minister with a servant heart especially those who well educated[23]. Knowledge (as anywhere) puffs

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Interview with subject number 39.

[21] Personal communication with the author on 27/3/2006.

[22] When my daughter Mele was a baby I would carry her in my arms when we went to church and sometimes I would do the washing but others condemned my wife for not carrying the baby and doing the washing. That it is the mother's task was one point; the more important was I should not do that being a minister.

[23] Personal communication with the author on 5/10/2005.

a person and the minister can easily be carried away by his almost ascribed status and how much he knows: but the people (again not unusually) are moved only by how much he cares. One retired President explained that he is not in favour of using the word *'eiki* in connection with the minister; he should serve them, not be served and over-honoured. According to him "the notion of servanthood has become secondary but it should be primary"[24]. Obviously this is easier to admit once retired. Yet had he made his concern known when he was the President it would have changed neither excessive regard for ministers nor ministers' disobedience to the Gospel demand of service on the part of church leaders.

This clash between Gospel and Tonga, between Church and State is exemplified by the events surrounding a state funeral in February 2004. During the funeral of the late Honourable Ma'atu, the younger brother of the current king, various churches took turns to conduct a prayer or *failotu* at the mortuary at Vaiola Hospital where the body was laid. As a sign of respect to the king everyone else sat down at ground level *including the ministers*. When it was the turn of the Catholic Church the priest in his full priestly robes stood up, as he normally does during the mass[25]. But even though Catholic practice is familiar to most people in the country not every Catholic approves of such behaviour to the king (or to chiefs) in general or at that time. A Catholic informant, responding to the question of the aptness of the priest's conduct, was clear: the priest should sit down like everyone else because this was not a church building and moreover *he is a Tongan*[26]. The king does not complain about Catholic priests, or any other minister for that matter, standing before him but the assumption is firstly that the king is paramount and secondly there should not be an open discussion about the issue. The FWC especially colludes in the maintenance of the state above the church.

Anglican informants also expressed the same tension over visiting the palace to conduct a prayer or *failotu.* The minister wearing his priestly robes expressed his embarrassment when sitting on a chair within the Palace grounds[27]. No self-

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[24] Interview with subject number 50.

[25] I can only assume that the priest was confident to do so because he was wearing his full priestly robes and he was on duty: he was representing the Word of God, not the state.

[26] Interview with subject number 56.

[27] Except when on duty it is perceived as disrespectful when one stands within the Palace grounds. No one is allowed to wear sun glasses nor open up an umbrella.

respecting Tongan would sit on a chair within the Palace ground but the late Queen Salote provided a chair every time the late Bishop Halapua visited the Palace and since then it became the practice when the Anglican priest visits[28]. But the tension between Tongan and Christian identity is still there.

Recipient of Gifts

As explained in the second chapter an indication of chiefly status is that people pay tribute and bring gifts to him or her. In every introduction to a chief one has to go with a gift and the value depends on the status of the chief. In the same way, the people feel they must bring a present.

Bringing of *koloa faka-Tonga* or Tongan valuables

In the event of a wedding, celebration of a birthday, or graduation, or a funeral, the minister, like the chief, is always given a gift as a token of appreciation for taking part or even just for attending, his gift being *koloa 'a e faifekau*" or 'Tongan valuables belonging to the minister' Couples may have to delay christening their child just because they have not yet have anything they think sufficiently worthy to give the minister. Usually a piece of *tapa* cloth or a fine mat is given to the officiating minister, though some give far more. If the *tapa* is not good enough, the minister's wife will be annoyed –which suggests she is thinking more of gifts as status markers for ranks of chieftainship, not for a man of God. Now money for a prayer may be given instead of valuables if the purpose reflects modern secular life; a young man in his early twenties, a member of the FCT[29] came with an envelope with some cash inside and asked me to pray for him and his studies.

Bringing of food

A lady minister explained that it was common that whenever they had special food in their home her grandfather would, with no discussion, take it to the Palace[30] and similarly good food is sent to the minister. The norm is whenever a family received anything good and special they would set it apart for the minister or '*tuku ia ma'ae*

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[28] Personal communication with the author on 29/11/2006.

[29] This was not in Tonga and there was no minister from his church for him to go to.

[30] Personal communication with the author on 12/11/2004.

faifekau'[31]. A family at the village where I was the minister in the College would always send pineapples every time they received a case of pineapples from the island of Vava'u. Thirty five years ago I was told by my mother to take a big cooked lobster to the FWC President's place, the practice since the arrival of the early missionaries and still routine in some families. One minister explained that one member came with food every Saturday in preparation for Sunday[32]. It is not only members of the FWC who do this: one minister explained that a Catholic fisherman when returning from fishing would always drop by to give his family a share of his catch[33]. A father and his daughter of seven came with cooked food to my house on a Sunday morning when I was the one preaching at the College in March 2004: his father began the practice of feeding the preacher, and he intends his own children continue it.

The word *kaihau*[34] is used to describe an abundance, especially of food, in the minister's home, the givers sharing in the good fortune resulting from providing for the ruler, the *hau*: they also share in eating. In this context God is the ruler and the minister and his family and others are all partakers of the gifts and food that the people brought in their devotion to God. In the same tone one would say, "*ko e hau ia 'o e lotu,*" again using *hau* rather than *faifekau.* The implication is that because the minister is doing the work of God he or she is benefiting from the services and presents rendered by the people in their worship of God the sovereign '*Hau*'. The potential for the representative to take on aspects of that which is represented are not peculiar to Tonga, but when added to the accession to chiefly rank of the ministers the mix may be unfortunate for the gospel.

It is common that whenever the minister preached there would be a *fakaafe*[35] or church feast where he is invited to a home for a meal and in addition would be given a basket(s) of cooked food to take to the manse and a piece of *tapa cloth* or a fine mat. Again, the minister as chief shares in the gifts of the ruler as of right. To minister (priest) and to rule (chief) become one, the local representatives of the gods.

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[31] Could be translated "keep it for the minister."

[32] Interview with subject number 40.

[33] Interview with subject number 2.

[34] The word "*kaihau*" is a combination of two words "*kai*" and "*hau*" : "eat" and "champion"

[35] *Fakaafe* is a church feast where the one preaching or leading is normally the chief guest.

An informant minister explained that in one island a family was committed to host a *fakaafe* for him in every Holy Communion of which there are at least twelve Holy Communion through out the year. In another island the minister and his family would wake up every Sunday morning to find their kitchen filled with plenty of food for their *'umu* or earth oven. It took a while before they found out that one family in particular who prefer to remain anonymous was responsible[36]. One informant explained that every Saturday afternoon his father would check whether he and his brothers had already taken the food and firewood[37] to the minister's place in preparation for his *'umu* or earth oven on Sunday[38]. Yet another explained how he and his brothers and sisters would take turn in taking the minister's food: every child looked forward to his or her turn for the minister would always say a prayer of blessing for them[39].

Some informants were convinced that the respect given to the minister by the people surpassed that given to the chief because the minister is more trustworthy. Because of this high regard attributed to the minister one minister explained that he is always careful to stop anything that might cause envy in the chief towards him because of the reverence he received from the people. He mitigated the effect, or showed his subordination, by giving the best of what he had received to the chief[40].

Bringing of first-fruits

Like the chief, the minister received first-fruit of yams, the *polopolo,* from individuals and the first-fruit of other land produce. One informant minister related that every year he is second to the chief in the list of those receiving a share of the *polopolo* harvested from the village's yam plantation or *toutu'u faka-kolo*. This sending of the *polopolo* to the chief *and* the minister is most likely an adaptation of the *'inasi* ceremony explained in the second chapter where the entire country brought

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[36] Interview with subject number 9.

[37] The word *tokonaki* or "to prepare or provide" is commonly used to refer to the preparation on Saturday afternoon of uncooked food, fire wood and the earth oven, ready for the cooking on Sunday. Because of this the seventh day of the week "Saturday" is called "Tokonaki."

[38] Personal communication with author on 6/3/2006. Sunday is the day where most homes have their best food during the week. It is the day of exchanging food with your neighbours which necessitates extra preparation than the normal.

[39] Personal communication with the author on 12/3/2006.

[40] Interview with subject number 23.

their *polopolo* to the Tu'i Tonga, the mortal representative of the god Hikule'o. One informant related that it was the rule in their home not to eat any fruit tree until the first fruit or the *fuatapu*[41] was taken to the chief and the minister. This again is most probably a continuation of the traditional practice where the first-fruits of fish or any other food had to be given to the chief or the Tu'i Tonga before it could eaten by the producer; eating first being *tapu*. As explained in the second chapter prior to the arrival of Christianity it was only what was reserved for the chief that was forbidden or *tapu* but one informant explained that the property and plantations of the minister was also *tapu* and there are stories that passed on of families that were thought to be cursed because they had broken the *tapu*[42]. Here is a clear indication both of the continuation of the traditional religion and the accession of the minister to the elite.

Giving domestic help or service

It is not only gifts that the chief receives: people also do whatever work is needed in the chief's residence. Vason who was in Tonga in 1797-1801 wrote that it was the custom for the inferior chiefs to send men two three times a week to work 'dig, plant and labour' for the secular ruler at the time the Tu'i Kanokupolu[43]. This is the *fatongia* or one's duty to do work for the chief. Likewise, a family on their own initiative would send a son or daughter to stay in the minister's home to help doing various domestic chores, the child sometimes accompanying them to the next parish. In one case an entire family served the minister as one informant described when his father was chosen as the *setuata faka-kolo* or local church steward in their island. In order to be close to the minister's house his father decided that they should move to a house next door to the minister's house and live there as long as he was steward, doing all the farming, cooking, washing and the domestic chores in the minister's home and checking every Saturday afternoon that there was enough food in the kitchen for Sunday and the rest of the week[44].

It would be wrong to think that ministers required the people to treat them as such, though naïve to think they could not discourage such help. Some ministers explained

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[41] One literal translation could be "sacred fruit."

[42] Interview with subject number 63.

[43] Vason, 79.

[44] Personal communication with the author on 14/3/2006.

that they sometimes discouraged the people from bringing a gift when visiting for counsel. Those people who sought the *mana*, the benefit to the giver passing over from the beneficiary, were naturally offended that the minister tried to restrict their access to *tapuaki* or blessing from God resulting from such good acts as looking after the minister. While in indigenous religion terms this wish for *mana* makes perfect sense, in Christian terms it does rather go against salvation by faith alone, a core Methodist view. There is no church policy on gifting, but this 'giving custom' could become a hindrance if visits can only be made after gifts have been procured. Equally important is the challenge for the minister to respond with impartiality to all, even those who come with little or nothing. Ignoring the issue is yet again continuing to support the status quo, and that does not represent Methodist ideals.

Generosity towards ministers outside of Tonga

The generosity and respect extended to the minister is clearly expressed by Tongans outside Tonga to Tongan ministers, especially in Australia, New Zealand and the United States where most expatriate Tongans live. The main reason is that the Tongans there are financially more capable. The popular impression is that a minister serving in Tongan churches overseas would not only benefit financially but his or her children would have a better education: some actively seek such jobs. This is a further challenge to the ideal of service to the congregation by the minister. It is becoming a problem for the church that some of its ministers serving overseas prefer to keep on extending their stay and a few have refused to return. One conclusion to be drawn is that they intentionally prolong their stay because of the various advantages they received. It is common for a minister when on holiday to go to these Tongan churches, especially the United States, knowing of the financial benefit they will receive. A minister who was stationed in one of these overseas Tongan churches expressed his surprise at the many ministers who were interested in visiting him. He said, "Before this stationing I was just a junior minister whom no one was interested in. But now it is different there is increasing interest of ministers in me. I know that they want me to liaise and arrange when they come over from Tonga to get some money"[45]. This hosting minister would be responsible for arranging a special *faikava* gathering called the *palupalu* where the attendees would not only come to drink but

[45] Perssonal communication with a FWC minister now working outside of Tonga on 7/11/2005.

more importantly to collect money for the visiting minister from Tonga. Some are not even FWC members: they are present *because they are Tongans* and they are willing to help (and receive *mana* from) the visiting minister from Tonga. The minister is thus a symbol of collective identity, the link with the home land. The Tongan church is the ideal location for any fund raising activity, being the main meeting venue for the Tongans in that particular area. This *palupalu* would include other locations in the United States where Tongans are depending on the minister's itinerary.

This form of collecting money is done for most if not all Tongans visiting the area. But one cannot deny that there is special effort when it comes to the *palupalu* for the minister, Tongans not seeing him until they have something to give. Most of the building projects in the FWC, especially in its schools, would not be carried out without the financial assistance of the Tongans overseas. Sometimes a minister would get up to ten thousand United States dollars when returning home to Tonga. Every time that I have been to the United States Tongans would always express this respect and generosity towards me as a minister. This 'generosity' had enabled some ministers to build new homes and buy new vehicles when returning to Tonga. Some ministers have abused this privilege. One informant expressed his discontent that a minister who is his cousin boasted to him of the amount of money that he had received from the various places that he had *palupalu* in the United States. "I was expecting him to talk about the spiritual state of the people but all that he was interested in was the amount of money he collected from each congregation"[46]. Another informant noted that before ministers had no house of their own and stayed only at the house provided by the church, whereas now they own one or two houses and they "drive around in four wheel drive pajeros"[47]. One retired President in his talk to the ministers at the annual training programme for ministers on probation expressed his concern of the increasing tendency of ministers to go the United States primarily to get money. He advised, "Please, you are called to look after the flock not to leave them"[48].

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[46] Interview with subject number 38.

[47] Interview with subject number 60.

[48] The author was present at this meeting on March 2004 at Moulton Hall the FWC main office.

Aspiring to be a minister

Every year the minister's conference[49] would choose usually ten to twenty out of at least a hundred candidates[50] applying from each District or *Vahefonua* to become a minister on probation or *faifekau- akoako*. With such value placed on the role of minister it is no wonder that it is a common aspiration for parents that at least one of their children would become a minister. After preaching one Sunday morning I was introduced by a couple to their fourteen year old and only son 'Sione'[51] and asked to pray that he becomes a *faifekau.* Even though at the most only five percent of the year's intake at the Sia'atoutai Theological College end up working full time for the church, parents still bring their children to be trained. It is still the practice of some families to set apart their eldest son to work for the church otherwise known as the *'inasi 'o e siasi'*[52] which could be translated 'the child for the church', with the hope that he would eventually become a minister.

It is not only the younger generation who aspire to be a *faifekau.* Often there are those who are chosen as ministers even though it is apparent to all that because of their age they would retire in two or three years' time. The usual explanation for such a choice is that they have been 'rewarded' or '*fakapale'i*' for their long years of faithful service in the church. Every year there are those applying to be a minister even though they have had no formal theological training: the chance that service to the congregation lies behind such an aspiration is perhaps not high.

To have ministers in the family line is a heritage that every family takes pride in and adds to the status of the family. This is exemplified by three informant ministers expressing their joy and pride that they were either the third or fourth generations of ministers in their family line either of their mother or their father[53]. It is the normal

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[49] Or the *"Konifelenisi 'a e kau Faifekau"*

[50] This hundred are the names out of the near two hundred that applied every year.

[51] "Sione" was named after a former minister and from an early age he is already aware of the wish of parents. Some people called it *'inasi mate* which means that the child once leaving home will serve the church to the end of his or her life.

[52] It literally means "the church's share."

[53] Interview with subject number 14.

expectation that if the father is a minister then at least one of his children should become a minister: four of the informant ministers were part of sets of brothers all of whom are ministers of the FWC.

Such an inheritance of ministerial calling and capacity over three or four generations may be based on merit but the choosing of probationers is sometimes marred by rumours of favouritism[54], ministers choosing candidates who are either children or relations of ministers. A retired minister related that he was chosen because he had the same surname as a renowned minister at the time but they were not actually related at all. Before the actual date of nomination it is common for ordained ministers, especially senior ministers, to inform fellow ministers of their choice of candidates with the intention of influencing others' choice. Some of these 'campaigns' proved successful at times.

As regards choosing a bride or groom it is also common for a son or daughter of a minister to be favoured. The common explanation for such a choice is that he or she '*ko e hako 'o e faifekau*' or 'is child or grandchild of a minister', a lineage of ministers providing a good and trustworthy family background. The apostle Paul commended one who aspires to be a minister and no doubt many are convinced of their call by God to be a minister: but if ministry is being effectively inherited, the Pauline injunction looses relevance, true virtue being achieved not inborn. However, one cannot deny that some take advantage of this as a way of gaining status: one woman was convinced that some wives encouraged their husbands to be ministers mainly because of the high status associated with being a minister[55]. In other words, the family gain a near 'chiefly status' through the elevation of a member of the family to the ministry, or a man or woman gain from marrying into such a family.

Ministers at other churches

It must be stated that this *faka'apa'apa* to the minister is not peculiar to the FWC only. It is part and parcel of the 'culture' to give respect to the minister. Other churches appear to have given even more *faka'apa'apa* to their ministers.

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[54] Or *"faka-famili"* which could be translated "within the family."

[55] Interview with subject number 75.

A minister from the *Siasi 'o Tonga* is convinced that ministers are given more respect in the *Siasi Tonga Tau'ataina*(FCT) and the *Siasi 'o Tonga*(CT) than in the FWC[56]. In comparison to the FWC both indigenous churches are very conservative in liturgy, doctrine, dress and are committed to retain the practices that started with the early missionaries. During the first fifty years there was little or no theological training for its ministers. Doctrinally they are the same as the FWC but the basic difference is that the FCT and CT have cut off any foreign connection. Both churches are proud of preserving an 'original culture' that never ceases not to change. A minister of the CT recalled a retired President of the church reminding fellow ministers, "…*ko e Siasi 'o Tonga ko e misiume ia 'o e ngaahi me'a na'e tu'uta mai mo e kau misinale"* or "…the Church of Tonga is the museum that keeps what the early missionaries landed with"[57]. The Church of Tonga as represented by this retired president takes pride in preserving whatever the early missionaries started the church with. In comparison to the FWC the FCT and the CT are more resistant to change. An example is the trousers and the black coats that were worn by the missionaries are still worn by the ministers and lay preachers today. The women still wear hats as the missionaries wives must have worn when attending church. As referred to in the first chapter this was because King George encouraged the people to dress in the European fashion especially the ministers to dress in black[58].

With such emphasis on the past it is understandable why these two churches give extra respect to the minister. A senior minister of the CT explained that when his father was serving in the Ha'apai group during the early seventies, whenever the President visited the Ha'apai group "it was just like welcoming the King", or "*Hange pe ha tali 'o e Tu'i*". This attitude towards their President has not changed much since then. According to him, the President listens to the debate in the conference and then announces his opinion, conference usually following his lead, even when the outcome is contrary to the Constitution of the church and the ministers know that[59].

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[56] Interview with subject number 29.

[57] Interview with subject number 62.

[58] Raeburn Lange. *Island Ministers: Indigenous Leadership in Nineteenth Century Pacific Islands Christianity*. (Christchurch, Canberra: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, Pandanus Books Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 2005), 108.

[59] Interview with subject number 66.

An informant minister told that it is common in the conference that the senior ministers or the *kau matu'a*[60], especially the President, rebuke and order anyone who does not agree with their view to refrain from talking and quickly sit down[61]. Sami Veikoso, a retired President of the CT, related that when he was a junior minister the President was very angry at his participating in the debate. He was rebuked together with the other junior ministers, it being made clear that they were present only to listen in silence and learn from the *kau matu'a* or elder ministers and nothing else[62]. The common understanding is that the junior ministers' turn to speak in the meeting will come when the *kau matu'a* passes away and only then. The same degree of *faka'apa'apa* to the minister is found in the FCT, especially to the President, indeed that church is sometimes referred to as the *Siasi Tonga Palesiteni* or the 'President's Church of Tonga'. To a certain extent, especially in the first seventy years, the name reflected that, whatever the President wanted, the church would normally agree to: the church belongs to the President. Not only is the FTC owned by its President, but since the early 1930s all Presidents have come from one family, the Fonuas. To call it a fiefdom is perhaps the best comparison, for the direction and running of that church involves just one family. In an unpublished article, '*A Tongan Schism: Authority in the Free Church of Tonga*', Karen Lofstrom wrote of the President of the FCT during the early eighties, as quoted by Connan

> …the president is treated as a great chief. Members welcome him with lavish presents, and honor(sic) him with chiefly language. When he holds a kava ceremony, it is an 'ilokava, of the kind held by chiefs.… Because the president is sacred, he is irreproachable. … Any criticism must be punished.[63]

Certainly the respect given to the President is more than the respect and obedience given to a high chief. His people honour him with lavish presents and serve and address him as a high chief. One informant from the FCT explained that he had no problem with treating ministers as *hou'eiki* or chiefs. He went on further to say that he would prefer that only ministers should be mentioned in the *fakatapu* in church

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[60] In this context *matu'a* refers to the elderly ministers.

[61] Interview with subject number 66.

[62] Interview with subject number 31.

[63] Connan, 53.

and no one else[64]. They do not support the state above the church or use one for the other which the FWC does[65]. It is apparent, especially from these two indigenous churches, that respect and fear prevent change lest it be seen to oppose the views of the elder ministers. This is evident when one informant, explaining why the church is relatively resistant to change, said, "*ko e tali pe ke hiki atu 'a e kau matu'a*" or "we are just waiting for the elders to pass away" before we can make any change[66].

As regard to the Roman Catholic Church almost everyone in the country, regardless of denomination, would address the priests and sisters with the words and gestures one would normally use when addressing a chief.

Ministers with the chief

A retired minister gave a word of advice about what I should first do as a minister when going to a village, "*ko ho fatongia 'e faingata'a 'o ka ke kauhala kehekehe pea mo e 'eiki*" or "your task would be difficult if you disagree with the chief"[67]. One indeed rarely finds the minister and the chief in disagreement. The chief is kept informed of what is happening. In the *misinale* or annual collection it is always the chief or a member of his family who is the *sea* or the chairperson. In cases where there is a big financial demand on the people like building a new church building the minister would ask the chief to speak on his behalf. Some of the informant ministers have admitted that working in a village where there is a chief is much easier than in a village where there is no chief[68]. He concluded that, "a church in a village that has no chief is usually a church that fights". The mere presence of the chief gives order to the church and often the people would fall in line with the wish of the chief, who is used by the minister for his own purposes.

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[64] As a practice in the Siasi 'o Tonga Tau'ataina(FCT) there is no *fakatapu* during the service. We can only assume that there was a *fakatapu* when King George was the ruler of the church but when he died the remaining high chief 'Ulukalala Misini broke away with followers to form the Siasi 'o Tonga: Watkin being the President and ruler must have started this tradition of not doing the *fakatapu*

[66] Interview with subject number 28.

[67] Interview with subject number 10.

[68] Interview with subject number 4..

Realizing it is crucial to maintain a good relationship with the chief a minister would always make it a priority to meet the chief of the place once he arrives at his new local church. This is the ''*ulungaanga 'o e fonua*', or the 'the way of the country' as stressed by some. In some cases the chief being aware of the new minister's pending arrival would be waiting with the elders at a *kava* ceremony specifically to welcome the new minister. So it is not only the minister who wants to relate to the chief but the chief also wants to relate to the minister. The importance of this relationship of the church with the chief is evident in the stationing of ministers. One criteria for stationing a minister to a particular village is that he and his wife know how to relate to the chief of the village: experience and age accustoms the minister to *serve* the *hou'eiki*. A retired minister Fakataha Molitika and his wife Lavinia is one such couple. They have been serving in three churches: one was where the king and queen attended in Fua'amotu, the second was where Princess Pilolevu attended in Fasi, and the third was where Prince Lavaka now the Crown Prince attended in Kolovai[69]. Such skill and attitude is highly commended and one would describe the minister and his wife as ''*oku na poto 'i he tauhi hou'eiki*', which could be translated 'they know how to serve the chiefs'. Furthermore, only senior ministers are allocated to preach in these local churches when it is a Special Sunday[70] that is emphasized by the church. The value of this relationship of the church with the chief is also shown in the scheduled weekly pastoral visits by a group from the local church led by the minister to the chief's residence to pray.

Some chiefs showed how they respect or want to identify with the minister by installing the FWC minister as one of their spokesmen or *matapules.* Both expressions *anga fakahouhou'eiki* or behaving like a chief and *anga faka-matapule* or behaving like a spokesman are used interchangeably to describe a well-behaved person. This means that while the minister is serving in that particular village he or she is known wherever he or she goes by that *hingoa matapule*[71] given by the chief. The chief Fakafanua of the town of Ma'ufanga gave the name Kula-he-lotu[72] to the minister. The late Queen Salote gave the name Havelulahi to the minister in the

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[69] Interview with subject number 67.

[70] Or *Sapate Fakamamafa*.

[71] It literally means "name of a spokesperson." In any cultural gathering especially in a *kava* ceremony one is always called to drink by the *hingoa matapule.*

[72] *lotu* could be translated "pray." *falelotu* is the house of prayer or the church building.

village of Kanokupolu. Fohe the chief of the village of Puke that Morton referred to earlier gave the name Likivai to the minister. ‘Akau‘ola the chief of the island of Taunga gave the minister the name Moala Tohitapu. One male informant complained that some ministers took advantage of this friendship with the chief to ask for an *‘api kolo* or town allotment in the chief’s estate or *tofi‘a*. According to him this is unfair on those who have been living in the village for many years, thus contributing to the welfare of the village, but have yet to be given an allotment by the chief[73].

Ministers are still among the best cultural orators and composers in the country. They could also be the most well informed persons on Tongan elite traditions and customs. Yet there will be a considerable number of Tongan traditions and practices which the minister does not attend and may know relatively little about, such as digging up a body if the living relatives are ill and the doctor is ineffective, or rituals concerning fishing. The very nature of their work of working closely with the people and being able to move to a new village on every third or fourth year provide them with experience and knowledge of the people and traditions in various places throughout the country, yet the opposition of the church to certain local customs means they may not be told when the events occur.

The main function of every cultural orator and cultural composer is to exalt or *fakahikihiki’i* the chief. This is evident in the speeches of the *matapule* or orator and in the lyrics produced by the *punake* or composer of songs and dances on every traditional occasion. It follows that the minister’s proficiency in elite ‘Tongan culture’ only serves to enhance his relationship with the chief. Va‘inga Veikoso a minister explained that while he was a minister in Sawana in the Lau Group, Fiji, the late Prince Tu‘ipelehake visited the Lau Group. He disembarked but the Prince’s *matapule* knew very little Fijian or English and was going to conduct the traditional introduction of the Prince in Tongan. Veikoso rescued the situation by asking the Prince to allow him to do the task of the *matapule* to introduce the Prince and his party in Fijian to the ‘Tu‘i Lau’ or ‘King of Lau’ and his people. The Prince was impressed with Veikoso’s commendable effort and installed him as one of his *matapule* with the name *Laione ‘o e ‘Otu Lau* or the ‘Lion of the Lau Group’. Heneli Vete is one minister who composed traditional songs or *hiva kakala* to be

[73] Personal communication with the author on 2/9/2005.

sung by young men in the villages to which he was stationed. While he was serving in the island of Niua Toputapu he was asked by the chiefs to compose a *lakalaka*[74] to await the arrival of the king to the island. His wife Mele taught the dancing movements and he called the composition 'Reconciliation 88' to coincide with theme of the Conference that year[75].

Although this relationship of the minister to the chief is important, and to be a spokesman of a chief is an honour, it must not be forgotten that a *matapule* is always subordinate to the chief who installed him with the name. Being a *matapule* can severely compromise the witness of the minister to the Gospel; he ceases to have a prophetic voice if he is the chief's ventriloquist.

Ministers as masters

With all the great attention and regard Tongan culture gives to the minister there is often the tendency for the minister to act as one to be served rather than one who should serve. This occurs even though it is *explicitly* laid down in the Constitution and Rules of the church in the 'Twelve Rules of a Helper' that those who proclaim the Gospel should not be *fie'eiki* or desire to be treated as chiefs because they are servants of all[76]. The common understanding of *fie'eiki* is one who is arrogant. Much authority and respect have been given to the minister and much of what is being done in the local church is not written: it is up to the minister to decide. As one informant articulates it "*ko e fu'u mafai lahi 'oku 'oange ki he faifekau*." or "the minister is given so much authority"[77]. It is normal for the minister to be domineering and the congregation is expected to do what they are told. Some claim that the FWC will 'rise and fall with the minister'. This is because whatever the direction and lead that the minister initiates the people usually follow. It is common in an informal gathering for one to leave all the decisions to the minister by saying,

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[74] An action dance performed by men and women while standing. The total number of performers would be at least a hundred.

[75] Rev Heneli Vete interview with the author at the minister's home at the manse at Halaleva on the 20th February 2004.

[76] *Ko e Konisitutone mo e Ngaahi Lao 'a e Siasi Uesiliana Tau'ataina 'o Tonga*. Ko e Paaki ko Hono Nima. (Nuku'alofa: Siasi Uesiliana Tau'ataina 'o Tonga, 2005), 34.

[77] Interview with subject number 21.

"*ko e ha pe ha lau 'a e faifekau*" which could be translated "whatever the minister says we will agree". Yet one informant complained of the minister's arrogance as if "he knows everything", or "'*oku poto ia he me'a kotoape*"[78]. There is an increasingly common impression that the minister does not have the humility to listen to others nor to seek their opinion. Such an attitude hinders the development of good leadership qualities amongst members of the church. As one informant observed, "ministers' leadership qualities are poor…I have seen churches where the minister is very controlling and cannot build its people as leaders"[79]. With the minister making most of the decisions and often failing to listen to the views and feelings of others there is little encouragement for members of the church to mature spiritually and socially.

Given this automatic respect bordering on adulation, a minister can lead the people to do what is questionable. A minister claimed that while the doctor cannot cure his diabetes the local healer can do it. He was convinced that God has given the local healer this healing gift and that other ministers have been cured of their illness. What he did not seem to understand, or ignored, is that the local healer is currently living in an adulterous relationship. Furthermore he does not use Bible verses but deals cards to tell what illness one has and what one should do in order to be healed. In local terms, the healer is totally outside the Christian system. Yet the minister supports, indeed *validates,* the healer by naming the senior ministers of the FWC who have been healed by this man whose methods, never mind morals, are dubious. Nevertheless many were encouraged to come once they saw the ministers going to the local healer for healing[80]. This could have tragic consequences for people's health.

One informant explained that some wanted, for health reasons, to ban smoking in the church hall but the dilemma is that the minister still smokes within the hall whenever he is present in the *kava* ceremony[81]. One informant objected to drinking too much *kava* in nearly every church programme as it is a distraction, but the church leaders countered that the minister wanted to have *kava*. According to this informant, "we

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[78] Personal communication with the author on 22/7/2005.

[79] Personal communication with the author on 5/10/2005.

[80] Interview with subject number 68.

[81] Interview with subject number 63.

convert people not from liquor to enjoy God, but to enjoy *kava* and *kava* fellowship and have no time for God". Whether people use the name of the minister to get their will is, of course, a moot point: but that is the risk of an authoritarian structure

Church buildings are often the most prominent buildings in the entire village. Even though the local church trustee has to agree to every building project, almost every church building is attributed to the inspiration of the minister at the time. In referring to it one would say that, "*ko e langa 'eni 'i he taimi 'o e faifekau ko*…" or "this was built in the time of the minister". One retired minister was relating with a feeling of fulfilment the number of church buildings around the country that were built when he was the minister of these villages[82]. Sometimes in conversations when referring to the strength and ability of a minister one would respond by saying, "*ko e faifekau langa falelotu*" or "he is a church building minister". One cannot belittle such an achievement but sometimes ministers are accused of planting 'new needs' in the minds of the people in order to be able to build a monument or *maka fakamanatu* for themselves before they leave. In this frenzy, pressing needs of poor families can easily be swept aside.

In regard to the *misinale* or the annual church collection, the minister chooses the 'best' way of collecting the most money. The focus is often more on the amount of money and less on how one worships God through his or her giving: the end can so easily justify the means. The traditional practice is to call out loud from the front one's name and how much one has collected, motivating people to contribute much. Some churches tried not calling the amounts and according to them the amount collected plummeted markedly[83]. One minister was persuaded that the usual way of calling out the amount one has collected is still the best way of collecting the *misinale* or annual collection of the church. He explained that while he was a teacher in one FWC college the teachers and supporting staff of the college agreed that instead of the usual calling out of the amount of money one had contributed, everyone would put his or her donation in an envelope and give it in. Except for the two responsible for counting and recording, and the minister, no one else would know how much one had given. After opening a few envelopes the Head Tutor [a minister] was aware that these first few envelopes only had two three dollars which

[82] Interview with subject number 34.

[83] Interview with subject number 5.

was well below the amount normally donated. The Head Tutor saw this as indifference and the main reason was that no one knows how much one contributed. The Head Tutor was angry and immediately ordered that they should resort back to the usual way of calling the *misinale*[84]. There was a marked increase in the collections and everything was back to normal.

The implication is that a significant number of the members only contributed a large sum because their contribution was being publicised. One minister, grasping the social game, explained that he divided the church into two classes and called one Tonga College and the other Tupou College[85]. The intention was for the two traditional 'rivalries' to compete to collect the most money[86]. In some cases the congregation is under compulsion from the minister to give. One informant explained that one minister threatened the congregation that if the amount they collected, or the *'inasi,* is not reached they should 'go to the sea' or '*te mou o ki tahi*'. The intimidation did not work, the congregation failed to reach the target and the furious minister essentially washed his hands of them by wishing them to go to the devil – the implication of 'go to the sea'.

Ministers are often blamed for putting unnecessary *kavenga* or obligations, financial or otherwise, on families in the name of the church. Sometimes members expressed this ironically, saying the minister would not visit when ill but only to collect money for the church. The people are in general more than willing to do anything that the church, as represented by the minister, requests of them. It is common for some if not most families to postpone paying rent[87], loans, monthly bills, children's school fees, just to save money for the demands of the church or the *kavenga 'o e lotu.* It is common to hear of some who are proud to bear these *kavengas* although the demands are well beyond their ability to pay. It is no exaggeration that to many their priority is to meet the *kavenga 'o e lotu* before family needs and anything else. They do it with little anxiety, leaving 'tomorrow for tomorrow'. One even hears of some who boast that they are members of a church that demands so much out of them by

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[84] Interview with subject number 16.

[85] Tupou College otherwise known as *Kolisi Siasi* or "Church's College" a Methodist boys school was founded in 1866, the first in the country. Tonga College otherwise known as the *Kolisi Pule'anga* or Government's College for boys was founded in 1882.

[86] Interview with subject number 37.

[87] This mainly applies to Tongans living overseas.

saying "*ko e siasi fua –kavenga 'eni*", they are sacrificing everything to meet these demands.

The minister receives much from the people in terms of obedience, money, gifts and in return should care for and bless his congregation. However, instead of blessing his flock, the minister sometimes angrily curses members of the church especially when they do not act according to his wishes. An extreme example was one minister in his anger who challenged any member opposing his opinion to a fight. One member took up the challenge which ended with the minister being suspended.

The result of this power to curse, coupled with *faka'apa'apa*, reduces the likelihood of members sharing their true opinion about anything just because it may seem as challenging or questioning the minister's decision. Gossip and backbiting (opposed by Paul) is used instead of following the injunctions of Matthew's gospel to discuss problems. Yet the minister will be quick to blame members for gossiping, a human practice greatly exacerbated by, and often a response to, the attitude of the minister. It is an inevitable result of the pulpit becoming a platform for the minister to unleash his anger upon the congregation. The sermon on such occasions has little or no connection with the Biblical passage and the congregation is well aware that he is angry and with whom he is angry. Because of this, Samiu Taufa, the minister at the village of Te'ekiu, continuously reminded the lay preachers that if they had something against someone they should settle it privately lest they abuse the privilege of the pulpit which should rather use encouraging, forgiving, loving words and give the listeners hope[88]. Power is being abused. It is no surprise that one expatriate saw the church as hierarchical and authoritarian, and the minister is partly to be blamed.

> The FWC is very hierarchical and authoritarian – we know best and you must do what we say! The FWC is backward looking, dwelling in the past and unwilling to change and adapt to changing conditions. It is intolerant of other views, other life styles[89].

Instead of facilitating the minister, working in this style can easily quench the work of the Holy Spirit. With human manipulation and especially with control by the minister there is little freedom: the Holy Spirit would not feel at home in such an

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[88] Interview with subject number 27.

[89] Personal communication with the author on 12/9/2005.

environment. It would be naive to think that the ministers are not bothered by the lure of positions and rankings. The church, as an institution, deals with power and some ministers are very much aware of where they come in the church hierarchy. It is in direct contrast to their call to be a servant but this is the reality. What was noted by Morton thirty years ago in the FWC is still the case.

> Church organisation has been just as concerned with rank and hierarchy as the chiefly organisation, but the difference is that status within the church is open to many numerous opportunities for acquiring church offices at different levels and for establishing reputations in some aspect of church activities.
>
> In an earlier period, education and demonstrated poto, "skill" among other attributes, were the main prerequisites for holding faifekau office in the Wesleyan Church. As such the Free Wesleyan Church has been a breeding ground for contemporary commoner elites[90].

One informant, when asked of the weaknesses of the FWC, said, *'fu'u lahi 'a e fili pone*" which could be translated "too much nepotism". The informant was pointing to the ministers in particular as people with authority. This is a valid observation in a culture where commitment to the family and the *kainga* or relations is valued above everything else. One expatriate observed that in Tonga, "…the family comes before all else"[91]. Senior ministers, especially Presidents, have been accused of favouritism. Often these are gossip and speculation and whether they are based on fact is not the concern of this thesis. This is a common complaint against decision makers in the country and the FWC is no exception. The usual assertion is that one was chosen ahead of the others not because of merit but because he or she was related to the minister.

Potential rivals and those who do not agree with those in authority are shifted from positions of influence somewhere else. Those who are seen as rocking the boat are 'punished' by stationing them in the farthest group of islands, the Niuas, which is nearer to Samoa than to the capital Nuku'alofa. The warning to these trouble makers is '*te ke hiki ki Niua*,'or 'you will be stationed in Niua'.

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[90] Connan, 23.

[91] Personal communication with author on 12/9/2005.

The minister has a major say on how things should be carried out inside the church[92]. He announces from the front what he requires the congregation to do and often, if not always, that is how things are done until he is stationed somewhere else. With moves usually taking place after every third or fourth year, it can be a long wait. As mentioned in the previous chapter, usually there is an order laid down by the minister celebrating the holy communion, of when each person should come forward to receive. One woman, who was unaware at the time that she was breaking any 'rule', did not comply with the order and was rebuked by the minister before the congregation for disrupting the proper order[93]. Sometimes the ruling is what one should wear, one informant telling of an incident where the women were warned by the minister never to wear a *kiekie* or waist ornaments[94] when coming to receive the Holy Communion, especially when the king is present. His reason was that it looks disrespectful. Both the *ta'ovala* or the waist mat and the *kiekie* are worn by women as a sign of respect but this minister has decreed that the *kiekie* is not as respectful as the *ta'ovala* for the Holy Communion: as long as he is there, no woman will wear the *kiekie* for Communion.

One minister stopped couples coming to christen their babies from putting the *koloa faka-Tonga* or 'Tongan valuables' on the *'a vahevahe* or communion rail, preferring them to bring their *koloa faka-Tonga* to his home and not to church.

With the high status associated with being a minister informants complained that some ministers entered the ministry for no other reason than personal gain. This claim is supported by an expatriate who saw 'most ministers' as lacking commitment, perhaps wanting to be ministers mainly because of the high status and benefits associated with being a minister.

> There is a marked lack of commitment on the part of most ministers. They go into the ministry either as a way out of a lowly origin and for the status achieved or because they are sent there in order to come under the authority of the church hierarchy and to get on in their profession[95].

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[92] Normally a minister would be stationed to a new congregation after his third year.

[93] Personal communication with the author on 3/3/2006.

[94] *Kiekie* are normally worn by women when going to work during week days.

[95] Personal communication with the author on 12/9/2005.

To claim that most ministers lack commitment could be challenged, but I fully agree that, if not careful, ministers can be carried away with the high status forgetting they were called to serve. The ministers as leaders and people of influence must lead by example so that those in authority at every level should know and put into action that they are there to serve the people: this is the challenge to 'Tongan culture'. This, not the wearing of this or that mat by the minister, is the challenge inculturation would demand.

Neglecting those at the fringe

As explained in the two previous chapters the FWC has concentrated its attention on the elite of society since the beginning of the Wesleyan Mission in 1826. One can understand the need for the missionaries to work hand in hand with the chiefs during the early years of the Mission, but what may have begun out of necessity has become the norm. As established in the second chapter, religion before the arrival of Christianity was a realm reserved only for the chiefs. The remaining ninety nine percent of the population were only involved because they had to be, but they were already declared as having no souls. They were just 'eaters of the land'. Since the arrival of Christianity for at least a hundred and eighty years the FWC, conveniently echoing the Tongan cultural pattern, has kept its focus on the top segment of the social ladder. The FWC has been moulded by the demands of 'Tongan culture' instead of gospel values. If Christ is not the head, and the content of this chapter has made it clear so far that Christ is definitely not the head, then the FWC is merely a mouthpiece of the state.

There is a need for the deep structures of the gospel to constantly challenge the deep structures of culture, as Gittins made clear. From the Old to the New Testament the Bible is continuously placing emphasis on the poor, the orphan, the widow, the needy, the stranger and the oppressed, as the ones God cares for. It implies that love and assistance for the poor, orphans, widows, needy, and oppressed in society regardless of creed would be powerful indicators of the faithfulness of the FWC. In the light of this, has the FWC, as the body of Christ, been faithful? The answer is an emphatic "no" because the FWC has been neglecting the 'poor' of society: many

members are poor, widows, orphaned, isolated and oppressed but, unable to contribute financially, they do not count.

It is easy to point a finger at the FWC leadership for its failures but this thesis is claiming that the responsibility to respond to the poor and the lower end of society rests on *every* member of the FWC and not only the President and the ministers. In regard to the scope of the work the FWC can only do so much for the need is enormous and definitely there is no end in sight. The thesis does not wish to ignore each person's responsibility in respect to the structure of Tongan society, nor is it advocating ignoring the elite of society or toppling the hierarchy or monarchy. A simple solution, like setting up a new church department to focus on the needs of the poor of society would be just that; a simplistic side-lining of the problem. The thesis is arguing that the church must be radical enough to differ from the 'Tongan way of life' not for the sake of being different but simply because this is what Christ would do as the Head of the Church. Just as it is a habit in Tongan culture to focus on the interests of the elite few, so should it become the way of life for the FWC to care for the poor and lower end of society. Just as it is the Tongan way to identify with chiefly blood and support chiefly power, the church's way should also be to identify with the poor.

This commitment to look after and care for the poor must be more than cold charity, more than programmes and plans, more than creating a special department to look after the 'poor'. It must be more than giving money, food and clothes to the poor of society, more than providing a welfare programme or just being friendly towards them or even praying for them. The church must be known more as friends of the poor and sinners than friends of the chiefs and the elite. Seeing sinners just as those who offend against sexual mores or property rights is theologically one-sided; all people sin and hypocrisy is no less a sin than adultery. The church must be able to give more than secular institutions can give; not only is giving *mana* not enough, the church risks using effectively non-Christian values to take from people.

What the marginalised are craving for is relationships which only true friends can give. It must begin, be animated and maintained ceaselessly by being obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit. According to the Lukan gospel Christ, while reading the book of the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth, declared that he was the one that the prophet was pointing to. That he was the one anointed by the Holy Spirit to *set the captives free.* The implication of that anointing was that his ministry was

purposely directed at the people on the fringe of society and in Tonga that category potentially includes at least ninety nine percent of the population who are not chiefs. Just as Christ was known as a friend of sinners and tax collectors, the church must be known as friend of the people at the fringe. The validation of the disciples after the Day of Pentecost was utterly dependent on their consistent obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit, the *main agent of inculturation*.

The reality is rather different. One informant who was at the time doing her field research for her Doctor of Ministry thesis was convinced that the FWC has been neglecting those at the lower end of the social ladder.

> …I have the hypothesis that people leave the church because first of all they are not getting the spiritual nourishment that they need and secondly they are people of lower status who feel voiceless and powerless within the hierarchical system of the FWC. The church in Tonga tends to have grown away from the initial Christian idea. The whole Christian message was dealing with the poor, and the oppressed and the widows and the orphans. These are the ones that are not receiving mention at all within the church system. These are the ones who feel that they do not belong in the Church because all the Church does tends to do is ask for more money, more time, more commitment[96].

Certainly, a church with such an approach would never be an attraction to those at the fringe. What is the point of going to a place only to be neglected? What is the point of attending a church which is a friend only of those at the top end of society? What is the point of attending a place where you are perceived as a social problem to be discussed not a person to be listened to and respected as an equal child of God? The church is seen to be more concerned about hierarchy, status, money, programmes, projects, buildings and reputations than the needs of the people. These people are on the verge of leaving because no one is caring enough to value or even listen to their opinion, and *that merely replicates the secular pattern of Tongan society*, it replicates the sacred society of the past when the ninety nine percent were just 'rubbish'. If that is the feeling of the members who do come to church then those who do not bother about coming to church at all would undoubtedly view the organization even more negatively. Whatever the outcome of this research, one thing is sure: the FWC has neglected its call to the lost and the poor of society and thereby failed itself. One could say that the FWC is an inward looking church, for

[96] Interview with subject 75.

the last Tongan missionary it supported was at least twenty years ago, but outward mission is not the only measure of success: the FWC needs to attend to the need at its doorstep. Most informants at the poor end of society have had consistently negative experiences in every denomination, none being welcomed or helpful. Let me go through examples of the dispossessed.

Prostitutes

Six ladies who are prostitutes were interviewed, one at a time. The oldest was twenty two years old. Common in their experience was that they all grew up with either a single parent or no parent at all. Either the father had died or had left and remarried, or the mother had died, or both parents had died or gone overseas and left the children with relations in Tonga. They may have been raised by one parent, but commonly by guardians like grandparents, aunts and uncles, and they had been moved from one home to another. All of them left school either at primary or secondary level because there was no funding available. Clearly none of them had the care and the comfort that every child would dream of. The fact that these girls are prostitutes indicates that some men go just because they want more. Men may be personally crap, but saying they have family problems lets them off to the hook to a large extent – and they often end up 'blaming' an uninterested wife! How the girls see themselves is expressed by one of them who said, "'*oku 'ikai pe haku mahu'inga ia 'o'oku*" or "I have no value"[97]. She sometimes ponders the possibility of committing suicide. How society sees them is articulated by how one of the girls described herself, "'*oku ou vale au"* which could be translated "I have gone mad"[98]. One of them regretfully admitted, "*ku ou 'alu au 'o vale*" which could be translated "I have acted foolishly"[99]. They all agreed that their way of life is shameful or *fakama* as they called it and are trying to free themselves from the job. But the main obstacle to such a wish is that no one really cares about them. They are all aware that the brothel[100] where they meet their customers is a place that is mocked and generally hated by the majority of the people. One girl explained that even members of her family did not speak to her once they knew that she worked in the brothel.

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[97] Interview with subject number 88.

[98] Interview with subject number 89.

[99] Interview with subject number 91.

[100] Called the "'*Apele Koula*" or "Golden Apple"

Although they say the brothel is clean and tidy, offers good food and they have their freedom, deep down they need help to get out from such a living. They all quickly said "no" when asked whether the church came to help or show any interest. The general attitude of any church is expressed by one of the girls when she said, "they [any church] do not want to talk or be seen to have anything to do with us"[101]. However, one made fairly clear that some of her regular customers are 'respectable' members of the church who attend regularly[102]. Judging from what the girls have revealed the church is no different from society in general because it does not wish to be identified with or have any connection with these 'sinful' girls though church members use them.

The church only wants to be identified with people who look, talk, dress and behave like the public face of the church. So why should the girls bother about the church if the general attitude is that they are non-people? The church should not see these girls as social problems to be ignored but as people who have a need which must be addressed. A young female of seventeen years old related her story that her mother died when she was a year old. She has not seen her father for he immediately left for New Zealand leaving her with a grandmother who brought her up. Her father, who is now remarried, has not returned since he went seventeen years ago. Her grandmother took her to the local FWC and Sunday school but she lost interest as she grew older. Being old and in ill health, her grandmother was no longer able to restrain her and at the age of fourteen she began to go out with friends and drink beer. Eventually she rebelled against her grandmother and fled from home for good moving from one home to another following her friends. She began to take drugs and has been a prostitute since she was fifteen. Sometimes she is encouraged by her employer and fellow prostitutes to steal from her clients and other people but she has yet to do so. At times, she yearned for parental love and missed her grandmother but thinks that she has gone too far from her. When asked whether any church was interested to seek her out and help her in all these years since she left home she said, "no". Except for her grandmother no one else showed any real interest or concern[103].

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[101] Interview with subject number 90.

[102] Interview with subject number 89.

[103] Interview with subject number 84.

One male informant told of a mother and two daughters, lapsed members of the FWC, who are all prostitutes living with the same man. He is convinced that the problems regarding relationships in the family and drugs are widespread and found in every village. The minister and the local church are either not aware of what is happening or do not care[104].

In 2005 the FWC started a program Langikapo mei Langi now looked after by Reverend Fili Lilo and his wife Afa to help teenagers who have left their homes, especially prostitutes. One can only commend the church's effort but definitely there is a long way to go as the general attitude of the members of the church to these less fortunate girls has yet to change. As explained by three of the workers, what is disheartening "is the lack of interest from most of the local churches especially from the ministers", towards their work. Sometimes the response from the people of the church including ministers is outright mockery. The group now hold a fellowship every Tuesday evening consisting of Bible studies and other activities to assist those seeking help. Sometimes the help given is for one of the workers to be present when one of the girls is in court. The average number attending per evening is about thirty and the biggest number was fifty[105].

An encouraging occasion was the conversion of one of the girls who is now a full time staff member. Another heartening experience was the wedding of one of the girls where everyone contributed to the feast and the celebration. 'Ofa who is a mother and full time staff member explained how fulfilling their work is regardless of its demands, knowing that they are attending to where the need is and with the outcasts of society that Jesus was not ashamed to be identified with. According to her, they are not only giving but in most cases they are the ones gaining from meeting these young men and women who have decided to leave home. Their main aim is to show in words and actions that these girls are "treasures in the eyes of God" and that God has a purpose and plan for each and every one. And they are careful not to show that these girls are different from them. However, a core staff of six can only do so much because the need is enormous, and the FWC is essentially uninterested in being part of the solution[106].

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[104] Personal communication with the author on 28/5/2006.

[105] Interview with subject number 86.

[106] Interview with subject number 85.

Widows and orphans

One group that is often neglected in Tongan society is the widows. The FWC has yet to take a bold stance to make clear the responsibility of its members to care for widows. If the widows of ministers who are respected members of society are neglected then how much is the need for other widows. One minister's wife confessed "*'oku toka'i mai pe ko e kei mo'ui 'a hoto mali*," or "you are respected only when your husband is still alive". My wife 'Elaona and a few widows like Halamehi Lokotui and Komisi Fihaki started a group for the widows in 1994 where they meet together to pray and have fellowship, supported by the Rev Tava Tupou who was the Director of Christian Education of the church at the time and his wife 'Ana. Their main meeting was held once a month and in some of these meetings as many as fifty to sixty widows would attend. The meeting was basically to listen to an invited speaker and to pray together afterwards.

While widows and other marginalised people may be supported from time to time by individuals, the FWC does not see it as part of their brief to help widows or other neglected groups in society who need attention and help. More than half of the regulars who attended the widows meetings were already committed Christians who greatly valued the fellowship. If *they* need the help we can only imagine how much more is the need of the widows who hardly go to church or who are ashamed or reluctant for whatever reason to ask the church for help. In most cases the story of widows cannot be separated from the story of orphans – among whom we have already discussed prostitutes. Here is one informant's story whose late mother was a regular attendee of these meetings.

The informant told of the sacrifices that his mother as a widow had to go through in order to bring him up and his two younger brothers. He is the eldest of three brothers and their father died when he was twelve years old. Though their father died while he was a minister of the church at Vava'u they received little or no special assistance or attention from the church after his death. In his own words, "it was like the church saying to us your father is now gone and any connection between us has been severed". In order to pay their school fees their mother, who was a teacher at the FWC primary schools, was permitted to seek employment in the government primary schools for better pay. All of the three brothers are now teaching in the FWC colleges and the experience had taught them to help in funding the education of

orphans[107]. The account was related with a feeling of gratefulness to God and to their late mother and even though he uttered the words that the church "severed all connections" or "*motuhi 'a e fekau'aki kotoape*" with the family, it was never in a complaining tone. It was told as if their tough life journey was all part of God's plan of training them up. Only God knows whether this was part of his plan but indisputably it is his plan that widows regardless of belief and merit are people to be looked after and cared for by the Church.

A widow with seven children explained that they received a thousand pa'anga from the church to help in the funeral of her husband, a minister, who died five years ago but since then they have received nothing from the church. In her own words "it is only the grace of God that pulls us through from day to day". During the interview she could not control herself but immediately burst into tears. And one can feel the burden that she is going through by losing her husband and the challenge of looking after seven children. The eldest of the children, a girl, was married but divorced from her husband and is now staying with them[108].

Both families have been helped in various ways by relatives and friends and also by fellow members of the church. But the FWC has yet to make a special effort to look out for these people and to help them. In other words widows and orphans have yet to be identified for help, as one informant puts it, "'*oku 'ikai pe ke tokanga mai 'a e siasi*." or "the church neglected them". Again it must be reiterated that this thesis is not advocating the establishment of a special department or program to look after and care for widows but again to raise a constant reminder of *everyone's* responsibility as a Christian to be concerned about and care for widows.

Prisoners and their families

One group that are generally neglected are the families of men and women who are in prison. In the early eighties, Peter Chignell a retired Director of Education for the government began the Prison Fellowship[109] with the aim of assisting prisoners and their families at Hu'atolitoli Prison. The late Prince Fatafehi Tu'ipelehake and his

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[107] Personal communication with the author on 23/3/2006.

[108] Interview with subject number 87.

[109] It became a member of the Prison Fellowship International.

wife the late Princess Melenaite were in the forefront supporting the project[110]. For more than year I was allowed to conduct a Bible study with the prisoners at Hu'atolitoli Prison once every week. We were connected with the prisoners' families and did what little we could to help. The greatest need was to help the children of the prisoners. It is common for the spouses of prisoners to live in adulterous relationships while the latter are in prison and one can only imagine the difficulty of growing up as a child in such a situation. A child born out of wedlock is already prejudged by society and is called a *tama tu'utamaki*[111] which literally means a poor child. Even the FWC, right from the beginning, put a label upon these 'illegitimate' babies when it laid down in its Constitution and Rules[112] that when it comes to the christening of babies the illegitimate baby(s) must always be the last to be baptised. Whatever the rationale of such a decision at the time there is no denial that these children are already discriminated against even by the church[113].

A rehabilitation centre for prisoners was built at Lafalafa the estate of the Honourable Tu'ipelehake but when Chignell returned to New Zealand after a few years there was no one to continue. However the Prison Fellowship Tonga still exists, the members being comprised of representatives from the various churches. Since the early eighties the FWC has been including Hu'atolitoli Prison in its *fehikitaki* or stationing of ministers.

This is a step forward but one person cannot cope with the need. It must be the responsibility of every local church to take care of its members. One informant 'Pita' whom I interviewed in March 2006 had been to prison a few times, mainly for theft. He used to be a farmer but is now a *haua*[114] in Nuku'alofa. He was a trustworthy and respected member of the local FWC in their village but reverted back to his old ways of drinking. According to him, once he was drunk no one from the church wanted to have anything to do with him. His family began to lose interest in going to church for they were ashamed of his backsliding and eventually stopped

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[110] This is the main Prison in the country located on the eastern side of Tongatapu.

[111] The literal translation is "poor child."

[112] *Ko e Konisitutone mo e Ngaahi Lao 'a e Siasi Uesiliana 'o Tonga.* Ko e Paaki ko Hono Fa. (Nuku'alofa: Siasi Uesiliana Tau 'ataina 'o Tonga, 1924), 42.

[113] Our younger daughter Sela whom we adopted was born out wedlock but she was the only child christened that Sunday morning.

[114] One who roams around aimlessly in town doing no work and sometimes begging on the road.

going: they too were marginalised and effectively punished by the congregation. According to him, it is difficult trying to earn honest money with the general attitude of the society towards him. Although out of prison, the 'people of the church' still judge him as the 'old Pita' and it seems as if no one has forgiven him, or indeed accepted that they too sin. He is an able farmer but owns no *'api tukuhau* or bush allotment. Worse, in terms of Christ's principles, whenever he completed planting a piece of unused land the owner of the land would push him away leaving him with nothing from the harvest[115]. He functioned as the despised 'other' for the members of his local FWC.

Theological Reflection

Tongan society is the most highly stratified society in the Pacific, with the longest reigning monarchical line invested with absolute power that still exists. The FWC was and is still proud that Tonga is the only surviving kingdom as expressed in the church's hymn number 391, for it has had a major role in the formation of modern Tonga and safeguarding the monarchical rule since the beginning of the Wesleyan Mission in 1826. According to this hymn, as explained in the fourth chapter, why Tonga was never colonised and still survives as a kingdom was because Taufa'ahau and the chiefs believed in the God of Christianity proclaimed to them by the early Methodist missionaries. The implication of that acceptance was that the God of Christianity was invited to preside at the apex of the hierarchical pyramid of the culture above the high chiefs and their people. God is pictured as presiding at the *'olovaha,* the highest seat of honour in the regal *kava* ceremony or *taumafa kava* before the monarch and everyone else. This implies that everyone at the top end of the social echelon moved down a fraction in the social ladder to give room for God the 'Paramount Chief'.

This is expressed in the *fakatapu* or prelude not only within the parameters of the church but even in most of the cultural ceremonies and gatherings. A speaker would often if not always acknowledge the presence of God before everyone else even the monarch. The speaker would first say "*Tapu mo e 'afio 'a e 'Otua 'i hotau lotolotonga*" or "With respect to the presence of God", and then the *fakatapu* moves on to the next highest ranking person present. If the church really meant what it

[115] Interview with subject number 83.

acknowledges in the *fakatapu* in every church service then the *fakatapu* could be seen as a consistent declaration and reminder of its submission to the rule of God the paramount chief. It follows that the reign of God should take precedence over the kingdom of Tonga. In other words Christ as the head of the Church should be given priority before everyone and everything else. The values of the kingdom of God should now supersede the values of the FWC. Tongans amongst all people should be familiar with how a kingdom should operate. If the FWC is faithful as the body of Christ then the Holy Spirit should be able to radically transform Tongan ways of life to be in harmony with the ways of the kingdom of God. However, as I have argued, this has not occurred, for God is utilised by the FWC which is part of, indeed integral to, the maintenance of this earthly social system.

Equality of all before God

One value of the kingdom of God that challenges the highly stratified culture is that everyone, irrespective of status, is equal in the sight of God. This is how the church should see people. It should respect and treat people regardless of status on the basis that everyone is created in the image of God. The church should not only preach it but, more important, practise it. But yet again it has failed in this area. It repeatedly condemns drinking alcohol, taking drugs and committing adultery, but turns a blind eye to its support of the elite of society. It is always those at the poor end of society that are disadvantaged whenever there is partiality in a social context. As the epistles of James explained, we normally give more attention to one who enters wearing a golden ring and expensive clothes than to a poor man who wears shabby clothes but, as Christians, our response should be radically different. The FWC has a unique opportunity that no other church in the country has because it has the king and the royal family and at least ninety percent of the chiefs as members. There are many reasons why the culture is slow in treating everyone as equal but the main reason is that the church has failed to be the salt and light that it is meant to be.

Seeking the praises of man

Tongan manners thrive on parading or doing things to be seen. The repercussion is that people only do their utmost when being watched. There is also the tendency not to be true to one's belief or feeling just because it might seen as questioning or opposing others, especially those with authority. The caution is that what is being

observed on the surface is the ritual but deep down is fear and pretension and an understandable enthusiasm to talk behind the backs of others. Both of these tendencies are apparent in the church.

I noted earlier in regard to the minister's attempt to stop the public statement of *misinale* giving: it is a typical example of the tyranny of *faka'apa'apa*. The teachers and the supporting staff in that context had only agreed in the first place to the new way because it was initiated by the Head Tutor. Had they been bold enough to share their honest feeling with the Head Tutor instead of pretending that they agreed to his proposal, the anger evoked at the usually joyous *misinale* could have been avoided. But it incited anger and the impression given was that many were under compulsion to give. This cultural way of giving where there is the tendency to blow one's own trumpet, letting the left hand know what the right hand does is common in the church, yet it is explicitly rejected in the New Testament. Moreover, it is not the amount one gives but the motive and the spirit behind the gift that matters. A truly inculturated giving is one that worships God.

Trust in good works

Prior to the arrival of Christianity the people went to the extreme of self sacrifice in their effort to please the gods. As explained in the second chapter in the hope of saving a dying chief people would cut their fingers or even strangle a child to appease the gods. As an indication of how much the death of a chief meant to them people would beat their faces with their fists and even cut their faces: the greater their suffering, the greater was the loss to them. This notion of sacrifice in the hope of pleasing the gods still has an impact on the church. There is the propensity not to rely on the grace of God alone but rather on meeting the demands of the church or *kavenga 'a e siasi* . One minister explained how sometimes one man who hardly came to church would come to his home with gifts of food and money. The impression conveyed is that this good work would make up for his haphazard living contrary to the values of the gospel. Unusually, he never accepted any of these gifts and told the benefactor to take away all he had brought, making it clear that only belief in Christ brings salvation[116]. Some informants have blamed ministers for maintaining this false impression that one has to work for salvation. Despite being a

[116] Interview with subject number 27.

Protestant denomination, 'works righteousness', typical of pre-Reformation though not modern Catholicism, seems more central to FWC theology than the *Sola scriptura* of the Reformation.

Another twist of the same fallacy is that salvation becomes the love of God plus one's good works, as these are defined by the FWC and the Tongan kingdom. The allegation is that the church, instead of clear cut teaching that salvation is simply, exclusively and utterly by grace alone, utilises this 'vagueness' as a tool to get their demands out of the people. 'Good works' thus includes meeting the membership requirements of the church like giving money to the *misinale* and hosting the *fakaafe*. As explained earlier in this chapter many would give priority to the demands of the church before and above their family needs and ability to pay. This means that they have to seek other sources of funding like loans from others.

The late Senituli Koloi, the founder of the Tokaikolo Christian Fellowship that broke away from the FWC in 1978, claimed this was one area where the FWC has led people astray. According to him there has been an excessive and unbalanced emphasis on the *misinale* and the *fakaafe* and other traditional practices while failing to focus on the importance of one's relationship with God[117]. One informant claimed that this trust in ceremonial fulfilment is a major weakness in the FWC, "my main claim about the Gospel and Culture in Tonga is that Grace has been replaced almost universally by Works as the mean of salvation"[118]. The church should be adamant and clear that it is through the love of God alone and not our works that one receives salvation. The onus is on the minister to clarify this, even if it were to cause a drop in his overall take.

The church: as friend of the poor

It is the norm for those below to serve those at the top of the hierarchy and Tongan society is not unique nor exceptional. This is how a society, organization, company, government and an institution functions. It was demonstrated in the second chapter that, before the arrival of Christianity, the people existed only to serve the chiefs; there was little mention of what chiefs should do for the welfare of the people. The arrival of Christianity should have brought a revolutionary change that would have

[117] Ernst, 82-83.

[118] Interview with subject number 82.

turned things upside down, the one who wants to lead being the servant of all. Such was the life that Christ challenged his disciples to live. Of all sectors of society it was only those who were in need that Christ clearly identified himself with. It was those that were thirsty and hungry, those who were in need of clothes, the strangers who were in need of homes and those who were in prison who were in need. Christ distinctly pointed out that when we attend to the need of the least of these we are serving him. According to Christ the only people that are worthy of the kingdom of God are those who carry out these obligations in love. This is the hallmark of people living with Kingdom values giving time, wealth and resources to those who are in need.

One way of putting it is that the one who is blessed with wealth, privilege and influence must handle it wisely for the benefit of those who are in need; to become a blessing to others especially the poor, orphans, widows, strangers, sick and other less fortunate members of society. Supporting wealth, power and status is not the way of the kingdom of God. Inculturation, as articulated by Gittins, is more than translation into the vernacular, cultural and liturgical innovation, or in the context of the FWC wearing the *ta'ovala* to church as a sign of respect, acknowledging God first in the *fakatapu*, having a *kava* ceremony before the service in honour of the preacher, or not wearing the *kiekie*. Inculturation is about the transformation of lives, and consequently the values of the kingdom of God should become the values of the FWC, rather than the values of Tonga becoming those of the church. Likewise, the FWC should be a blessing to others especially those in need. It should be the eye for the blind, feet for the lame, ear for the deaf, home for the homeless and wealth for the poor. An inculturated church is a church that is not friendly to the poor but a friend of the poor, who are equally part of the church. The challenge is to all those in a position of authority at all levels like kings, chiefs, presidents, ministers and fathers.

The 'poor' in all

Like the chief, the minister is often placed on a pedestal and idolised and he accepts this and colludes in it. But while the minister may be treated like a chief, he has a big price to pay for all these privileges. Unlike the chief, the minister is always judged and watched closely by the people. Nearly everyone has an opinion on what a minister should do, say, dress, places which he should and should not go to, and

how his family should behave. His home may have plenty of food but he is expected to share it with everyone and not to do so would give rise to gossip. One male informant said that the minister should always wear a *tupenu* and *ta'ovala* in public places and should eat or smoke while standing[119]. One informant could not bear the sight of a minister being rich with "things of the world". To him the minister should live at the same level as the poor[120].

The minister is often projected as 'super human' and 'holy' and, while this is not unusual, the way the minister allows himself to be elevated to the level of chiefs makes him even more liable to scathing glances from 'his' people. He is expected to quickly forgive everyone but he is the last to be forgiven. He is expected to have ample time to meet the need of everyone but hardly anytime for himself and his family. Certainly some but unrealistic expectations on the minister, who is fallible like everyone else. Yet given that the minister all too often behaves as if he is infallible, and all too often uses the pulpit to abuse those who irritate or offend him, he can easily reap a bitter harvest. Moreover, the expectation of perfection may make it hard for a distressed or depressed minister to find support; but if the price the minister has to pay is being observed, checked up on and gossiped about, it is surely trivial compared to the price the Gospel pays for the failure to challenge the 'ungospel' aspects of Tonga practice.

The FWC and power

The FWC is (or should be) daily confronted with the decision of whether to fall in line with the values of the Gospel or to bow down to the pressure of society. [121] Both the preceding chapter and this chapter have demonstrated that the FWC have often been shaped by the culture instead of the other way round. This is well articulated by Taliai.

> To me nothing distinguishes the Christian teaching from Tongan culture more than their diametrically opposed views of rank and the exercise of power. One seeks to serve people, the other to control people. One prostrates self, the other promotes self. One lifts up the

[119] Interview with subject number 3.

[120] Interview with subject number 38.

[121] Stephen Sykes. *Unashamed Anglicanism.*(London: Dartman, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1995), 178-197. It was through reading the tenth chapter on "Episcope and Power in the Church" that brought that gave me ideas to look at ministers in the FWC as individuals with power.

> lowly and the despised, the other seeks prestige and position. This can be called the Gentile – Tongan Syndrome supported and promoted by the FWC[122].

The problem of power in the Church is not new for even Christ's inner twelve disciples had serious arguments amongst themselves in regard to power, arguing about who was the greatest among them and it was from these conflict accounts that we learned of Christ's opinion of how one with authority should behave and relate to others. But the issue of representatives of God taking advantage of their office was much earlier than that, as soon as God dealt with humankind. We learn from the prophet Ezekiel[123] of God's anger upon shepherds who have been caring for themselves but not their flock. They did not care for the weak nor bind up the injured. They did not heal the sick, go after the strays, or look for the lost.

Faithful to its call the FWC must be bold and honest to admit that its ministers, like everyone else with authority, do abuse power. As noted by Charles Forman it is only in Tonga in the Pacific that "we find both full scale warfare between church groups and a nationally organized persecution and deportation of one church group by another"[124]. Church disputes lead to warfare and deportation. The history of the Wesleyan Mission from the beginning is full of conflicts and as a result four other churches were formed: the Free Church of Tonga[125], the Church of Tonga[126], Tokaikolo Christian Fellowship[127], and the Free Constitutional Church[128]. There were minor doctrinal differences but the main cause of these four divisions was undoubtedly a struggle for power or a despair about the abuse of power. The church should accept and acknowledge that it is just as likely as any other institution to abuse power. Without doubt, as has been shown, the *faifekau* is a powerful person in society in line with the ritual leaders of the past. There is hardly anyone in Tongan society invested with such trust and expectation as the minister, who has a far greater number of people and resources under his care than do most people. The minister as

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[122] Personal communication with the author on 13/12/2004.

[123] Ezekiel 34:1-4.

[124] Forman, *Tonga's Tortured Ventured in Church Unity*, 3.

[125] Brokeaway from the FWC in 1924.

[126] Broke away from the FCT in 1928.

[127] Brokeaway from the FWC in 1978.

[128] Brokeaway from the FCT in 1984.

a person of authority can easily manipulate things to suit his or her wish. My father who was a minister related that some ministers purposely shed tears at certain points of the sermon just to work on the congregation's emotion, the sermon being annotated with the phrase "*ki'i tangi,*" a small cry. The example may seem a mockery: but it still happens.

Influential as it is, the church and its ministers are often accused of nepotism, manipulation, misappropriation of funds and deception[129]. Ministers have been suspended and dismissed for they have abused the trust that is laid upon them. The church has even gone to the extent of confessing that it has problems with ministers of exploiting the privileges and the trust placed upon them to dominate, manipulate, control and influence the people to achieve their own selfish aims instead of the leading of the Holy Spirit.

It is never easy if not impossible to point a finger at the motive of one's actions. So when the minister says that we are doing this to glorify God or in obedience to the leading of God who, in his right mind, would dare question his decision. It is not easy to find a church member who would question anything that is done to glorify God. But the heart of man is evil above everything so that only God knows the true motive for everything done in his name. Either it was to the glory of God as declared or it was just a magic phrase uttered by the minister to legitimise what he wished to be done. When the congregation is asked to step up their contribution to the *misinale* or to build a new church building, is it because the church needs it or is it just the minister building a monument and making a name for himself. When the minister puts extra emphasis on *faka'apa'apa* or respect and *talangofua* or obedience to those in authority as two Tongan golden values, is it because he wants these values manifested in the lives of his congregation or is it just because he wants them not to question or challenge his decisions. As referred to earlier, the minister is generally seen as one anointed by God or *ko e pani 'a e 'Otua*. But instead of being encouraged to live out the values of the gospel the minister could easily use it as an excuse to idleness and living as if he is above the law of the society. Even the very claim by the minister that in deciding to serve the Lord he has given up so much of the riches of the world is questionable. It could very well be true but, at the same time, the claim could very well be asking for pity, for leniency, for lowering of

[129] Interview with subject 26.

standard, even for a free ride just because he is minister. In others words it could be a plea to be treated differently from others. The minister's knowledge of the Bible would be above most in the congregation and therefore his comment and interpretation would often be the final authority. Ministers could easily use 'proof texts' taken out of context from the Bible to back up his position. One woman contends that women in general are better lay preachers than men in their local church but it seems that the minister is not in favour of women preaching. This is because, according to the informant, only a few women lay preachers have been given the chance to preach. One can only assume that the minister concerned would often resort to the Pauline exhortation that women should keep quiet in church to back up his stance. In trying to put emphasis on the husband as the head of the house he would highlight the importance of wives submitting to their husbands as laid down by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians but would turn a blind eye to the command in the following verses for husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the Church[130]. Being the only one who decides on who is going to preach when or *vahevahe malanga* the minister sometimes uses it to punish a lay preacher with whom he does not see eye to eye. The 'culprit' would complain "*Kuo fuoloa 'a e 'ikai vahe mai ha'aku fatongia malanga*." or "It has been a long time since I have had a preaching assignment". The common inference is that he had been punished because of disagreeing or arguing with the minister.

Sometimes the minister instead of giving the preaching appointment to someone else would do a particular preaching appointment knowing of the great benefits that he is sure to receive from the *fakaafe*. As mentioned earlier in this chapter one gets the impression that in relating to the chief the minister is sometimes using the chief's influence for his own purpose. That is whenever he finds it difficult to convey something to the people he would ask the chief to speak on his behalf. But if the minister really cares for the chief he would say things that not only pleased the chief but more importantly speak the truth in love. One common problem associated with a person of authority is that he or she often represents the subordinates. The minister therefore speaks not only for himself but also on behalf of the congregation. And it is up to the minister to decide on what to say or not to say. One informant complained that the President in most cases would listen only to the minister and not

[130] Ephesians 5:22-33.

to the people[131]. One could blame the President for not attending carefully to both sides of the story but the finger was pointing at the minister for misrepresenting the people to the President.

The FWC has the opportunity to demonstrate how a person as powerful as the minister exercises authority. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Church, since the arrival of Christianity, has been the major agent that influences culture and it is going to remain that way if it is faithful to its call as a representative of Christ. The only hope of Tongan society learning how to rule according to the values of the Gospel rests in the Church, and the FWC has a major role.

Conclusion

Inculturation demands a radically different way of exercising power. Instead of dominating and exercising power over the people the church is challenged by the values of the Gospel to be the servant of all. This is the mandate for the church to follow and the blueprint for those with power has already been laid down by the Christ that he came 'to serve and not to be served'.

The church cannot just ignore it because there is no other way of doing ministry that pleases Christ the head of the Church but the way of a servant. Moreover, inculturation is not only about the actions which are visible but more importantly is the attitude and heart of a servant which are invisible. It is not an easy nor a difficult but an impossible task. But this is not new to the Church for it is always called to do things that it is beyond its capability. The irony is that it is only through this realization that the Church cannot do it that the Church, at the same time, begins to hope and believe that it can do it. The church cannot do it on its own but can do so with the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

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[131] Interview with subject number 21.

Conclusion

The thesis has demonstrated that the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga has remained very much under the mould of Tongan demeanour as represented by the monarch and chiefs since the beginning of the Wesleyan Mission in 1826. This chiefly influence persists because the solid hierarchical arrangement of Tongan society, rooted in the traditional religion, carries on even though Tonga has been regarded as a Christian country for nearly two hundred years. King George I was determined that his people would remain religiously independent of any foreign control, hence the 'free' in the name. However the Tongan worldview, which accorded both King and chiefs the final say in this freedom never intended that the church would be independent of their control. Indeed it may be fair to see this demand for no foreign control over the church as being less for religious reasons and rather more to ensure the elimination of any challenge or opposition to the King's and the chiefs' full control over the church.

This was not a mission-induced pattern of state-church relations, but derives rather from the fact that in Tongan tradition, the chiefs have always been controlling the spirituality of the people. Being a chief means ruling both politics and religion and to deprive a chief from leading and controlling his peoples' spirituality is to challenge his right and power to rule, indeed it will restrict his power to what might be seen as the temporal sphere. Missionaries would have preferred to see church and state separated as befits Wesleyan ideas, but Tongans with a worldview in which there was no sacred-secular split were and are less likely to challenge the chiefs' control of the church.

However, in order for the Wesleyan Mission to survive in a context where everything especially religion revolves around the chief they needed the backing of the chiefs. Therefore from the beginning of the Wesleyan Mission, pragmatism ruled, maintaining the unity of church and state. This did not exclude attempts by missionaries to restrict the chiefly control on the church, but the latter were always profoundly irritated whenever the missionaries made the attempt. Not, it must be said that they made such efforts too often, for they were themselves sometimes accused of behaving as a chief, accusations which were sometimes justified.

During the early years of this union between church and state both missionaries and chiefs were convinced of the benefits of working together, as clearly expressed in Hymn 391 discussed in Chapter Four. Both seem to have agreed that it would be impossible for Tonga to be a strong nation if the two 'olive branches' of the church and the state were separated. Both claimed that if not for this union of church and state under King George, Tonga would have been easily taken over by a colonial power like the other Pacific island countries. There may well be truth in this assertion about the past.

That was the past: why has this influence of the Tongan way of living, as embodied by monarch and chiefs on the FWC, been prolonged until now, the evidence for which has been so carefully presented? One reason, a core reason, is because the FWC has often been the main supporter of the State throughout history and it (unlike other churches) is still the loyal defender and supporter of the status quo. The FWC still reflects Tongan culture, for its organization is still strongly hierarchical, more than is usual or inevitable in the Wesleyan tradition. In terms of ethics it is Tongan not European, emphasizing loyalty to those in authority like the king, chiefs and ministers or *faifekau* in a perfect mirroring of the cultural pattern.

However, the FWC is a Christian institution and, in its emphasis on those at the top of the social ladder and effective neglect of those at the fringes of society, the FWC is a misrepresentation of the body of Christ. The gospel is inaccurately portrayed as favouring those with wealth and power while neglecting the majority of the people. This cannot be dealt with by tinkering with liturgy, with clothing, with words through indigenization or basic contextualization: the situation calls for inculturation in which the gospel values constantly challenge the core values of the Tongan way as expressed by the holders of the cultural mat.

The first chapter of the thesis, apart from following the progression from indigenization to contextualization and inculturation, highlighted the need to make the gospel meaningful and relevant in Tongan society in all its parts, because in a highly stratified context there is always the propensity of the contextualizing attempt to reaffirm the identity and culture of the spokesmen, the elite. Any attempt based on such a model of making the gospel more appropriate can all too easily, and sadly, become a promotion and maintenance of the status quo. This does not help the oppressed and the poor who are the majority in need of freedom from oppression, and it in no way realises the gospel. The chapter suggests that the way forward is to

take what Gittins argues for inculturation, which is not only a matter of making the gospel meaningful or appropriate but enabling the changing of lives and an uninterrupted relationship with the Holy Spirit, the main agent of inculturation.

Chapter Two found that prior to the first European contact every aspect of Tongan society was saturated and dominated by its core value, that of appeasing the chiefs at the expense of neglecting the majority of the people. The position between the chiefs and the majority of the people were put at opposite poles. While the chiefs were worshipped as gods the majority of the people were labelled by the chiefs as stupid and soulless, mere eaters of the land or worms, or insects. *Pulotu* or earthy paradise is a place only for the chiefs. It was at the death of a chief that women and children were strangled and people beat themselves with bruises all over their face to express their sorrow. It was during the illness of a chief that fingers of the people including children were cut and children strangled in the hope of rescuing a dying chief. It was the chiefs who placed a *tapu* on the food that they want. It was the chiefs who called ceremonies like the *'inasi* where plenty of food was wasted just to boast of how powerful they were but this was of little or no use to the hard up majority in terms of material survival.

We find in the third chapter that it was to this chiefly focussed way of living that early European explorers like Cook were made welcome. The explorers were well aware that a good relationship with the chiefs was crucial to their success because the people would only do anything that their chiefs told them to. The Europeans were apparently superior in technology and fire power but it never altered in any way the confidence of the chiefs that they were the rulers of the place and they were determined that it remained that way. The chiefs were well aware of the benefits and the need for them to maintain this contact with the outside world. Before Cook and his men the people were told by the chiefs to be hospitable and friendly. The chiefs provided generous gifts, Cook admitting that he had not received such generosity from any of the places that he had been to. But all of this hospitality and generosity was not for nothing because there was always a string attached: the fact of Tongan agency and careful self-interest was rarely realised.

The missionaries, as set out in Chapter Four, were also unable to fulfil their purpose without the backing of the chiefs who, determined to establish their rule when the

explorers arrived, were equally determined to do the same when the missionaries came. Culturally they had the right to 'interfere' in religion because they were rulers not only of the secular but also of the sacred, deserving both political and religious allegiance from his people. This chapter indeed suggested that the 'Tu'i Tonga sacred/secular unity' tradition claimed to have begun with the first Tu'i Tonga 'Aho'eitu was still the underlying Tonga spirituality in the FWC, the church becoming a political tool in the hands of the chiefs. By the same token the power of the chiefs were sought by the missionaries to assist their cause.

Chapter Five, on the institution of the church and its relations to the state, shows that to a certain degree the Tu'i Tonga sacred/secular unity is still the underlying Tonga spirituality in the FWC. The FWC still lives on to its reputation since it began as a faithful supporter of the status quo. Often what is found inside the church is a duplication of the Tongan 'elite' (*'eiki*) way of living, with the focus of attention still the monarch, the 'heart' of the culture and his chiefs. The danger of this collusion is that the FWC is no longer a friend of the poor and the majority at the lower end of society. It has little or no prophetic voice at all. In its support for the status quo, it has definitely failed to become the salt and light that it should be to the nation.

The last chapter shows how powerful and influential a *faifekau* or a minister can be. The inclination to raise the *faifekau* to the same level or higher than a chief was understandable, for this was the norm in the Tongan worldview prior to the coming of Christianity. Tongan spirituality was always controlled by the chiefs, the sacred being under the rule of those with power. It was no surprise then that the *faifekau* is a member of the elite and is normally found to be a friend of the chiefs. The position of the man in the gutter, the prostitute, the abandoned, is not one in which this essentially state church, or arm of the state, has much interest: this is the scandal of establishment.

It has been demonstrated from the beginning of this thesis how the core value of 'Tongan culture' with its chiefly focus has made a great impact on the Wesleyan Mission since it was launched in 1826. This is the very core value that every Tongan, including the author, is proud of. It is the binding force that is claimed to have maintained unity and stability of the country for centuries. It is at the heart of one's identity as a Tongan. Because it is so deeply engraved there, one is easily persuaded that Tonga would not be Tonga without the subordination of the majority to the chiefs in sacred and secular matters. However, this core value lying in the deep

structure must be challenged by the gospel values, not by overturning chiefship, but elevating all as equal children of God within the church context. The author, a Tongan who has been a minister of the FWC for nearly twenty years, confesses that he too has been, and still is, a member of this status quo and is constantly being challenged to be faithful to his king and *at the same time* faithful to his God. That brings excitement and life to the call for inculturation. The way will not be easy, but the imperative is there, the call to faith. This, surely, is what inculturation is about: the endeavour to do the 'impossible,' through reliance on a lively relationship with the Holy Spirit, the main agent of inculturation.

The FWC, reputed to be a faithful supporter of the status quo, must also grapple with the reality that all human society, other than the hunter gatherer group in which the only differentiation is by age open to all, has the potential to be organized around the unequal value, unequal sanctity, unequal dignity and unequal human rights of its members, as a Tongan FWC minister, now overseas, summed up the church in Tonga. Tonga is no different from any other country, or any other church, though its claim to be a Christian country, and the Wesleyan commitment to those on the margins, gives it a particular responsibility to address this inequality.

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