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ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND THE LIMITS OF HIERARCHY IN THE MODERN KINGDOM OF TONGA

I. INTRODUCTION¹

Recent research on social relations in highly stratified societies indicates that principles of status differentiation uniformly permeate relationships on all levels in these societies. Dumont, for example, has shown that in India indigenous conceptions of purity and impurity structure both inter- and intra-caste relationships (Dumont, 1970). Maquet has defined a premise of inequality which underlies virtually all social interactions in the Kingdom of Ruanda (Maquet, 1961). From the perspective of the classic Weberian distinctions concerning social differentiation between class (distribution of control over goods, services, and resources), status (distribution of prestige and honor), and power (distribution of authority), the concern of the above analyses and this paper is primarily with stratification by status, specified in cultural ideologies of rank. The extent to which the distribution of prestige and honor corresponds to the distributions of power and of control over resources in any particular society is an empirical question of secondary interest here. Rather, the central problem of this paper is to examine the extent to which routine, everyday interpersonal relations within a low status group or class in a highly stratified society are in fact permeated by the same concerns with status differentiation or rank determination that characterize social relations between status groups or classes.

The expression of culture-specific ideologies of rank in interpersonal

¹ The research for this paper was undertaken in connection with a project for the comparative study of law and conflict at Harvard University. My research on Tonga is continuing at the present time. I wish to thank the government of Tonga under His Majesty King Taufa'āhau Tupou IV for kind assistance. Professors Stephan Fjellman, Klaus Koch, David Maybury-Lewis, and Nur Yalman read earlier drafts of this paper and made several helpful comments for which I am grateful.

and group relations must be distinguished from 'natural' principles of status allocation based on such factors as personality, sex, and age, which appear in all societies. However, in certain highly stratified societies such as India and Ruanda, culturally defined categories of rank are claimed to be pervasive in structuring interpersonal relationships, including the widely noted higher status of elders to the young, of men to women, and of strong-willed to weak-willed individuals. Whether or not individuals in these societies are necessarily more 'rank conscious' in an absolute sense than individuals in societies without elaborate ideologies of rank is a question that cannot be answered here.

Conditions in the modern kingdom of Tonga, the only remaining Polynesian kingdom in a region that has been culturally typed for the prevalence of its highly stratified societies (Sahlins, 1963), depart in some ways from the view which posits the permeation of both inter- and intra-class interactions with concerns for status differentiation in terms of a given ideology of rank. Research focussed on Tongan village life has not discovered a predominantly hierarchical quality in the everyday interactions among commoners. Neither the Beagleholes, who studied a small village of commoners in the Vava'u region of Tonga (Beaglehole, 1941), nor Aoyagi, who studied a village on the main island of Tongatapu (Aoyagi, 1966), emphasized the hierarchical quality of village life. Quite to the contrary, Aoyagi noted the absence of internal stratification in the village that she observed. My own material from fieldwork in the village of 'Uiha in the Ha'apai region of Tonga confirms the view that there is as much equality as hierarchy in the observed daily interactions among commoners.² I had expected the organization of casual groups within the village, especially the organization of work groups, to be governed by principles of status differentiation, borrowed conceptually from the principles that govern interactions within Tongan kin groups and between social classes, but I did not find this connection. For example, there is a striking contrast in the behavior of commoner participants in the daily, recreational *fai kava*, in which kava drinking and conversations are conducted in a relaxed atmosphere where distinctions of status are difficult to perceive, and in the formally ritualized *'ilo kava*, in which the noble or his represen-

² I lived for 2½ months on the island (and village) of 'Uiha during the summer of 1972. I spent shorter periods of time in the capital, Nuku'alofa, and touring the main island of Tongatapu. I worked almost entirely in the Tongan language. Since the scope of this paper is broader than a community study, my constructs are based upon my own data and reading of published literature.

tative is present and in which all interactions are structured in terms of demeanor and deference.

This is of course not to say that questions of rank and status determination are not important in Tongan social behavior. Rather one must try to establish the loci in social life where consistent principles of rank and status determination are important, and not important, instead of being satisfied with facile claims that *all* social interactions in societies with elaborate ideologies of stratification are dominated by concerns with rank. Kaeppler's reanalysis of Tongan principles of rank is an important first step in attempting to distinguish the context of Tongan society in which an interest in status determination is a dominant element in the content of social relations (Kaeppler, 1971). Although she begins by claiming that "all interpersonal relationships in the island kingdom are governed by principles of rank ..." (Kaeppler, 1971, p. 174), she recognizes in her critique of Aoyagi that the Tongan village is not a microcosm of Tongan society and that a consideration of the importance of rank must be viewed in terms of rank within kin groups and between social classes. In addition, Kaeppler demonstrates that village studies alone do not provide an adequate understanding of the multidimensional contexts in which concerns with status differentiation operate in Tongan social relations.

Focussing on interactions within the commoner class in Tonga,³ this paper will approach the problem of examining the importance of rank in everyday life by defining two alternative sets of structural arrangements for every adult individual in Tongan society, which although interdependent, are governed by different concerns with status deter-

³ I lived in a community the noble of which was absent and thus observed predominantly commoner social interactions. Much of the previous work on Tonga is characterized by a fascination with the social and cultural life of Tongan nobility, and there is a need to understand social arrangements at the bottom of the class structure. In fact, it is possible to attribute the extreme 'permeation' view of ideologies of rank, which this paper attempts to modify, to the predominant attention that analysts have paid to rituals and customs of high status groups. For example, previous studies of highly stratified societies attribute intra-class or horizontal rankings to concepts originating in inter-class or vertical rankings (see Maquet, 1961; Goldman, 1970). There is no general justification for establishing a relationship of dominance of vertical over horizontal domains of ranking even though both domains may share some common features in the way that rank is expressed. In this paper, it is only necessary to demonstrate that kinship and class domains share some common principles of expressing rank without concern for the dominance of domains, a question that may appear and needs an answer only when one's perspective is from the top down in the analysis of a hierarchical system.

mination. One alternative structural domain in which much social activity occurs is the Tongan village community. The other is the dispersed bilateral kin set.

Every Tongan adult has both a *fonua*, or island/village identity, and a *famili/kāinga*, or kin set identity. Because of the high geographical mobility of individuals in modern Tonga, one's village and kin set identifications may overlap, but are rarely co-terminal. Particularly in Ha'apai where land shortage and population pressure result in a great deal of movement, it is uncommon to find in any village community complete sibling groups related through two generations in residence.

The dispersion of kinsmen outside the boundaries of village communities defines for every adult individual a kin set⁴ among which interactions are predominantly in terms of economic exchanges and support, but are also structured through traditional principles of rank in the *kāinga* (the total category of one's recognized kinsmen). Modifying Gray and Gulliver, I call this dispersed set of kinsmen a family estate which is a "complex of processes, involving on the one hand natural resources and products derived from them and on the other hand the family groups which exploit them . . ." (Gray and Gulliver, 1964, p. 5). The Tongan kin set as family estate is composed of kinsmen who actively maintain economic transactions and who mutually have an interest in and are responsible for each other's economic position. The fact of dispersion and diverse economic activity makes contacts between members of a family estate periodic and by the medium of mail and messages rather than face-to-face.

Mitchell has made the important point that any model of kindreds or kin networks must take into account a temporal variable relating to the stage of the individual's life cycle (Mitchell, 1963, pp. 350-351). For Tonga, the temporal variable relating to the appearance of family estates is the stages of fission and replacement in Fortes' scheme for the developmental cycle of domestic groups (Fortes, 1958, p. 5). That is, the analytical temporal focus of the family estate is the period of dispersion of siblings from a single domestic group and the setting up

⁴ I avoid the use of the term kin group or kin network, and instead use the term kin set which indicates that inclusion of individuals in a family estate from the total category of one's recognized kinsmen or *kāinga* involves principles of selection determined by a combination of an individual's economic activity and kinship position. My use of kin set is approximately the same as Gulliver's: he uses the term to denote a category that "comprises those people against whom ego can and does exercise claims, with whom he co-operates, and to whom he acknowledges obligations" (Gulliver, 1971, p. 18).

of independent households. The analytical structural focus of the family estate then is minimally a set of true (as opposed to classificatory) adult siblings. Also, aside from a minimal set of siblings, discrete family estates are also composed of kinsmen in other categories of relationship. Besides kin linkage, the other necessary criterion for inclusion in a family estate is the nature of one's economic activity. Thus, the family estate as used here is defined by a set of economic processes (flows of goods and services) among a set of kinsmen, the focal composition of which is a group of true siblings. A detailed analysis of the characteristics of the family estate, particularly with regard to status determination among component members, will define one major domain of modern Tongan social structure.

A detailed analysis of the characteristics of the village community will define an alternative structural domain in which concern with status determination differs from that in the operation of family estates. Every Tongan individual has a village or community identification through which he interacts with neighboring commoners, some recognized as kinsmen, some not. Also it is on the village level that an individual is integrated into the societal class structure by his relationship with the noble on whose land he lives. Commoners in Tongan villages do not appear to manipulate genealogies to place themselves closer to the noble's immediate kin set. At the village level, one's status in the societal class structure is remarkably fixed.

It will be shown that concern with determination of rank in interpersonal relations is important within family estates and between nobles and commoners at the village level, but not in everyday interactions among commoners in the village. After a discussion of the major structural transformations that have occurred in Tongan society, the structure of the family estate and of the village will be described in some detail. Finally, the integration of these alternative social structures is discussed in terms of an individual's strategies for managing his varying social statuses in the alternative structural arrangements in which he is involved.

II. HISTORIC TRANSFORMATIONS IN TONGAN SOCIETY

Concern with determination of rank occurs within three analytical dimensions of Polynesian social structure: the kinship system, the status or class system, and the descent group system (Goldman, 1970). In former times, the population of Tonga was distributed over the three

main island groups, Vava'u, Ha'apai, and Tongatapu, in a single, branching segmentary system or ramage. Branching from the Tu'i Tonga lineage proceeded by collateral segmentation, and membership in segmentary lineages at all levels was determined patrilineally. Major societal segments were named *ha'a*, each composed of a number of related titled chiefs and their kinsmen of graded rank in collateral lineages (Gifford, 1929, p. 30; Goldman, 1970, pp. 310-315). *Ha'a* were ranked in terms of their claimed genealogical relation to the Tu'i Tonga line. The concept of *ha'a* was also used formerly to refer to the descent groups of particular chiefs within the major named *ha'a* and also to persons of a particular locality. Thus, *ha'a* was a flexibly used concept referring to some aggregate of people in Tongan society defined by both segmentary and territorial dimensions in different contexts.

Cross-cutting the ranked segmentary system encompassing the entire society was a class system with the *Tu'i* or king as the ruler of the society, the *'eiki* or hereditary chiefs ranked in relation to the *Tu'i* through their membership in the named *ha'a*, and *tu'a* or commoners related to particular *'eiki*. An intermediate class were the *matāpules* or ceremonial attendants of the *'eiki*, who were usually commoners appointed by the chiefs.

Although it is clear that chiefs determined their status by determining their rank to other chiefs and to the king through their membership in ranked, named *ha'a* it is not apparent that commoners were as concerned with ranking themselves in terms of their particular chiefs. Fluidity in the status positions of groups in the period before the rise of the present dynasty is well attested in the accounts of early observers (Martin, 1817) and in Gifford's data (Gifford, 1929). Nevertheless, the picture of Tongan society before the reforms of Tupou I is one in which the societal status of a commoner rose and fell with the varying fortunes of his chief, but his own rank within his chief's *ha'a* was fixed. One commoner could show how he was more closely related to his chief than another commoner, but the fact remained that he was still a commoner.

Goldman argues that it is within the kinship system that a commoner was compensated for his lack of rank in the class system and for the irrelevancy of his genealogical rank in relation to his chief (Goldman, 1970, pp. 446-447). In modern Tonga, a commoner's concern for rank in his kin group is far from merely a compensation for his lack of status in the class system. It is rather precisely through a commoner's rank in his kin group that he may achieve economic and even political power in modern Tonga. Of course, such a situation presupposes the transfor-

mations that have occurred in Tongan society, in which the traditional class structure survives, but no longer provides the only sphere in which economic and political mobility is possible.

No attempt will be made here to give a full account of the Tongan kinship system; it will only be necessary to show the close relationship between concepts of rank in the class system and kinship system. The statuses that an individual occupies in relation to his kinsmen are essentially the same today as formerly in Tonga. Also, categories of kin classification cut across the class system; both noble and commoner kin groups are organized in the same manner. As noted by Kaeppler, rank in Tongan kin groups is based on three principles (Kaeppler, 1971, p. 177): (1) from ego's perspective, kinsmen related through ego's father have higher status than those related through ego's mother; (2) female kin have higher status than male kinsmen of the same generation; and (3) elder has higher status than younger among siblings of the same sex.

As has been widely noted for Polynesian kinship systems, it is the nature of the brother-sister relationship which determines the organization of rank in reciprocal kin role relations, especially the relationships between the maternal uncle (and his children) and his sisters' children and between the father's sister (and her children) and her brothers' children (see Mead, 1930; Goldman, 1970; and Firth, 1936). Although men have authority over their wives and children, succeed to titles, and inherit land through patrilineally determined primogeniture, they are considered ritually and ceremonially inferior to their sisters. The higher rank of sisters in terms of honor is expressed primarily in the elaborate *tapu*s or avoidances that brothers must observe toward sisters. Extensions of this principle of rank within the sibling set are manifest in the famous *fahu* relationship between sisters' children and mother's brothers (*'ilamutu-fā'e tangata*) in which individuals are free to demand goods and services from their mother's brothers. It is also manifest in the relationship between brother's children and father's sisters (*fakafotu-mehekitanga*) in which individuals display extreme deference behavior (expressed in *tapu*s) toward their father's sisters. In terms of the ego-oriented kindred or *kāinga*, the eldest sister of ego's father has the highest rank in relation to ego, and the youngest brother of ego's mother, the lowest rank. In addition, ego must display respect to his father, expressed in specific *tapu*s.

Formerly, the *kāinga* was the minimal segmentary lineage in Tongan social structure, headed by an *'ulu mōtu'a* or 'elder head', a hereditary position passed to the eldest son or next younger brother of the position-

holder (Maude, 1965, p. 29). Today, with the dissolution of the lineage and the descent principle among commoners, the term *kāinga* is applied to one's bilateral kindred or field of individuals that one recognizes as kinsmen. In former times, the commoner *'ulu mōtu'a* was linked to the class system by being considered the *foha* (son) or *tehina* (younger brother) of the chief to whose lineage his people were collaterally related and subordinated.

The internally ranked *kāinga* is conceptually related to rank in the class system in the following ways: (1) Relations between *Tu'i* and *'eiki*, and between *'eiki* and *tu'a* are marked by rigid deference behavior expressed in *tapus*. Within the *kāinga*, the important reciprocal ranked relationships between father-children, brother-sister, and father's sister-brother's children are expressed in similar *tapus*. (2) In talking about rank in the *kāinga*, Tongans discriminate status by saying that A is either *'eiki* or *tu'a* to B, i.e., class concepts are used to designate relative rank in the *kāinga*. Alternatively, the term *fahu*, 'above the law', is used in describing rank designation both within the *kāinga* and between classes. (3) Formerly, a kinship idiom was used to characterize relationships between individuals of different classes: *'ulu mōtu'a* were termed the *foha* or *tehina* of *'eiki*. Of course the *'ulu mōtu'a* were in fact usually related to their *'eiki* but the kinship terms used to characterize their relationship were idiomatic and metaphoric, rather than descriptive of actual ties. Finally, (4) Tongan kin terms have the character of titles, similar to titles of nobility defining the societal class hierarchy, which allocate particular statuses of honor to an individual and define for him standards of behavior concerning demeanor and deference in relation to all other individuals in his *kāinga*. These shared concepts of rank survive to the present in both the Tongan class system and the *kāinga* despite important structural changes that have occurred in Tongan society.

Conditions in contemporary Tonga may be seen against the backdrop of changes that occurred during the period of civil wars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the rise to power in the mid-nineteenth century of George Tupou I, the founder of the present royal dynasty. Tonga was ruled by a line of *Tu'i Tonga*, putatively descended from the union of a god and a woman of an earlier Tongan population. After a history of assassinations of *Tu'i Tonga*, in the fifteenth century, the twenty-fourth incumbent *Tu'i Tonga* conferred supreme secular power on his younger brother, the *Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua*, while retaining for himself the highest sacred status. The sixth *Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua*, repeating the earlier split in authority, conferred considerable authority on one

of his sons, the Tu'i Kanokupolu. The first two royal lines lost status as successive Tu'i Kanokupolu increased their power. Finally, after a period of civil wars during which the Tu'i Tonga and various allied factions of chiefs were defeated in 1852, the Tu'i Kanokupolu, George Tupou I, united all three island groups of Tonga under his rule. The consolidation of power under Tupou I coincided with his conversion to the Wesleyan Church and his alliance with foreign missionaries. Tupou I, with the aid of his European Prime Minister, Shirley Baker, a former Wesleyan missionary, instituted a number of important reforms (see Rutherford, 1971). The following transformations have occurred in Tonga during and since the rise of the dynasty of Tupou I:

1. Before the nineteenth century, Tonga's population was dispersed on the land of the various islands. Only in the first part of the nineteenth century did the present pattern of nucleated village settlement emerge, resulting largely from mission influence and the need for protection during the civil wars (Maude, 1965, p. 61).
2. The reforms of Tupou I culminated in the Constitution of 1875 which transformed the traditional feudal political system of Tonga into a constitutional monarchy on the English model. In contemporary Tonga, the nobility still occupies most of the positions of authority in both the co-existing traditional and Western political systems.
3. The end of the period of violence and the reforms of Tupou I considerably limited the powers and prerogatives of chiefs in the traditional social system. Formerly, the Tu'i Tonga bestowed chiefly titles and grants of land upon individuals who had extensive powers to dispose of the land and its inhabitants as they wished. The title of noble was created by the Constitution of 1875, and Tupou I chose a number of both his prominent supporters and opponents to hold titles. Noble titles are associated with legally recognized hereditary estates or *tofi'a*. The remainder of the former chiefs maintained and passed on their titles, but were reduced to small landholders just as commoners. In modern Tonga, chiefs without *tofi'a* have only ceremonial status and are otherwise indistinguishable from commoners in terms of class rank. Thus, the reforms of Tupou I essentially froze the boundaries of the class system, not only limiting the possibility of an individual becoming titled, but also limiting the prerogatives and powers that chiefly titles formerly carried with them. There were 33 noble titles in Tonga in 1965, but only 29 actual title-holders, since two men held two titles each and the remaining titles were held

by the Royal Family in the absence of direct heirs (Maude, 1965, p. 56). The power of the nobles within the surviving traditional class structure was limited in that they no longer have legally recognized rights to the services or goods of their people, nor any judicial functions outside the state legal system, nor any control over the amount of rent and tenure of land, legally registered by commoners who live on their *tofi'a*. Essentially, nobles within the traditional structure have been reduced to landlords with very limited powers even in this status. However, what makes the role of the noble important in the traditional class system is the fact of their considerable moral and cultural status on the village level, backed by the very real power that they hold in the parallel political structure of modern government. The Town Officer of a village, often a commoner, still shows considerable respect to his noble, and at least in 'Uiha, accedes to his wishes. In sum, the traditional class structure of Tonga survives, but in an attenuated form with sharply defined boundaries between the Royal Family and the small number of noble titles on one hand, and the rest of the population including commoners, nominal chiefs, and *matāpules* on the other.

4. Tupou I instituted a unique individualistic system of land tenure (see Nayacakalou, 1959, pp. 93-114; Maude, 1965, pp. 97-103). Every Tongan male over sixteen years of age was to receive on application two pieces of land: a tax allotment (*'api tukuha'u*) of $8\frac{1}{4}$ acres and a town allotment (*'api kolo*) on which to build a house. For his tax allotment, an individual was to pay an annual rent of eight shillings to his noble if the land was on an hereditary estate, or to the Government, if the land was on a government estate. Also, by law, the use of land was to be inherited by the eldest son of the previous deceased holder. This system of land tenure exists to the present day, and is an important factor in stimulating the dispersion of Tongan kin groups from their native villages and islands. The complexities of the operation of this system in the face of increasing population need not be considered here. Formerly, nobles had the power to distribute unused land on their *tofi'a*, but since there is so little land left undistributed in Tonga, this surviving noble prerogative has lost much of its effect.

What has happened to patterns of rank in the kinship system, the class system, and the descent system in the face of these changes can best be approached by asking what has happened to the *ha'a* in modern Tonga. As Aoyagi has shown, the concept of *ha'a* as a group in any of its previous uses has virtually no meaning for commoners on the village

level (Aoyagi, 1966). My own data bear this out - my informants did not relate to any social grouping called a *ha'a* in whatever context. However, as Kaeppler has demonstrated, *ha'a* membership is still a central concern of nobles and their internal ranking as a class (Kaeppler, 1971). Commoners in modern Tonga are indirectly articulated into a single societal structure not as before, through reckoning membership in descent groups that permeate the society in a single ramage, but rather indirectly through their territorial and historic association with a particular noble who in turn relates to the royal line through the old *ha'a*, ramage ranking.

Consequently, the segmentary descent system which was the basic form of traditional social structure has not disappeared in modern Tonga. Rather, only its continuity has been lost. What were before both territorial and segmentary units in the social structure have now become almost completely territorial units. It is primarily a village identification and only secondarily some general notions about being of the same blood of the noble or the noble's people that articulate commoners into a societal structure, the traditional elements of which are preserved exclusively by the nobles. The loss of a predominantly descent identification among commoners with the nobles and the king in an encompassing societal structure has served to eradicate the segmentary basis on which the class system was formerly superimposed in ancient Tonga. The demise of the continuous societal ramage in addition to Tupou I's reforms concerning the nobility have produced a rigid and autonomous class system in modern Tonga. At the same time, the introduction of modern governmental apparatus and consequent opportunities for commoners to rise within this system have cleared the way for the creation of a commoner middle class defined by education and economic/occupational status completely outside the surviving, rigid traditional class system.

Paradoxically, the possibility for social mobility of Tongan commoners through taking advantage of new economic and educational opportunities is tied to cooperation among kinsmen whose relations still operate on very traditional principles of status and rank. Of the three dimensions of former Tongan social structure, the kinship system has probably retained the most of a traditional flavor and content. The modified class system also remains traditional, but it can be seen that the greatest structural changes have occurred in the descent system. Most important, however, both the class system and the kinship system still share the same mould of rank concepts in modern Tonga.

III. THE TONGAN FAMILY ESTATE

The dispersion of kin groups from native villages and islands in modern Tonga and the consequent formation of family estates are largely a result of the growth of population, the scarcity of undistributed land, and the individualistic land tenure system. There were no complete sets of adult siblings resident in 'Uiha; every adult individual had siblings and other members of his *kāinga* who were in long-term residence elsewhere.⁵ It is difficult to distinguish permanent from temporary long-term absences, since many individuals who plan only temporary migration remain absent permanently. In addition, degree of dispersion of kin groups varies considerably from *kāinga* to *kāinga* in Tonga, and for any particular village community, the relative degree of dispersion of a village's component kin groups has a great deal to do with the presence of 'dominant' or economically powerful commoner families within a particular locality. Unless adult male siblings with families of procreation can find some local employment outside agriculture such

⁵ The alternative models of social structure developed here are intended to be society-wide in scope. However, their range of application may appear to be more limited since my field data are biased by the fact that I worked in an area of Tonga, Ha'apai, where the rate of migration (and thus the degree of kin dispersion) is highest. Yet, I feel that such a bias does not in fact detract from the societal significance of my interpretive scheme, since the geographical mobility of Tongans in general is well-established by other writers (see especially, MacArthur, 1967; and Walsh, 1970), and from the few contacts that I had with kin groups in other parts of Tonga, I was impressed with the similar, mobile and dispersed nature of kin sets. The examples presented here, then, are not unrepresentative of what is happening in other Tongan communities. The following table, abstracted from the 1966 *Census*, provides one specific useful, but crude index of population dispersion. No account of Tongans overseas is available (1966 *Census*, Table 10A, pp. 63-68):

		Tongatapu	Ha'apai	Vava'u	Other Islands
		M/F	M/F	M/F	M/F
Tongatapu	M	18,719	389	428	604
	F	17,414	452	466	405
Vava'u	M	2,212	225	5,088	158
	F	1,902	251	5,730	157
Ha'apai	M	2,455	4,513	280	222
	F	2,276	4,577	299	92
Other Islands	M	775	54	117	2,003
	F	853	74	125	1,748

Table a: Tongan Population Classified by District of Birth In Conjunction With District of Census Enumeration and By Sex (Totals Cover All Ages).

as fishing or storekeeping, they must migrate, either alone or with their families.

Reasons for leaving one's native village are varied: Females leave when they marry out, enter some form of higher education such as teacher's training, or look after children who are in school either in Nuku'alofa or in one of the two other major towns of Tonga, Pangai in Ha'apai and Neiafu in Vava'u. Males leave to look for vacant or undistributed land in some other part of Tonga; to look for potential spouses; for education; for employment outside agriculture as government clerks, police, teachers, and *faiŋekaus* ('ministers'), or in fishing and shipping; to work abroad as laborers (there is a large Tongan community in New Zealand); or just for *'eva pē*, i.e., living among kinsmen away from home without any specific reason. Every one of the above reasons for leaving often involves several years, if not permanent, periods of absence from native villages. The increased need for cash, the selling of copra being the only way of acquiring money locally, and the desire for the conveniences of modern goods and services are the 'pulls' that complement the 'push' of land pressure which together serve as the stimuli resulting in dispersed family estates, both within Tonga and abroad, as a major feature of modern Tongan social structure.

The kin determinants of the composition of family estates derive from the channels of ranked status positions in the kinship system, defined briefly in the previous section. Anthropologists have been accustomed to specify *mutual* rights and obligations for reciprocal role relationships in kinship systems. However, in the case of Tongan kinship, elaborately defined rankings of reciprocal roles necessitate the lopsided or asymmetrical analysis of relationships in which either rights or obligations are emphasized, but not both. Within the sibling group, older brothers have primarily rights over younger brothers, and sisters have primarily rights over brothers. For extra-familial kin, a set of siblings has rights over mother's kinsmen (especially the mother's brothers and their children) and obligations to father's kinsmen (especially the father's sisters and their children).

In ranked kinship relations, one party has rights and the other has obligations which are culturally specified. The situation in the class system is parallel: nobles have rights vis-a-vis commoners, who in turn have obligations vis-a-vis nobles. This is not to say that individuals holding higher rank or status have no obligations to those with lower status. For example, Tongans emphasize the importance of *'ofa*, 'love'

or 'kindness', as an essential motivation in all interactions. To describe someone as *ta'e 'ofa* ('without love') is to criticize his conduct severely. Thus, individuals in higher status positions whether in the class or kinship systems are obligated to act with *'ofa* toward individuals in lower status positions. However, this sort of generalized obligation permeating all relationships is distinct from the more specific definition of ranked relationships in terms of who has rights and who has obligations.

The channels of economic processes which define the Tongan family estate conform broadly to the following pattern based on the organization of rank in Tongan kin sets: Goods and services pass from younger brothers to older brothers, from brothers to sisters, whether married or not, from mother's brothers to sister's children, and from brother's children to father's sisters. Of course, in actual cases there is a great deal of variation in this pattern. The nature of economic activity and differing degrees to which individuals conform to traditional kinship norms (in turn related to the trade-off between personal ambition in the context of modernity and traditional patterns of rights and obligations as both burdens and advantages) account for much of the variation from the above directions of economic flows in family estates.

A question arises as to whether rights or obligations between ranked status positions in Tongan kinship are associated merely with the performance of ritual standards of behavior which confer honor or also with implied patterns of economic transaction and material support. If the latter is the case, as is argued here for the family estate, then rank among a particular set of kinsmen is a potent factor in the distributive aspect of economic activities. However, the answer to this question varies with the structural context of the analyst's attention. Certainly within the family estate, composed of dispersed kinsmen who have frequent, but little face-to-face contact and thus few opportunities to perform ritual behavior, rights and obligations associated with ranked relationships are manifested chiefly in terms of the form and direction of economic transactions among them.

On the other hand, within villages, where interactions among kinsmen are daily and face-to-face, rights and obligations associated with ranked relationships are manifested chiefly in terms of the performance of particular standards of deference behavior rather than in terms of economic transactions. Of course, on the village level, there are important food transactions in consumption among ranked kinsmen, but the organization of economic activities in production and distribution and for mutual aid and support often does not follow the channels

of ranked relationships among kinsmen. In the village, economic co-operation is as much a non-kinship as a kinship based matter, and usually, individual families of procreation are self-sufficient in productive activities on the land. This contrasts with the importance of traditional patterns of rank in the kin set as a determinant of the form of economic flows in the dispersed family estates.

The nature of economic activities among kinsmen is also an important determinant of the composition of the family estate. A common economic factor in most family estates is the holding of land: one or more *'api tuku*hau will be held or controlled by males in a particular sibling group. At least one brother, usually, but not always the eldest, will remain in residence in the kin set's native village tending the land which he will eventually inherit. Other brothers will disperse and look for employment. The importance of particular brothers and sisters in the family estate will depend on the type of employment that they find. Particularly important are siblings who have salaried employment either in Tonga or abroad. Also important are mother's relatives who have salaried jobs.

The following are the kinds of help or support that one might desire from a kinsman in his family estate: help in finding an undistributed *'api tuku*hau; financial support for educating oneself or one's child; periodic remittances of cash from money-earning to non-money-earning kinsmen; help in migrating within Tonga or emigrating from Tonga; provision of accommodations away from one's home for indefinite periods of time and for whatever reasons; the provision of modern goods in traditional settings where such goods are scarce (an important example is the replacement of houses built with Tongan materials by houses built with European materials, supplied by kinsmen abroad or near the capital); the provision of food to kinsmen involved in non-agricultural activities; taking care of children in the absence of parents; and support, financial or otherwise, in the case of emergencies or special occasions. The mutual fulfillment of the above needs and desires among kinsmen is the nature of the content of the relationships among dispersed kinsmen in a family estate. These activities, which are of considerable importance to the economic and social development of particular individuals in a modernizing context, are channelled in terms of the hierarchically organized kinship system.

Varying configurations in the compositions and contents of specific family estates, then, are largely determined by a combination of kinship factors, derived from traditional norms of ranking, and economic factors,

derived from the strategic or non-strategic positions of particular kinsmen. The strategic importance of position is focussed on the distinction between those who can offer cash remittances as opposed to those who can offer remittances in kind, and between those who are situated geographically in or near a modern sector (at home or abroad) and those situated in a traditional sector (the village or island community).

Now one may claim that what has been called a family estate is nothing more than one's universe of recognized kinsmen, divided into a number of categories, and from which an individual can flexibly select, initiate, and terminate relationships that provide particular advantages or fulfill needs. Since kin networks are dispersed and interactions are infrequent and rarely face-to-face (in fact only on occasions such as funerals when large numbers of kinsmen gather), it may appear even more obvious that relationships within the *kāinga* are ephemeral. In contrast to this perspective, I suggest that there is a readily observable corporate quality in the relationships among sets of kinsmen which can be isolated analytically as clearly defined family estates from their *kāinga*, i.e., from categories without easily definable boundaries covering large numbers of people who recognize mutual blood relationships.

It is contrary to traditional anthropological thinking to characterize groups as corporate which do not persist from generation to generation and which are not in effect descent groups, but other studies have convincingly demonstrated the corporate nature of nonunilineal, short-lived kin groups (see, for example, Campbell, 1964, on the Sarakatsani). Likewise, the Tongan family estate has corporate features. The 'corporate cement' is the growing sense of responsibility that a set of kinsmen has for each other's material welfare and individual development as they assist one another in dispersing from native households and 'getting started' in life.

Paradoxically, the Tongan corporate family estate arises precisely because the opportunities for joint participation in a particular activity (agriculture) are limited, and individuals must disperse to find a variety of forms of employment. Through time (the stages of dispersion and replacement in the developmental cycle), a set of kinsmen, focussing on a group of true siblings, provides each other with mutual aid and support in diverse activities. In time, these processes become stabilized in that transactions among the same cooperating, but dispersed kinsmen continue and reoccur (become 'routinized'). This process is similar to the general scheme elucidated by Boissevain: 'non-groups' develop into 'quasi-groups' which may develop into full-fledged groups (Boissevain,

1968, pp. 542-556). The transitions occur between these structural states as interactions among individuals in a network increase and become norm-governed. This process appears to occur in the formation of Tongan family estates.

In addition, the transitions from quasi-groups, or clusters in networks, to groups is marked by the development of a covert or informal authority structure among a set of individuals. The informal leaders of a quasi-group or group are brokers and managers of the group's interactions. Covert authority structures are clearly a part of Tongan family estates. Usually, a particular kinsman, male or female, will become a leader or at least the person with the most influence in the family estate either because of the strength of his particular economic position or because he is in a position to serve as an intermediary in facilitating the needs of one kinsman being met by the resources of another. It is not easy to predict who will be the manager of a family estate, because it depends on a highly variable combination of kinship and economic factors. One might assume that among brothers, the eldest will be the broker in a family estate, but it is often not the case. I recorded data for one family estate in which the youngest brother of a sibling set, having a high-paying clerical position abroad, mediated transactions and was constantly being asked for assistance both because of his position in the organization of rank (his obligations to sisters and older brothers) and because of his relative economic power.

Given the hierarchically ordered channels of economic flow defined above, the development of routinized interactions among a set of kinsmen and of informal positions of authority justifies the construction of a model with corporate features which isolates distinct, but ephemeral units from ego-focussed Tongan *kāinga*. With respect to extra-familial or extra-sibling group kinsmen, specific individuals in the categories of mother's brother and mother's brother's children and of father's sister and father's sister's children will be incorporated in the family estate through time to the exclusion of other individuals in these categories as a result of the pattern of actual economic transactions. From the perspective of the sibling group, brothers and sisters will come to demand goods and services from particular individuals as mother's brothers and will recognize *effective* (material as opposed to merely ritual) obligations toward particular individuals as father's sisters. The rest of the individuals in any of these categories will form a part of the general *kāinga* category of a set of siblings, but will be excluded from the family estate.

There is no indigenous category for 'family estate', and it is thus an analytical construct of the observer. On the other hand, there is indigenous cognitive justification, in the varied uses of the categories *famili* and *kāinga*, for the analyst's construction of a family estate model. The category *famili* is obviously borrowed from English; the category *kāinga* formerly referred to lineage in the Tongan ramage, but today refers to one's universe of kinsmen. Some informants used the categories *famili* and *kāinga* synonymously to refer to one's universe of kinsmen; others distinguished *famili* as one's family of procreation and/or one's family of orientation from *kāinga* as one's general category of kinsmen; still others specifically referred to *famili* as one's group of brothers and sisters and their *fānau* ('children') plus other 'prominent' kinsmen (usually mother's brothers and their children) living outside the village community and to *kāinga* as a residual category of all the rest of one's blood relations. The use of these categories is usually not consistent for any one informant, and much of the variation in use is accounted for by such factors as an individual's position in the developmental cycle of domestic groups. Nevertheless, the latter two uses of these categories reflect the fact that Tongans themselves do distinguish the existence of a discrete set of kinsmen separate from the composition of specific domestic groups in co-residence and from a general category of recognized kinsmen, the *kāinga*.

The ways in which the categories *famili* and *kāinga* are distinguished in use are also an important and subtle index of strategies that individuals employ to manage their positions in family estates. In principle, one can define himself out of obligations and into rights by altering the referents of whom he considers *famili* and whom he considers *kāinga*. The composition and content of family estates become stabilized through time, but in the process of development of a particular family estate, individuals can manipulate their positions regarding their rights and obligations to particular kinsmen. For example, individuals who attempt to maximize the support they can call upon and minimize their obligations (i.e., 'development-minded' individuals in a modern sector) will define *famili* as their family of procreation, defining other kinsmen, including true siblings, as *kāinga*, as more distant. On the other hand, siblings of these individuals, located in the village or traditional sector, who attempt a trade-off between obligations and rights, will define *famili* more broadly to include the very individuals in the modern sector who define their village kinsmen out of their *famili*. Differing perceptions of who constitutes *famili* (marking here the family estate)

often result in conflicts and accusations over the fulfillment of one's duties (in terms of either rights or obligations) as a kinsman.

Objectively, there are limits to individual manipulation, since one 'who has made it' in a modern sector may not want to alienate his siblings by defining them out of the category covering effective economic transaction (the *famili* or family estate), and will thus settle on a less extreme strategy whereby he will fulfill obligations for his higher ranking kinsmen, but will also try to minimize the financially burdensome consequences of these obligations without alienating his siblings. The potential and real conflicts between individual and collective interests considerably complicate any attempt to provide a neat analytical model of the family estate. It should be noted, however, that although I found evidence of such conflicts, I found in general a remarkable congruity in the operation of the family estates for which I could gather data. Perhaps the degree of support provided by kinsmen in modern sectors to kinsmen in traditional sectors seems generous and significant to recipient villagers (as in the case of the provision of materials for building a European-style house), but not too burdensome to their donor kinsmen in a modern sector within Tonga or abroad.

A final important index of individual strategies within family estates is the treatment of sisters by brothers. In any sibling group, sisters have higher prestige status than brothers. In terms of material support, the obligations of brothers to sisters may have an important influence on the individual social and economic development of brothers, especially with regard to decisions about marriage. I noted cases of several men who never married or married quite late (after the age of 35). Explanations for this phenomenon often contained a quite explicit recognition that as a brother, one is obligated to actively support his sisters and their children indefinitely. Of course, not all brothers were quite so selfless since marriage is certainly the statistical norm in Tongan society. Some married brothers continued to actively support their sisters, married and unmarried; others responded only to requests from sisters for support; while still others claimed that their active material obligations of support to their sisters effectively ceased when their sisters married — then support, except on special occasions, became the responsibility of the husbands. The preceding discussions reveal that although channels of support are well defined by the organization of rank in the family estate, there is still much room for individual manipulation based upon the subtle ways that traditional rights and obligations can be interpreted and perceived in practice.

IV. THE TONGAN VILLAGE

Village and family estate domains overlap in that every Tongan community is composed of segments of family estates, which are native to the community, and of segments of family estates, which although native to other communities in Tonga, usually have some *kāinga* tie to a native resident of the community in which they are located. It appears that after the passage of at least three generations since a change in residence, a kin set's identification with a new *fonua* becomes established and accepted by older members of the community, even though the kin set and others in the community may still recognize its connection with a previous *fonua*. Alternatively, there are cases of individuals (in 'Uiha, for example) who recently decided to settle in a community and who were immediately accepted as native members, because their ancestors (usually remembered not more than three generations back) came from the community. Establishing traditional associations with long-standing communities either through long-term residence over generations, or through renewing a former connection is an essential criterion for defining *fonua* membership as opposed to newcomer status in villages.

Associated with *fonua* identification is an individual's identification with a particular noble, who is either the landlord of the *fonua* (as his *tofi'a* or estate) or has historical associations with it. Even Tongans who live away from their native *fonua* recognize a connection with their noble. However, this recognition may have very little practical importance for them, since modern noble-commoner relations are focussed on the landlord-tenant aspect of these relations which has little direct significance for an individual living away from his *fonua*. It is within Tongan villages that interactions manifesting the hierarchical and egalitarian aspects of the traditional class system are most frequent and visible to the observer.

The operations of the class system within Tongan villages will be considered in two dimensions: noble-commoner relations and commoner-commoner relations. Points of discussion will be illuminated by reference to data collected in 'Uiha. A general typology of Tongan communities, based on the form of noble influence, is a useful background to the following discussions: (1) those communities located on the estates of nobles native to and resident in these communities; (2) those located on the estates of nobles native to but non-resident in them; (3) those located on the estates of nobles from other *fonua*, but resident in them; (4) those located on the estates of nobles from other *fonua* and non-resident in

them; (5) those located on government estates without a connection to particular nobles as landlords; and (6) large towns, composed of merged villages, presently independent of particular noble affiliations.

Tongans on government estates maintain connections with particular nobles through historical associations originated before the rise of the present dynasty and through the presence in residence of a *matāpule* or a representative of a particular noble. Most contemporary villages are included within types 2 and 4, since the majority of Tongan nobles spend most of the year in or near the capital, Nuku'alofa, because of the conveniences it offers, and in some cases because of government service, especially as Ministers and Members of Parliament. The village of 'Uiha, in which most of my data were collected, is included within type 2 above.⁶

Noble-Commoner Relations

The changes in status that are associated with an individual's succession to a noble title reveal much about the nature of class relationships within Tongan villages. As in inheritance of *'api tukuhau*, succession to a noble title is by primogeniture. In effect, the noble class of Tonga is composed only of the noble title-holders and their families of procreation. Yet, on the village level, class distinctions are highly ritualized and clearly visible only in interactions between the actual person of the title-holder and the rest of the individuals of the community. No special deference behavior is exhibited in interactions between commoners and close kinsmen of the title-holder (including even those kinsmen who technically outrank the title-holder such as his sisters) or between commoners and holders of *matāpule* and *'eiki* titles which confer honor but no special rights or privileges, except in the ritual associated with kava-drinking.

The significance of one's genealogical closeness to a noble title-holder is a highly variable matter in modern Tonga as a determinant of personal status. In some cases, one's status as a sibling of a title-holder, or as his *matāpule*, counts in determining one's effective rank in the class system;

⁶ I exclude detailed background statistics on 'Uiha since they are not crucial to the presentation of my framework. In 1972, I recorded the following data for the period that I was in residence: there were 703 persons distributed among 118 household compounds, 10 of which were deserted (their former occupants living abroad or elsewhere in Tonga). According to a general survey of Tongan land in 1962, there were 154 *'api tukuhau*, registered and unregistered, in the estate of 'Uiha. In some cases, two or more plots, considered separate *'api tukuhau*, were held by one person; most plots were less than the maximum-sized *'api tukuhau* of 8¼ acres, and some were even less than 1 acre.

in other cases, it does not. Class distinctions and hierarchy are formally marked in Tongan villages in interactions between village residents, commoner or otherwise, and the actual persons holding noble-titles, whether they are full-time residents of their respective villages or not.

Informants in 'Uiha described the remarkable change in behavior that occurred after the eldest son of the previous noble succeeded to the title. Before assuming the title, the designated heir to the title joined in village activities with commoners such as recreational *fai kava* and work groups without formal recognition of his potential status. Having assumed the title, the same individual was, and is now, treated with highly explicit deference behavior (e.g., bowing when greeting him, using a special vocabulary still surviving in the Tongan language and used only in conversing with nobles) by all those who formerly associated with him in a far more equal and informal manner. In 'Uiha, there appeared to be no striking, or even, subtle, class distinctions in observed interactions between commoners and the siblings and *matāpules* of the present title-holder. On the other hand, the reputation of the present government District Officer, a 'Uiha commoner with a strong and long-standing friendship tie with the present title-holder, was greatly enhanced, although no special deference behavior was displayed toward him.

This process of sudden and formal isolation of an incumbent title-holder, marking the formation of distinctions in the class system, reveals an important dimension of social relations in Tongan villages. The elaborate marking of rank in the class system, viewed from a societal perspective, is contrasted by the prevalence of what Turner would call 'normative communitas' (Turner, 1969, p. 132) or essentially an egalitarian ethic derived from ideas about common kinship and historical origins, shared among people living together in a traditional *fonua*. In some sense, all people living in the same community are equal because they share the same *fonua* identification, regardless of class affiliations. Although *fonua* identification is primarily a territorial concept, it is still conceived by Tongans in terms of a kinship idiom.

Informants in 'Uiha described a general kinship ideology in which all residents of a particular community were considered one *kāinga*, often expressed as the *kāinga fakafonua* (the 'home kindred' or 'community as kindred') or as a particular noble's *kāinga* (referring to his 'people' in general, or to the *fonua* from which he originates). The usage of this idiom is more than metaphorical, since informants explained to me that if they desired, they could in fact trace their blood or affinal relationship, no matter how distant, to any other member of the community. Practi-

cally, however, this sort of calculation is never done, and individuals do recognize effective limits to their *kāingas*, i.e., those whom they recognize as occupying particular statuses as opposed to those who are non-kinsmen without specific kin statuses. Now, whereas ego-focussed, recognized *kāingas* are organized in terms of ranked statuses, already described, *kāinga* as a general ideology (what Fortes calls 'kinship amity' transcending the specifically defined norms of any kinship system) marks the unity of a group of people through a well-defined, but generalized consciousness of common descent.⁷

The other component of the egalitarian dimension of *fonua* identification is a common sense of historical heritage. For example, in 'Uiha, residents, regardless of class distinctions, pride themselves on their historical association with the founder of the present ruling dynasty. Such idioms and associations, emphasizing a sense of *communitas* and an egalitarian ethic, have as much, if not more, effect locally on interpersonal relations in everyday life as has the predominant ideology of rank and hierarchy in Tonga's traditional class system. The isolation of the noble title-holder from the members of his native *fonua*, including his recognized *kāinga*, is necessary to establish sharply the distinction between nobles and commoners at the local level in order to make the existence of the class system possible at the societal level. Thus, the crucial definition of class boundaries for the societal class structure as a whole can be observed on the village level in the behavior of the title-holder toward his *kāinga fakafonua* of which he is a member, but toward which as title-holder he must establish a relationship of sharply defined inequality.

As noted in the second section, the modern Tongan noble has few legally defined prerogatives regarding the people living on his *tofi'a*. Any violations of the laws by a noble can be brought to court by commoners, although I know of no such cases in 'Uiha or in other communities of Ha'apai. In fact, the noble has a good deal of authority over the people living on his *tofi'a*, usually his *kāinga fakafonua*.

⁷ The merging of a kinship and a community identification occurs in a form of social organization which Murdock called a 'deme'. Goodenough elaborated the developmental aspects of this form (Goodenough, 1970, p. 53): "Overlapping or not, however, if descent groups eventually become coterminous with the community, the community in effect takes over their functions and they cease to exist as separate entities." This is essentially what happened in Tonga, as can be seen from the second section of this paper. If this view is correct, the generalized kinship ideology in Tongan villages is a residual function of the development that Goodenough posited.

In 'Uiha, slightly under half of the *'api tukuhau* were unregistered and thus technically held by commoners at the pleasure of the noble. Nevertheless, I recorded no cases of eviction. However, there were cases in which landholders whose lands were both registered and unregistered consented to 'switching' or redistribution of their lands at the request of the noble. The noble periodically requests goods from his people, most often in kind (pigs, yams, or other root crops), occasionally in money (I heard of one request for \$ 100 T).⁸ There was occasionally some grumbling among villagers about the injustice of these offerings, but in effect such requests are made infrequently and are always fulfilled. The noble, through his representatives, maintains an interest in the happenings within his village and sets policies for his people to follow (such as the decision to fence pigs in or let them run free), whether these accord with policies of government departments or not. Finally, the noble is in fact the largest landholder in the community, reserving for his own use a number of *'api tukuhau*. He has the option of distributing these lands to people he chooses, either for temporary use or for permanent acquisition, or he can leave his lands idle.

The above sources of *de facto* noble power on the *tofi'a* may vary considerably from community to community based on such factors as the noble's personality, the economic conditions of his family estate, and the type of relations he has to the people of his *tofi'a*. One might suppose that a noble is in fact most powerful on a *tofi'a* where he is native and resident, and least powerful on one where he is non-native and non-resident. Given the variations that might occur, the above legal limitations and existing sources of traditional prerogatives are the constants which define the content of noble-commoner relations at the village level.

In the case of type 2 villages, e.g., 'Uiha, face-to-face contact between noble and villagers is periodic. In 'Uiha, the noble, who is a Member of Parliament in Nuku'alofa, visits his estate about three times annually, each visit being one or two weeks in duration. Otherwise, the noble makes his requests known to his people through radio messages, through announcements at *fonos*, i.e., mandatory community meetings, or through his personal representatives.

Whether face-to-face or indirect, the following appears to be the pattern of noble-commoner contact within villages: a noble makes requests or queries known to his people *as a whole*, either through an intermediary or through the institution of the *fono*. That is, the noble

⁸ \$1.00 Tongan is equal to approximately \$1.25 United States. Values in this paper are expressed in terms of Tongan dollars.

initiates interactions with his people only through his selected personal representatives, such isolation being a function of the definition of class boundaries, which cuts the noble off from the egalitarian ethic of his *kāinga fakafonua*. On the other hand, villagers *individually* initiate interactions with the noble either through his representatives or by personal contact. The intermediary is a one-way channel of communication from the noble to his people, but not from the people as a whole to the noble. There are no customary means by which the expression of the community can be articulated to the noble.

In this regard, the *fono* is not a democratic, 'town-meeting' type of institution. Attendance of adult males at *fonos* is mandatory by law, and *fonos* can be called only by the noble or by representatives of the government. In 'Uiha, the spokesmen at the *fonos* that I observed were the resident District and Town Officers, native commoners locally elected. They served as spokesmen both for the government and for the noble. During a *fono*, directives and other announcements (*tu'utu'uni*, literally 'orders') are stated by the individuals in charge, and then the meeting is ended without discussion, other than occasional questions of clarification.

Who becomes the personal representative of the non-resident noble is often an open question since the noble, holding positions of authority in both the traditional and modern political systems, has considerable freedom and range of choice in selection. The intermediaries may be close kinsmen, *matāpules*, government officers, or even close friends. In 'Uiha, the noble usually consults the District Officer, a long-time friend, although he arranges for his visits through his favored *matāpule*, to whom he is also related (the *matāpule*'s mother was the father's sister, *mehekitanga*, of the present noble). The most interesting cases are those like 'Uiha in which a single individual merges the roles of government representative and effective representative of the noble. In the ideal typical case, the traditional and modern authority structures in any village are separate, the *matāpule* being the intermediary link in the former and the town officer the intermediary link in the latter.

Despite the severe legal limits on noble prerogatives, the real sources of noble authority in Tongan villages are not difficult to locate. Clearly in villages like 'Uiha, the noble, although a highly privileged deviant from village *communitas*, has nonetheless symbolic importance in defining a community's societal identity. The *fonua* of 'Uiha is the land of Malupō, a historical title conferred both upon an individual and representing a group of people, marking their place in relation to what was once considered a sacred kingship. Although villagers are no longer

aware of the exact societal significance of the noble title to which they are associated, they still have a keen sense of honor carried for them by the title-holder. Still, the title-holder is not one of them, although he may have been before succeeding to the title. Rather, he operates in and becomes part of a different domain of social life in which commoners have no part other than in the representation of their honor through the noble, i.e. the domain of kingship and royalty expressed most vividly in the *taumafakava* or kava ceremony of the Tu'i, his *matāpules*, and the nobles.

The various types of kava-drinking situations and the rituals associated with them are the key to the contemporary preservation of traditional aspects of Tongan social structure.⁹ Kava-drinking is a highly ritualized remnant of ancient Tongan customs, most of which were swept away with the virtual replacement of the important indigenous religious belief systems and related ritual by Christianity. The differences in *fai kava* (among commoners), *'ilo kava* (with a noble present), and a *taumafakava* (with the Tu'i present) reflect, and are a visual manifestation of, Tonga's class structure. One's rank in the class structure is seen by the observer in the hierarchical rituals of the various levels of kava-drinking. The ritual and symbolic superiority of the noble over his people is most striking in the *'ilo kava* ceremony both to the analyst and the indigenous informant on the village level.

In sum, the centrifugal force of the family estate on village residents is currently a major factor responsible for the erosion of the traditional supports for the noble's *de facto* prerogatives and influence in the community. People who are interested in the development of their dispersed estates, which may eventually be a means for their own social mobility, are less likely to be interested in the honor and status that they gain in the traditional system through the person of the title-holder. To the extent that this is true, the actual authority of nobles, at least in the

⁹ For previous discussions and descriptions of kava-drinking ceremonies in modern Tonga see Gifford, 1929, pp. 156-170; Beaglehole, 1941, pp. 112-122; Newell, 1947; Collocott, 1927; and most recently, Bott and Leach, 1972. These authors (except Beaglehole) concentrate largely on the highly ritualized kava-drinking ceremonies of the king and nobles. There is as yet no adequate ethnographic account of the commoner *fai kava*. This is an excellent example of how fascination with noble customs can lead to an overemphasis on the permeation of concern with rank in all institutions and within all classes. As I suggest here, the commoner *fai kava* is permeated much more with the egalitarian ethic of the *fonua* than with the hierarchical ideology of the societal class system.

traditional system, may be brought closer to the legal definition of their limited powers.

On the other hand, aside from their positions in the traditional class system, the Tu'i and nobles also control the positions of power in the modern political structure. Consequently, even though some villagers no longer hold values which support the authority of the nobles in the traditional class structure, they must nevertheless recognize the power of the nobles as a class (as opposed to *their* particular nobles) in the modern political system. However, in the case of 'Uiha, the present importance of the noble for the villagers can be attributed predominantly to his place in the traditional system rather than in the modern state. Depending on the development of commoners in family estates throughout Tonga, the locus (traditional or modern systems) of the noble's importance for them is bound to change.

Commoner-Commoner Relations

Just as the individual in Tonga can be analyzed both in terms of his family estate and *fonua* identifications, so the village community as a unit of analysis can be seen both as the co-residence of a number of segments of family estates and as a population unified by a local folk tradition and the general egalitarian ideology already described. Although it is easy for the analyst to observe the ritual aspects of behavior in interactions between commoners who recognize mutual *kāinga* membership both within and between domestic groups, it is much more difficult to attribute specific instances in which material aid and support are exchanged to the existence of kin ties between two exchanging individuals or domestic groups. That is, for any ego, one can observe patterns of ritual behavior reflecting the organization of rank in the Tongan *kāinga*: a male ego, for example, will demand respect behavior from his mother's brothers and their children and will be deferential to his father's sisters and their children and to his sisters. However, the application of such standards of behavior to ranked statuses within a recognized *kāinga* is not paralleled by recognition of material rights or obligations to occupants of particular *kāinga* statuses outside the domestic group, as opposed to others to whom one is related only through the idiom of the kinship ideology of the *fonua* (these others are *effectively* non-kinsmen in contrast to one's recognized *kāinga*).

I could not establish exclusive channels of exchange consistent with the organization of rank in the Tongan kinship system among members of a village as I could among members of a dispersed family estate.

Regular exchanges of food after Sunday religious services occurred among domestic groups both related (in terms of recognized *kāinga* membership) and unrelated. One is as much obligated to help a friend or neighbor asking for assistance as a recognized kinsman.

Thus, concern with status differentiation, entailing either rights or obligations, does not appear to underlie exchanges among members of a *fonua*, since as putative kinsmen of the *kāinga fakafonua*, everyone is obligated to help and can request support from everyone else. The only exception to this was the occasional assertion of an *'ilamutu* ('sister's child') of his/her right to the services and property of his/her *fā'e tangata* ('mother's brother'). However, in this case of the exercise of particular rights associated with the occupation of a culturally defined kin status, the economic consequences are trivial. The problem of attributing observed contents of interactions and exchanges to specific kinship norms or not is a complex and theoretically important question, long ago recognized by Firth (Firth, 1936, pp. 104-117). In 'Uiha, at least, rights and obligations in economic transactions of aid and support among domestic groups are related more to the egalitarian norms of kinship amity than to the hierarchical norms of the kinship system, the latter reflected mainly in the performance of particular appropriate standards of behavior toward ranked *kāinga* members.

There are important factors which do account for cooperation or the lack of it between domestic groups, or between individuals from different households. Obviously, in different contexts, villagers will alternately try to evade, initiate, or fulfill requests for support; the covering ideology of kinship amity and *communitas* is in no way a binding influence to which villagers uniformly adhere. To discuss these factors, it is necessary to refer to the alternative analytical perspective which views the Tongan village as a collection of segments of dispersed family estates.

In Tongan villages, individual domestic groups or households are discrete and self-sufficient units of economic activity on the land. Major flows of goods and services as assistance outside the domestic group or household occur among the dispersed kin set or family estate of which the village domestic group is a member or segment. The manner in which a domestic group responds to requests for support from neighboring households or initiates requests for support, in terms of the general kinship ideology of the *fonua*, depends significantly on such factors as (1) the economic position of a domestic group in its family estate (whether the members of households are primarily donors or

recipients in the transactions among ranked kinsmen of the family estate) and (2) the degree of dispersion of segments of family estates outside the native village (whether a domestic group is the only segment in its family estate resident in a village or whether the component domestic groups of a family estate are relatively undispersed and concentrated in a particular community).

Although the kinds of mutual requests that villagers make are diverse, the most common requests in 'Uiha were for permission to use a section of an *'api tukuhau* for the planting of subsistence crops such as yams and taro, to borrow a dryer to process copra, to use a cart or boat to transport copra, or to procure cash and food for one's obligatory offerings to *kāinga* members, family estate members, the noble, or the government. Major economic cooperation and sharing of land occur among segments of family estates resident in the same village. Such co-resident family estate segments also constitute the dominant, identifiable commoner factions in the village.

In contrast to these family estate factions of a village, there are numerous domestic groups, often headed by the eldest brother in a family estate, which are essentially caretakers of land held by their respective dispersed estates. Cooperation in economic activity and the formation of identifiable factions are weakly developed among caretaker domestic groups. Their interests lie outside the native village, in the activities of their dispersed kin sets.

A family estate with concentrated segments composed the dominant faction in 'Uiha and the visibly most prosperous commoners in the village. Several caretaker informants grumbled because they had to stay on the land while members of their dispersed kin sets were bettering their economic positions elsewhere. Other caretaker informants, who benefited as recipients of gifts and support from their dispersed kinsmen, seemed relatively content with their positions as landholders in their native village. It appears that the strength of their positions in their respective family estates was a compensation for their relative lack of influence and power within their native village.

An adequate description of social relations among commoners in Tongan villages, then, must integrate a prevailing egalitarian ethic, based on *fonua* identification, with the observed economic variation among members of a homogeneous social class, based significantly on factors relating to family estate identification. In this analysis, the influence of culturally defined concepts of rank, important in interclass relations and within the kinship system, has little direct significance.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has analyzed commoner focussed social relations in two major structural domains of contemporary Tongan society: dispersed family estates and the village community. Another important domain which constitutes the interstices of Tongan social structures is the growing towns of Tonga and the existing concentrations of Tongans abroad. Here, the analysis of social relations of different classes who share neither a *fonua* nor a family estate identification would probably differ markedly from that of the relations in the domains considered in this paper. The problems posed by a strange environment in a modern sector obviously alter the conditions of social life for individuals interacting with relative strangers. The influence of culturally defined concepts of rank on interactions between strangers, given homogeneous class identity, is a fascinating question beyond the scope of this paper.

Any attempt to construct neat models of alternative social structural domains in Tonga is offset by a focus on the individual actor and his considerable flexibility in manipulating his statuses in alternative social structures. In the above sections, numerous instances have been suggested in which such manipulations occur: variations in the ways that brothers recognize obligations towards sisters; variations in the ways that nobles as distinct from commoners recognize obligations toward kinsmen; variations in the boundary definition of the categories *famili* and *kāinga*; and variations among commoners in meeting obligations of *kāinga fakafonua* membership. These variations do not derive in most cases from an overt questioning of cultural ideologies which in fact permit considerable flexibility in individual interpretation and manipulation, but from the great variety of situations (implying in turn a great variety of personal motivations) in which individuals find themselves inside and outside of modern Tonga. This paper has merely identified the constant elements, the sets of statuses, that define the scene or background in terms of which individual motivations are articulated.

Every adult Tongan has a set of ranked statuses in a family estate, the definition of which over time is only partly his prerogative; a societal class status manifested in his subordination to the noble of his *fonua*; and a status as citizen, albeit lower class, of a modern government. The nature and expression of personal motivations, whatever they may be, represent an integration of the individual statuses that a commoner holds in the alternative structural domains in which he acts. Analytically, this integration of statuses in the accomplishment of individual ends may be viewed in terms of strategies.

For example, the strategy of a village resident who desires to leave his *fonua* for a modern sector may be to minimize (but not negate) his obligations, encompassed in his *fonua* statuses toward fellow villagers and his noble, while maximizing (to the extent that he can, given his set of ranked kin statuses) his returns in his family estate. Ironically, although individual social mobility in the context of development and modernization has often been associated with the freeing of the individual from the stifling bonds of traditional obligation and responsibility to the group, the possibility of individual mobility in Tonga from traditional life centered in village social structure depends upon the continued vigorous operation of traditional obligations in the structure of the family estate. Furthermore, the possibility of mobility in individual cases is significantly influenced by one's favorable or unfavorable position in a family estate, in turn dependent upon the configuration of economic transactions among ranked kinsmen. Once outside the village, the strategic problem for an individual who still remains in the family estate (some of course do define themselves out of rights and obligations and consequently out of their family estates) is to exploit the advantages of his situation in a modern sector while still fulfilling the obligations implied by his ranked kin statuses. This example has dealt briefly with the 'development-minded' individual; persons with other motivations would be analyzed in terms of other strategies for integrating the same sets of statuses.

It has been demonstrated that although a generalized 'concern for rank' in interactions is certainly an important aspect of modern Tongan society, it is by no means pervasive. One must be able to distinguish between the generalized awareness at all levels of the importance of ranking in a highly stratified society from the actual use or non-use of particular culturally defined concepts of rank in the structuring of interpersonal relations. Paradoxically, traditional ranking concepts appear to be of less importance in structuring interpersonal relations among commoners in the locus of traditional Tongan life, the village, than in the locus of current economic and social development, the family estate.

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