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IDEOLOGY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN THE TONGAN KINSHIP SYSTEM

Introduction

*Tonga is a highly stratified Polynesian society.*¹ A clear indication of this is found in the emphasis Tongans put on the *tu'a*-*'eiki* distinction. They continually rank each other as lower (*tu'a*) or higher (*'eiki*). By means of this ideological distinction not only the social status and the corresponding power position of any individual within the kinship system are defined, but also the important difference between commoners and aristocracy (chiefs) is indicated. It is a matter of relative position, of relational logic. For example, a chief (= *'eiki*) may be *tu'a* as well, not only vis-à-vis still higher chiefs, but also with respect to certain categories of kinfolk who do not necessarily belong to the chiefly class (the *hou 'eiki*).

To be able to understand this ideology, we have to go into the background of the Tongan kinship system. But first the concept of ideology as it is used here will be defined.

Ideology and Social Inequality

I define ideology as a set of ideas in which *forms of social inequality* are represented as *natural and self-evident*, or, as may be the case, as *predestined by a god or any other supernatural power*. Social inequality may occur at several levels within a society: between the sexes, age and kin

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1. Tonga is a Polynesian Kingdom of 150 islands, 36 of which are inhabited by some 100,000 persons. The Tongan islands, situated between Fiji, Samoa and – at a larger distance – New Zealand, have a total surface area of 649 km. Between 1900 and 1970 Tonga was a British protectorate (see Van der Grijp 1987b). At present, Tonga is the only lasting Polynesian kingdom. The author completed 16 months of field research in Tonga during two periods in 1982-85; at the end of 1988 a third period of field research will begin, this time covering the West Polynesian islands of Wallis and Futuna as well. I wish to thank Jan Pouwer for his constructive comments on former versions of this article, including corrections of my English.

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categories, descent groups, classes, ethnic groups, etc. At the same time, inequality may exist between societies as a whole, e.g. at a global level between western and non-western societies. Moreover, all sorts of inter-connections may exist between the different levels and domains of social inequality. In Tonga, this is very much the case.

However, we have to be conscious of the fact that the concept of ideology is defined in a different way by different people. The concept has a long history, which can be traced back to the French scholar Destutt de Tracy.² Since the publication of his book *Eléments d'idéologie* in 1801, the concept has often been sold under false pretences, varying according to the historical, political, social and scientific context.³ With the above definition of ideology I intend to give the concept a heuristic value.

The Tongan Kinship System

In a wider kinship context than the household, Tongan individuals partake not only in a kinship category called *kainga* but also in a kin group indicated as *famili*. The word *famili* is borrowed from English and has replaced the older notions of *fa'ahinga* and *matakali*. These notions are still known by – especially elderly – Tongans, but are rarely used nowadays.⁴ The difficulty is that the new term *famili* has the same ambivalence as 'family' in English: Tongans apply it to the household as well as to the extended family. In English we have the possibility of distinguishing 'nuclear family' from 'extended family', but in the Tongan lexicon only the substantive and not the two qualifying adjectives have been adopted. Moreover, the Tongans have two different kinds of extended family: the *kainga* and the *famili*.

To add to the confusion, the *kainga* is sometimes also called *famili*, although the two concepts usually refer to different social realities. In order to be sure what we are talking about, we will designate household in this article exclusively with the term 'household', *kainga* with 'kainga', and *famili*, as long as it refers to another type of extended family than the *kainga* (namely the *fa'ahinga* or *matakali* type) with 'house'.

2. After the French revolution, he became a member of the 'Institut National', charged with research on origins and the development of ideas, with the ultimate aim of being better able to propagate the 'esprit révolutionnaire' as seen from the point of view of the then French government.

3. See Augé 1975; Baechler 1976; Barnett & Silverman 1979; Godelier 1984; Holthoorn 1973; Larrain 1979; Merquior 1979; Therborn 1980; and Vadée 1973. A theoretical argumentation for the definition of ideology as applied in this article is given in Van der Grijp 1987a: 23-26 (cf. 1984, 1986 and 1988).

4. In the early seventies, Rogers observed Tongans using the word *fa'ahinga*, the meaning of which remained vague, however. He even refers to an informant who wanted to denote only pigs with *fa'ahinga* (Rogers 1975:238). The Tongan word *matakali* is directly derived from Fijian *mataqali* (cf. Ravuvu 1983:1).

The concept 'house' is used here in the sense defined by Lévi-Strauss, according to whom a house ('maison') is a:

'... personne morale détentrice d'un domaine, qui se perpétue par transmission de son nom, de sa fortune et de ses titres en ligne réelle ou fictive, tenue pour légitime à la seule condition que cette continuité puisse s'exprimer dans le langage de la parenté ou de l'alliance, et, le plus souvent, des deux ensemble' (Lévi-Strauss 1984:190).

A house is a form of social organization which in the past has been thought of as existing in so-called complex societies (cf. the notions 'noble house' and 'royal house'), but which in fact, according to Lévi-Strauss, is found anywhere in the world, including societies without a script. The 'house' neither coincides with the nuclear family or the household, nor with the lineage or the clan, however; all are closely connected. This becomes clear in an additional characteristic: 'Pour se perpétuer, les maisons font largement appel à la parenté fictive, qu'il s'agisse de l'alliance ou de l'adoption' (Lévi-Strauss 1984:190). First we will define the *kainga*, and then the Tongan house.

The Kainga

A *kainga* is a category of people to whom an individual can trace back a bilateral relationship known among anthropologists as cognatic (= 'ignoring sex in tracing kinship links', Fox 1967:49). It is an ego-oriented, kindred system (cf. Freeman 1961). Within the *kainga* a distinction may be made between *kainga 'i fa'e* and *kainga 'i tamai*, that is, the matrilineal and patrilineal kinfolk.

The *kainga* is a category of relatives who do not form a group in daily life, but who may operate as a group at certain occasions such as weddings and funerals. The anthropologist Rogers emphasizes that the *kainga* is an ideology as well as an emic definition of a kinship category. People are referred to as *kainga* as soon as they mutually recognize their kinship ties. Also non-relatives who treat each other as relatives are indicated as *kainga* (Rogers 1975:247). Churchward, who compiled a classic Tongan-English dictionary, even gives for *kainga*, after 'relative' and 'relation', the meaning 'fellow-countryman': 'brother or sister in the sense of comrade or compatriot' (Churchward 1959:244). In fact, Churchward's last-mentioned meaning turns out to be used by many Tongans living abroad. To my question as to which people belonged to their *kainga*, Tongans I met in Auckland (New Zealand) invariably replied: 'all Tongans here' (there are many thousands of Tongans residing in Auckland!). Tongans in Samoa, Fiji and Hawaii gave me a similar answer.

At present in Tonga, there is a noticeable shift in the range of relatives

said to belong to the *kainga*. In the past, cousins to the fourth degree were always referred to in sibling terminology. Nowadays, there is a tendency to restrict the sibling terminology to real siblings and first cousins. For more remote cousins descriptions are used. However, the exogamy injunction still applies to at least cousins of the fourth degree. In this respect no distinction is made, at any rate among commoners, between *kainga 'i fa'e* and *kainga 'i tamai*, i.e., matrilineal and patrilineal kin. An exogamy injunction for the *kainga 'i tamai* also applies to the aristocracy (nobles and the royal house), but for them endogamy within the *kainga 'i fa'e* is a rule rather than an exception. This has to do with the power and prestige inherited through 'the blood', in which commoners have no share.

The House

The contemporary house is a localized group of both biological and classificatory kin which has its origin in some brothers and their offspring, but incidentally also in some brothers and a sister, a cousin and/or a friend and their offspring. The distance between the house's core of ancestors and the younger heads of the actual households is generally three generations. The descent norm for the house is patrilineal, but in fact so many exceptions occur that we should speak rather of patrilineality-tending-to-ambilineality.⁵

People belong to a *kainga* more or less automatically, that is to say, without making any special effort. Membership of the house, in contrast with the *kainga*, is defined by participation in the daily activities of the group: working in the fields or going fishing (men), collecting shells on the reef at low tide, plaiting mats, beating tapa, doing the laundry (the women), making regular visits, exchanging small food gifts and news, etc. Another difference with the *kainga*, closely connected with the above-mentioned one, is the fact that the house is a localized group, whereas the *kainga* (which is not a group but a category) in almost all cases extends beyond the borders of the village, island, and even island group. Reciprocity within the house involves so many obligations, and one is supposed to invest so much time, energy, food, goods, and even money in it, that it would be impossible to participate simultaneously in two houses. Also the household, being a unit of production and consumption, cannot afford having its individual members participate simultaneously in different houses.

Rather than travelling continually between two places, a person who

5. De Josselin de Jong (1984:249) proposes to speak in the Tongan case of 'double descent'. In spite of his argument, with reference to Rogers (1977:170), that 'mystical power is transferred through and to females', I feel that the concept of 'double descent' suggests too much that both lines are of equal importance. This is not right in the Tongan case.

feels the need to do so will present himself or herself to the members of a related house in another village. When the stay assumes a more or less permanent character, she/he will become a full member of that other house. This does not cause any problems as long as the members of the second house recognize the *kainga* relationship with the newcomer, however distant the genealogical bond may be. This kind of move occurs particularly among adolescents who want to see more of the world – to start with, Tonga – or who, for whatever reason, have got into trouble with their parents; but it occurs among adults as well.

The move from one house to another, temporary or otherwise, corresponds with the old Tongan idea of *ngaue 'aonga'aki'ene faingamalie*, meaning that if a favourable opportunity presents itself, one should not hesitate to take advantage of it. This also holds good for the residence pattern of marriage partners: the norm is virilocal, but actually there are so many examples of uxorilocality, very often for economic reasons, that we may refer to it rather as a virilocal-tending-to-ambilocal pattern.⁶

The Principles of Social Inequality

The *tu'a-eiki* system on the kinship level is based on the following elementary principles. Firstly, sisters have a higher status than brothers. Secondly, elder siblings have a higher status than younger. The order of these two principles is very strict: a woman has a higher status than her older brother. When a marriage partner dies, the surviving partner will be *tu'a* (lower) as compared with the deceased one, regardless of sex; however, during their lifetime their status is unequal, because the man is considered to be the head of the household (that is to say, as long as they are not living in the household of other relatives).

In the ascending generation – and this is the third basic principle – patrilineal relatives have a higher status, and matrilineal relatives a lower status, than ego. Subsequently, the same rules which apply to ego's brothers and sisters apply to the father and mother of ego: father's eldest sister, the *mehekitanga*, has the highest status, next follow his younger sisters, and then, also in order of age, come the brothers. Thus, mother's brother, the *tu'asina*, in this system has the lowest status.⁷ The status of ego's uncles and aunts is transferred to their children, irrespective of their age and sex (cf. Rogers 1977).

In the descending generation – and this is the fourth fundamental principle – the children of ego's sisters, at least if ego is a man, have a higher status than ego; in the case of a female ego, this is only true for the children of elder sisters. Thus, the eldest daughter of ego's sister has the highest status (this is indicated by the term *fahu*), next comes the second

6. Elsewhere in Polynesia this is also the case.

7. It is on this subject that Tonga has served Lévi-Strauss as an example in his theories on kinship (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1958:52-62; 1984:217-20).

Diagram 1: The *tu'a-'eiki* system among relatives.

daughter of ego's eldest sister, etc. The children of ego's brother are lower in rank (*tu'a*). Among the nephews and nieces in the generation below ego, the children of FBD are higher (*'eiki*). All the other cousins, regardless of sex, are *tu'a*. During the lifetime of their parents, children are *tu'a*. Compared with a deceased father they remain *tu'a*, but not compared with their deceased mother. Grandchildren are not *tu'a*, although the degree to which they are *'eiki* varies strongly according to their subsequent position within the *kainga*.

Diagram 1 shows the kinship categories, as well as their *tu'a* or *'eiki* status vis-à-vis ego, indicated with – or + ($\pm$ meaning 'more-or-less-equal', which, as can be seen, is quite rare). It is a simplified schema: some categories are only represented by one term. In other words, one kinship term may apply to several kinship categories, with the value – and/or + (= *tu'a* and/or *'eiki*). To prevent the schema's becoming more complex, the categories 'own children', 'stepchildren', 'children of MB', and 'children of FZ' are not included.⁸ Moreover, the schema is viricentric in the strict sense of the word: ego is a man; a female ego has other categories.⁹ The categories of affines have been left out here as well.¹⁰ The following list contains the kinship terms which are represented in diagram 1.

<i>kui</i>	all male and female relatives two generations above ego;
<i>tamai</i>	father and all patrilineal male relatives one generation above ego; ¹¹
<i>fa'e</i>	mother and all matrilineal female relatives one generation above ego; ¹²

6. Elsewhere in Polynesia this is also the case..

7. It is on this subject that Tonga has served Lévi-Strauss as an example in his theories on kinship (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1958:52-62; 1984:217-20).

8. Ego's own children are called *fanau*; children of FZ: *tama mehekitanga*; children of MB: *tama tu'asina*; stepchildren: *houmotu'a* or *fakafanau*, although they may be indicated with the terms for one's own children as well (cf. Panoff 1965).

9. Feminicentric perspective: one's own sons and daughters as well as those of the *tokoua* are called *tama*. Kaeppler (1971:191) specifies that mothers may make a distinction between sons (*tama tangata*) and daughters (*tama fefine*), but do not necessarily do so, because they show the same conduct towards both categories of children. For fathers, however, daughters have a higher status than sons; fathers use the terminological distinction between sons (*fohu*) and daughters (*'ofefine*) consistently.

10. Categories of cognates: husband and wife are both indicated with the term *mali* (or, alternatively, with *hoa*). In the past, Tongans used the terms *ohoana* and *unoho*, but these terms are now considered old-fashioned. Churchward gives the following designations for husband and wife, corresponding with the social status of the person addressed. Ordinary words (husband and wife respectively): *mali* and *mali*; polite words: *fine 'eiki* and *tangata 'eiki*; honorific words: *uaifi* and *husepaniti*; derogatory words: *finemotu'a* and *motu'a* (Churchward 1959:324). The honorific designations clearly show influence from English. (See, for the difference in vocabulary between commoners and aristocracy, Marcus 1980.)

11. According to Gifford (1929), male as well as female patrilineal relatives are called *tamai*. However, according to the late Queen Salote it is out of order for women to be called *tamai* (Salote, in Bott 1958/9).

12. Bott adds here that also the more remote cousins of father are called *fa'e*.

<i>mehekitanga</i>	father's eldest sister; more generally all father's sisters and his first-degree cousins; ¹³
<i>tu'asina</i>	mother's brothers and all matrilineal male relatives one generation above ego (a synonym for <i>tu'asina</i> is <i>fa'e tangata</i> , meaning literally 'male mother');
<i>tokoua</i>	relatives of the same sex and the same generation (when older, they are called <i>ta'okete</i> , and when younger, <i>tehina</i>);
<i>tuofefine</i>	(exclusively from a viricentric perspective) all female relatives of the same generation;
<i>'ofefine</i>	(ditto) ego's own daughters and those of the <i>tokoua</i> ;
<i>foha</i>	(ditto) ego's own sons and those of the <i>tokoua</i> ;
<i>'ilamatu</i>	(ditto) children of the <i>tuofefine</i> ;
<i>mokopuna</i>	grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.

The mode of behaviour, corresponding with the *tu'a-'eiki* system within the *kainga*, may be summarized in the following seven rules:

- 1) avoidance between siblings and parallel cousins of different sexes, as well as between all patrilineal cross-cousins;
- 2) near-equality between siblings and parallel cousins of the same sex;
- 3) reserve and obedience required of men and women towards their FZ, their *mehekitanga*;
- 4) encouragement and command required of men towards their own children and those of their brothers and male patrilineal cousins;
- 5) tenderness, familiarity and satisfaction of needs required of women to their own children, their sisters' children, and the children of female matrilineal cousins;
- 6) deference and humility appropriate for men and women in their relations with mother's brothers and matrilineal cross-cousins, and for women towards their brothers and patrilineal cousins as well as to the children of these;
- 7) no restrictions between grandparents and grandchildren (Kaeppler 1971:177).

Examples of Convention

In a discussion with an unmarried male informant from the northern village of Taoa, some of these rules were clarified. In the past, he told me, it was not permissible for biological and classificatory brothers and sisters (*tounga'ana* and *tuofefine*) to be in the same room. Nowadays, this is the case to a much lesser degree, among other things under the

13. Second-degree and more remote female cousins are referred to as *fa'a*, according to Bott (1958/9). Kaeppler (1971:175), however, uses this term for all female relatives related via the father, one generation above ego.

influence of western movies. But a classificatory brother and sister are still obliged to behave 'properly' when in each other's vicinity. When asked for an example, my informant first sent his two sisters away and then said: 'It is impossible for example, even when we are joking, to utter in their presence the words . . .' (here followed some swearwords with clear sexual connotations). The fact that another, but non-related, woman was sitting in our vicinity at that very moment apparently was of no consequence to him in mentioning his examples.

Nowadays, it happens more and more frequently that brothers and sisters are present in the same room. However, other things that should not be done remain. A man is not supposed to sit in a kava circle when the kava is being served by his (categorical) sister, his *tuofefine*. Neither is it allowed for them to dance together, either in the traditional way, or western-style dances.¹⁴ A man is not supposed to eat from the same dish or banana leaf as his (classificatory) sister, nor to drink from the same cup. Children are also not allowed to eat from the same dish as their parents. Usually parents observe this rule among each other, and so do brothers and sisters mutually. The same restrictions apply to the wearing of clothes.

When a young man sees his unmarried classificatory sister accompanied by a male friend – who may or may not be a lover – the brother should go away as quickly as possible. A situation in which a brother with his girlfriend and a sister with her boyfriend are sitting in the same room is unimaginable for Tongans, and at least arouses strong indignation. But once married, this is no longer a problem – then this sort of restrictions do not apply. When a man is married and his sister is not, he is supposed to give her the best food he is cultivating in his plantation. On her wedding day, he has to make an earth oven (*'umu*) with pigs and yams for the *kainga* of her husband. When she gives birth to her first child, he also provides her with food, for example milk, cocoa and sugar.

In spite of the high status of daughters, the eldest son is still considered to be the 'most important child' because he will inherit all the possessions of the household, whilst daughters become members of other houses. In the past, a sister could always get, or take with her without asking, things from her brother, for example a pig. The wife of the brother concerned put up with this because she could do the same to her own brother. At present this is all changing. The above-mentioned informant commented:

'In the first instance, our parents teach us this kind of taboos, especially our mother. The mutual avoidance of brothers and

14. Western dances, disco and ballroom dances alike, are called *hula*. This is also the Polynesian word for Hawaiian dancing. Hawaiian dancing differs from the Tongan style by the erotic hip movements.

sisters starts at the age of eight. When I became fourteen, they constructed a special house in the yard for me and my younger brother. Since that time I have never slept under the same roof with my sisters.'

Brothers and sisters have to avoid each other as much as possible; they are not allowed to make fun together. The sister has a higher status than her brothers, even when the latter are older, and in some cases she has more power as well, for example where claims to his possessions, such as pigs, yams and other food, are concerned. However, in the inheritance of the house and land other rules are at work than where the transmission of status is concerned. In spite of their higher status, women are mostly excluded from inheritances, as here the principles of patrilineality and primogeniture are in force. Thus, with respect to the inheritance of the house and land it is the boy, at least the eldest son, who has power, though he has to wait until his father is aged or deceased.

I would like to comment here with regard to the supposed higher status of sisters as compared with brothers that the *tu'a*-*'eiki* ideology does not always correspond with practical reality. The fact that the quoted informant is *tu'a* to his sisters did not prevent him, as we saw, from sending them out of the house when he saw fit. It is an example that could be multiplied, to start with in connection with the inheritance of houses and plots of land (cf. Van der Grijp 1984 and 1987a). In the Tongan way of thinking, women are endowed with much prestige, but this does not necessarily imply that they always have more power than men.

Social Inequality at Funerals

The funeral is one of the most important occasions in the course of which the *kainga* is activated (Kaeppler 1978). On that occasion it becomes clear to everybody how the individual in question, the deceased, is related to all the other *kainga* members, and how one should be defined in terms of *tu'a* and *'eiki* status. The funeral is also the outstanding occasion on which to incorporate young people into the Tongan tradition, the *faka Tonga*, because then the behaviour of all relatives concerned, some hundreds of people, is manifestly defined by *kainga* position.

The preparation of the body of the deceased for the funeral, the closing of the eyes, the washing and dressing, all this sort of actions has to be performed by *kainga* members. Where the deceased is a woman, it should be done by the children of FZ or others who are higher in rank than the deceased (her *fahu*), whereas in the case of a deceased man it should be done by his sister's children or by the grandchildren of FZ (his

fahu).¹⁵ If the corpse were prepared by a person of lower rank, this person might be tortured by evil spirits, the so-called *tevolo*.

Relatives who are lower in rank than the deceased are collectively referred to as *liongi*. This goes for the matrilineal relatives of a deceased man and a deceased woman, in the latter case also for her own brothers and their children. People who are *liongi* manifest themselves as such by wearing round their waist an enormous frayed mat (the *ta'ovala*), which may be so big that it completely covers the black mourning dress underneath. These mats are a sign not only of mourning, but also of relative social position: the lower the *liongi* position vis-à-vis the deceased, the bigger the mat.

The complement of *liongi* is *fahu*. During their lifetime, Tongans will be treated by their *fahu* (usually FZ, or a genealogical equivalent thereof) as pleases the *fahu*. This may even imply – and this is not at all an exception – acceptance of the adoption of one of one's own children by the *fahu*. After one's death, the *fahu* will be the leader (*'eiki*) of one's funeral. Apart from that, the status of either *liongi* or *fahu* within the context of a funeral is only valid in relation to the deceased, and not to the living. Someone who is *fahu* to a deceased may be at the same time lower in rank than someone who is *liongi* to that deceased. It is all a matter of relational logic (cf. Pouwer 1974).

Social Organization of the Aristocracy

The lineages of the Tongan aristocracy are denoted *ha'a*. According to Gifford, who defines *ha'a* as patrilineages, 'each (*ha'a*) consists of a nucleus of related chiefs about whom are grouped inferior relatives, the lowest and most remote of whom are commoners' (Gifford 1929:30). However, later field studies demonstrate the absence of *ha'a* organization at village level (e.g., in Pangai, Vava'u, Beaglehole and Beaglehole 1941:71; in Nukuleka, Tongatapu, Aoyagi 1966:150, 172; and in Ta'oa, Vava'u, and Matuku, Ha'apai, researched by me). One of the main reasons, in my view, why Gifford failed to understand the social organization of commoners, is his choice of mainly chiefly informants.

In the 1920s, Gifford distinguished thirteen *ha'a* in Tonga (Gifford 1929:33). Later, Decktor Korn estimated the number of *ha'a* at ten (Decktor Korn 1974:6). However, neither of them supplied any empirical evidence for this. Kaeppler's work makes more sense in this respect. Through a thorough study of the activities accompanying the funeral of Queen Salote in 1965, she demonstrated the existence of four (or eventually five) *ha'a*. She defines the concept of *ha'a* as 'the abstract

15. At the funeral of a man in Fungamisi (Vava'u), for example, his FZDD was chosen as *fahu*, and not his still living FZD, because she was his *tuofefine* and was consequently not supposed to sit in the presence of her *tu'onga'ane*. A *fahu* has to sit beside the head of the deceased (cf. Helu 1975).

ranking of titles that derive through collateral segmentation within the societal structure, which emphasizes patrilineality' (Kaeppler 1978:175).

The first ten days after the burial of Queen Salote were marked by massive food gifts. In addition, royal kava ceremonies were held in front of the palace, in homage to the late queen and her successor, her son Taufua'ahau Tupou IV (the present king). These kava ceremonies (*pongipongi*), four in all, were also meant as a confirmation of the rights and duties of the *ha'atufunga*, the master of ceremonies at the funeral, and as a recognition of the participating chiefs. At the kava ceremonies, during which food gifts were presented as well, special attention was paid to:

- 1) the *ha'a* Ngata,
- 2) the *ha'a* Havea,
- 3) the combination of the *ha'a* Vaea and the *ha'a* Latuhifo, and
- 4) the *kau* (= *ha'a*) Hala'uta respectively.

The kava ceremonies were manifestations not only of subordination to the new king and his government, but also of ceremonial equivalence and respective status of the four *ha'a* (Kaeppler 1978:187).

Except for cases in which it is manifested in the 'personal class position' and the 'blood' of an individual, *ha'a* status is generally given little attention at funerals. The *kainga* status (i.e., the *tu'a'eiki* principle)

prevails over *ha'a* status and, as Kaeppler calls it, 'personal class position'. The *liongi* at Queen Salote's funeral may serve as an example. These *liongi* were the Tongan nobles Kalanivalu and Vaea, and the Fijian chief Sir Ratu Edward Cakobau. Kalanivalu is the highest chief of the *ha'a* Tu'i Tonga, Vaea a chief of the *ha'a* Havea (sic!) and Cakobau a high chief from Fiji. Kalanivalu was – he is now dead – Salote's MFMBDS (see diagram 2).

In other words – and these are my words – he was her categorical *tu'asina* (cf. diagram 1). Vaea is Salote's half-BS, her *fakafotu*. Cakobau was her half-brother via the father. These three men possess a very high status within their own *ha'a* as well as in the matter of 'personal class position' (in Kaeppler's terms), although during Salote's funeral they were *liongi*, that is, of very low rank (*tu'a*). I have already emphasized that the *tu'a-eiki* distinction is a matter of relative position, of relational logic. The same holds good for the relation *kainga/ha'a*, as is demonstrated in the example above.

The Dynasties of Sovereigns

During the funerals, according to Kaeppler, '*kainga* status takes precedence over class and *ha'a* rank' (Kaeppler 1978:177).¹⁶ However, I think that Kaeppler is wrong in defining the problem in terms of *kainga* status and *ha'a* rank, as if they were two fundamentally different qualities. In my view, *kainga* status and *ha'a* rank concern two different manifestations of the same dichotomy, *tu'a-eiki*, with the same basic principles. The mutual relationship of ancestors in terms of *tu'a* and *eiki* is implied in the classification of *ha'a* rank, as may be clear in diagram 2. Moreover, *ha'a* rank is also determined by the genealogical distance to the lines of the old *tu'i* dynasties, which, finally, is expressed in the *tu'a-eiki* dichotomy, too. The three titleholders of these old dynasties are called respectively Tu'i Tonga, Tu'i Ha'atakalaua and Tu'i Kanokupolu. In this section we will have a look at their origin and development.

According to the oral tradition, the descent line of the Tu'i Tonga can be traced back (in terms of western time-reckoning) to about the year 950, when the first Tu'i Tonga, Aho'eitu, was born, the son of the Polynesian god Tangaloa and an earthly mother (Collocott 1924: 279-83; Gifford 1924:25-43; Wood 1932:5-6; Bott 1982:89-91). Originally, the Tu'i Tonga was a sacred as well as a secular sovereign, who not only symbolically – through myths and ritual – guaranteed the well-being of the entire Tongan population, but who also wielded

16. At the funeral of Queen Salote, however, the status of *liongi* provided the persons in question with much prestige. Even people who had a very distant kinship tie with her, or pretended to have one, showed up with the typical *liongi* mats. But in many cases they were exposed as 'would-be chiefs' (*fie'eiki*) (Kaeppler 1978:180).

Diagram 3: Genealogy of three dynasties of sovereigns.

considerable military and political power. In the fifteenth century, for example, the then Tu'i Tonga extended his supremacy even to the adjacent archipelagos of Samoa, Niue, Tokelau, 'Uvea (= Wallis), Futuna, Rotuma, and part of the Lau Group in Fiji (Latukeyu 1975:2). But this extension of the Tongan empire – still according to oral tradition – resulted in so many political and administrative difficulties, that the 24th Tu'i Tonga, Kau'ulufonua, delegated his secular tasks to his younger brother, whereas he kept the religious functions for himself.

This younger brother, Mo'ungamotua, was the first representative of a new dynasty with the title Tu'i Ha'atakalaua. The sixth titleholder of this Tu'i Ha'atakalaua line, Mo'ungatonga, created through his second son a new title and function with mainly military and political responsibilities. This son, Ngata, was the first Tu'i Kanokupolu. Mo'ungatonga himself retained the nominal leadership, which was inherited later by his eldest son Fotofili and his descendants (Gifford 1929:49-51).

The triumvirate of the three titleholders (the *tu'i*), however, did not have an eternal life. In 1799, at the beginning of the civil war, the sixteenth Tu'i Tonga, Mulikiha'amea, was killed on the battlefield (see Van der Grijp forthcoming). To the vacant Tu'i Ha'atakalaua post no one has been appointed ever since. The army of the last Tu'i Tonga, Laufilitonga, was defeated in 1826 by Taufa'ahau, who himself acquired the Tu'i Kanokupolu title in 1845. Until Tu'i Tonga Laufilitonga's death in 1865, Taufa'ahau put up with him, but after the sacred ruler's death, Taufa'ahau prevented anyone else from taking up the title.

Much later, Queen Salote Tupou III, the mother of the present king, married a descendant of the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua line, Viliami Tungi Mailefihi. Her father, King Siaosi Tupou II, had been married to Lavinia, a descendant of the Tu'i Tonga dynasty. By means of these matrimonial strategies the three lines of sovereigns are now – at least in royal ideology – unified in the person of the present king, Taufa'ahau Tupou IV (see diagram 3).

Conclusions

Ha'a rank refers to a relation in terms of the *tu'a-'eiki* dichotomy in the remote past, which is projected on to a situation in the present, whereas in the case of *kainga* status one goes back only a few generations to look for the *tu'a-'eiki* dichotomy. Furthermore, we find that those Tongans who claim *ha'a* rank do so to their own advantage. Usually they may derive a certain power from it. Hence they usually emphasize their *ha'a* rank, or at least memorize it regularly. In the case of the commoners – by far the largest section of Tongan society – little prestige (and power) can be derived from *ha'a* rank. Their recollection of it is, in fact, fairly weak or, in most cases, totally absent.

Kaeppeler (1978:177) stated that '*kainga* status takes precedence over

class and *ha'a* rank'. This may be true with respect to the important funeral ceremonies. However, where titles to land, and especially the large landownership titles of noble titleholders are concerned, this is certainly not the case. It is precisely on this level that Tongans actively manipulate descent to get the 'right person' in the 'right place'. In old times, titles and titleholders who were considered superfluous were eliminated by giving them such a sacred aureole that it would be completely unbecoming for them to participate any longer in earthly tussles for power. Good examples of this can be found, as we have seen, in the history of the Tu'i Tonga and the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua lines.

Methods of manipulation of titles that are at present more in use are the strategic marriage and a more selective assignment of titles. These methods, incidentally, are not at all a novelty in the Tongan political context (see Sahlins 1958; Goldman 1970; Marcus 1977; Biersack 1982). Kaeppler also holds the view that the regrouping of *ha'a* and other lineages and the rise and fall of high titles are characteristic of the flexibility of the Polynesian political system. It demonstrates, she states, that 'the Tongan social system is still viable within its endemic Polynesian parameters' (Kaeppler 1978:188). We might say that this may be one of the many modifications of the dichotomy 'ascribed-versus-achieved-status', which Sahlins once said corresponded with Polynesian and Melanesian societies respectively (Sahlins 1963).

Tongans shift rather quickly from one household and one house to another. It also happens, although not often, that people change *ha'a*, especially when they believe they will be able to acquire a vacant title in the other *ha'a*. In such a case they may swap, for example, their father's patrilineage for their mother's. In this respect one may speak, as does Decktor Korn, of an optative and variable membership:

'A person will be a member of the group within which and through which he can best secure his own advantage and, if necessary, he will switch membership to do so' (Decktor Korn 1974:11).

A switch of *ha'a* 'is not lightly done', but, as Decktor Korn rightly adds, 'it is common enough not to be exceptional' (Decktor Korn 1974:11). Unlike the situation in unilinear descent groups in many other societies, descent in Tonga is only a precondition for potential membership of the *ha'a*, and this is true for the house as well (see also Kane 1967; Goldman 1970; and Bott 1981).

A house is a more or less open social entity. Fission and the emergence of new houses, which then function within the same village, is common in Tonga (Van der Grijp 1987a:79-81). In this respect, the house differs fundamentally from the *ha'a*. Segmentation occurs in the *ha'a*, and new groups and descent lines are created. For the members of the *ha'a* it is very important to be able to claim a link with the aristocratic ancestors.

The latter, in their turn, are all related in a distant and perhaps only mythical past to the Tu'i Tonga, the sacred sovereign of the ancestors. This genealogical interest, which is directly connected with power, guarantees the continuity of the *ha'a*, at least as far as the persons concerned share in that power. Commoners (the *ha'a*) usually say they do not know if they belong to a *ha'a*, whereas members of the aristocracy (the '*eiki*') have a very detailed knowledge of their own *ha'a* and those of others. Here we can see how ideology, social inequality and history converge.

After all, we should keep in mind the definition of ideology given at the beginning of this article: ideology as a set of ideas in which forms of social inequality (e.g. the *tu'a*-*eiki* distinction) are represented as natural and self-evident, or as predestined by a god or any other supernatural power. Tangaloa, the divine ancestor of the Tu'i Tonga line, might be such a god. The strength of ideology in this sense, the everyday experience of social inequality, is that all participants, commoners and chiefs alike, accept their position in terms of *tu'a* and/or '*eiki*' as self-evident and necessary for the survival of Tongan society as a whole.

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