Early economic encounters in the Pacific or, proto-globalization in Tonga

For a long time anthropologists and historians were taken in by a certain mystique of Western domination: the conceit that the world expansion of capitalism brings all other cultural history to an end [...]. [However,] often in the [Polynesian] islands, in a sort of Neolithic homage to the Industrial Revolution, Western goods and even persons have been incorporated as indigenous powers. European commodities here appear as signs of divine benefits and mythic bestowal, negotiated in ceremonial exchanges and displays that are also customary sacrifices. (Sahlins 1988:5-6.)

This article aims to demonstrate the degree and nature of local autonomy in long-term processes of globalization in Tonga. Tonga is exceptional in two ways: for never having been officially colonized, and for the continuity of its political system (which is a chiefly system). Also, but this is less exceptional, it has never had what could be called a modern, capitalist economy. Globalization is a recent term for the relationship between capital and the nation-state; in the words of William Greider (1997), it is like ‘a runaway horse without a rider’. Global capital is characterized by strategies of predatory mobility. However, the global and the national are not necessarily exclusive but are interacting and overlapping. Social scientists work with the nation-state as a container representing a unit in time and space, a ‘unified spatiotemporality’ according to the sociologist Saskia Sassen (2000). She adds that much of history fails to confirm the latter hypothesis. I suggest that anthropologists, al-

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though they are considered ‘social scientists’, work rather with the notions of culture and society which, in the case of more recent Tongan history, overlap with that of the nation-state. Although globalization is a rather recent notion with an exclusively contemporary application, we can discern the roots of its practice in the early trading contacts between Europeans and Tongans.

Incidental encounters at sea

The first intensive economic encounters between Europeans and Polynesians occurred near the northern Tongan outlying island of Niuatoputapu in 1616.¹ The Europeans, who were Dutch at this point, called the island Cocos Eylandt (Coconut Island) after the 1,400 coconuts they were able to exchange during the two days they were anchored there.² During the encounters, some beads and knives were exchanged for two lengths of bark cloth (tapa); these would seem to have been social exchanges rather than commercial ones. The Dutch ship, the *Eendracht*, was under the command of Willem Schouten and financed by the merchant Jacob Le Maire. Not belonging to the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (United East Indies Company, hereafter Dutch East India Company), the seventeenth-century Dutch multinational *avant la lettre*, the *Eendracht* was searching for an alternative route to the East Indies. A few days later, near the Tongan island of Tafahi, the Dutch lured some sailing canoes by dragging a floating galley barrel behind their ship. The Tongans untied the barrel and knotted some fishes onto the rope. Within minutes, many canoes surrounded the Dutch ship. At the instigation of the Dutch the Tongans went to fetch coconuts and root crops from their island. On that day, 11 May 1616, 200 coconuts changed hands. The following day, the Dutch stocked up with 1,200 coconuts and a quantity of bananas, root crops, and pigs as well as a significant amount of drinking water. Concerning the relative value of the goods exchanged, the ship’s log offers rather precise information. On 11 May 1616, one nail or one small string of beads was exchanged for five coconuts. A few days later a nail was valued at only three or four coconuts. There was, however, a minor armed encounter, due to the Tongans wanting to take over the Dutch sloop. In spite of the many gifts exchanged, in particular with the

¹ Earlier, in 1595, the Spanish captain Mendana had a violent encounter with some Marquises, while Quiros, also Spanish, ‘discovered’ the Tuamotus, the northern Cook Islands and Tikopia in 1605. For these and other early contacts see Van der Grijp (2009a) and for Tikopia and the early economic encounters with Raymond Firth in particular see Van der Grijp 2009b:68-72.

² Schouten 1945:182-3. Previously, the Dutch captain had noted in the ship’s log his very first contact with Polynesians, 25 Tongans in a sailing canoe (of the tongiaki type, as we now know) on the open seas, that the islanders’ food supply consisted mainly of coconuts: ‘this was all the food and drink they carried with them’ (Schouten 1945:179; author’s translation). For this early contact see also the detailed account by Le Maire (1945:51-9).
local chief Latu, the hostility appeared so intense that the Dutch discontinued their bartering and chose the open seas.\(^3\)

Although within its wider Polynesian context Tongan history became part of global history relatively early – the islands were ‘discovered’ by European voyagers long before most other parts of Polynesia – the encounters with Europeans in the first two centuries remained incidental. Nevertheless, these contacts had an impact on Tongan views on trade. The kind of exchange between Europeans and Tongans developed from gifts and barter to commerce, with money arriving much later as a medium of exchange. The kinds of goods exchanged may be distinguished into several categories: primary necessities, such as food and water; manufactured goods, such as textiles and other types of cloth; luxury goods; animals; and persons. Prior to 1850, periodic political instability and wars frequently interrupted trading relationships. Previous to the twentieth century, the means of transportation and communication were restricted to sailing vessels and correspondingly slow letters. But the introduction of steamers around 1900 enabled the rapid development of other means of communication and transportation. The locus of trade changed from incidental encounters at sea, usually close to the shore, to shops and trading offices; it was only at a later stage that real ‘market places’ developed. In discussing early contact trade from the perspective of economic anthropology, I focus on: (1) the social relationship between the trading partners; (2) the kind of exchange practised; (3) the kinds of goods exchanged; (4) the security dimension; and (5) the technological conditions of trade development. In this article, I will deal with all these aspects in the earliest trade between Europeans and Tongans. Social relationships started with Europeans being incidental foreign visitors and later being long-time or even permanent residents.\(^4\) Further, I will take a look at economic exchange between Tongans on the one hand and, on the other hand, (European) voyagers, missionaries, and colonial settlers; I prefer to call this exchange in Tonga ‘proto-globalization’.

Ethnographic sources for this article are from the journals of European voyagers of discovery; missionary diaries and correspondence to be found in the Methodist Missionary Archives in London and the Catholic (Marist) Missionary Archives in Rome; and newspaper cuttings archives and colonial archives in the Pacific. All this ethnographic material comes from the past, and is akin to a historian’s primary sources. An epistemological problem remains: we have no first-hand Tongan accounts, and we thus have to reconstruct Tongan practices and viewpoints through European sources.

Let me add here a provisional definition of globalization, a key concept in

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\(^3\) The chief named Latu by the Dutch was Latumailangi or Puakatefisi, the first Ma’atu or chief of Niuatoputapu.

\(^4\) Later, starting from the 1970s – and beyond the timeframe of the present article – Tongans in turn moved to different parts of the Pacific Rim (Hau’ofa 1994).
contemporary debates. Globalization involves the functioning of capital on a global basis, an extension of the former logic of colonialism and imperialism. The mobility of global capital is its main characteristic, irrespective of forms of communication, national rules, industrial productivity, or ‘real’ wealth in any particular country or region (Appadurai 1996, 2000). I will return to this later.

**Gift exchange and barter with Europeans**

In 1643, other Europeans, namely Abel Tasman and his men (also Dutch, by the way), discovered the Tongan islands of ‘Eua and Tongatapu. Barter-hungry islanders with large quantities of coconuts immediately greeted them. Before Tasman departed on his journey around Australia and through western Polynesia, his patrons in the Netherlands Indies-based Dutch East India Company had given him special instructions: he was to find out whether there was gold or silver in the countries he would possibly discover, and whether that gold or silver was highly valued by local inhabitants. Tasman was not supposed to inform the inhabitants of the commercial value of these precious metals in Europe, clearly an intentional deception (Van der Grijp 2004a). The instructions were: ‘if they shall offer you gold or silver in exchange for your articles, you will pretend to hold the same in slight regard, showing them copper, pewter, or lead and giving them the impression as if the last mentioned minerals were of greater value’ (cited in Beaglehole 1966:145). It was unfortunate for the Dutch East India Company that the Tongans had none of the desired precious metals. They could, however, offer provisions such as agricultural products and drinking water. The encounter between Tasman and the Tongans was more peaceful than the preceding one with Schouten and Le Maire (Tasman 1919; see also Slot 1992). At the first sight of a Tongan canoe, Tasman threw a loincloth into the water that was picked up by the Tongans. Next, the Dutch, still at a distance, presented two nails, a Chinese mirror, and a string of beads tied to a piece of wood. As a counter-gift, tied to the same piece of wood, the Tongans offered a mother-of-pearl fishhook. When three Tongans came aboard the Dutch ship, other goods were exchanged. The Dutch treated their guests to a glass of wine. They themselves took the first sip, in order to reassure the Tongans that the wine was not poisoned. The Tongans drank the wine and, when leaving the ship, took the glass with them. These first gift exchanges were purely symbolic. Soon, numerous canoes with (presumably) more commercially minded Tongans surrounded the Dutch. Several Tongans jumped into the water and offered their coconuts. A visiting chief received presents from the Dutch. In the evening a delegation from this same chief arrived, bringing counter-gifts. The Dutch resumed the commercial exchange of pigs, chickens, coconuts, bananas and yams with other Tongans in exchange...
for beads and nails. Tasman’s men obtained a chicken for a nail, and a pig for a nail plus one length of sailcloth. Finally, Tasman and his crew were able to stock up with 100 pigs, 150 chickens, and numerous coconuts and other agricultural products. These early encounters with the Dutch were characterized by a mixture of gifting and bartering, which would continue throughout the many similar encounters in the centuries to follow.

On James Cook’s first visit, one-and-a-half centuries after the Dutch, the Tongans immediately came on board in order to exchange *tapa* (bark cloth) for nails. In 1777, during his third visit, Cook exchanged axes, rasps, files, textiles, beads and spectacle lenses for large quantities of *tapa*, red feathers (much in demand at his next destination: Hawai‘i), as well as other ‘curiosities’ and food. In 1793, the Spanish Captain Malaspina too engaged in commercial exchange with the Tongans. The Spanish traded a pig for either a yard of sheet or two or three knives. An axe was worth one pig as well as a large quantity of root crops. In exchange for penknives, strings of beads or coral, the Spanish could obtain chickens, root crops, bananas and coconuts. The daily quantity of exchanged and consumed goods grew to ‘unbelievable proportions’ (Malaspina 1793, in Herda 1983:40-1). On their departure, the Spaniards fixed the exchange price for one large plus one small pig at one axe (Malaspina 1793, in Herda 1983:100). In 1797, when the French captain Lapérouse arrived on Tongatapu, it was obvious that the inhabitants had had previous contact with Europeans. The Tongans came on board fearlessly and, unlike the Samoans, never refused ‘de donner leurs fruits avant d’en avoir reçu le paiement’ [to hand over their fruits before having received payment].

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European visitors were not only trading. Some introduced domestic plants and animals that they had brought from Europe or elsewhere. According to Robert Langdon (1977:43-4; see also Cook 1961:262), Abel Tasman (or one of his men) must have left grapefruit seeds in Tonga, since this plant was found there by Cook 140 years later. With the exception of Fiji and Samoa, the grapefruit does not occur in the South Pacific. The Samoan word for grapefruit is *moli toga* which, seen from the Samoan point of view, could be an indication of the place of origin.

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5 There was also linguistic exchange (Geraghty and Tent 1997).

6 Lapérouse 1797:378. In contrast to Tonga, there are few written sources on Samoa before 1830, and even after 1830 sources are scarce. Roggeveen and Bougainville observed Samoan islands and interacted with Samoans in 1722 and 1768 respectively, but did not go ashore. Roggeveen saw the Manu’a Group in 1722, and Bougainville the islands of Tutuila and Upolu in 1768. In 1787, 12 crew members of Lapérouse were killed on Tutuila. In 1791 Captain Edwards visited the islands on his ship the *Pandora*. Only in 1830 did the first missionary sent by the London Missionary Society, Williams, settle in Upolu. He was, however, not the first European resident on the island. For some time European beachcombers had been living in Samoa. Davidson comments rightly that ‘descriptions of Samoan society and settlement patterns in 1840 cannot be regarded as a record of a society unaffected by European contact’ (Davidson 1979:84).
Langdon also ascribes to Tasman the introduction to Tonga of the lemon, a fruit that the Tongans considered to be too sour to eat but quite suitable for hygienic purposes, for example for washing their hair. Accordingly, the Samoan word for the European soap introduced in the middle of the nineteenth century was *moli* ‘soap’. James Cook gave seeds of watermelon, pineapple, turnip and other vegetables as gifts to Tongan chiefs. Twelve years later, Captain Bligh, a former officer of Cook (and well known for his later misadventures on the *Bounty*), saw 25 pineapple plants growing on the island of Nomuka in the Tongan Ha’apai Group. Since it was not the right season, the plants were not bearing fruit, but Bligh’s Tongan hosts assured him that they had eaten many pineapples, that these had been big and juicy, and that there were many more pineapple plants growing on Tongatapu (Bligh 1979:150).

From the end of the eighteenth century, and commencing with Cook’s visits, Europeans also introduced several types of domesticated animals to Tonga. Cook himself presented a bull and a cow as gifts to Pau, a ram and two ewes to Ma’ealiuaki, and a stallion and a mare to Finau Ulukalala, all these men being senior Tongan chiefs. The Tongans, who were used to pigs being the largest animals on their islands for centuries, called the cattle *Puaka Tute* ‘Pigs of Cook’ – *Tute* being the Tongan name for Cook and *puaka* the word for pig. The British Admiralty, which initiated these gifts, intended them to serve as the basis for breeding herds of animals in order to feed future passing British ships. This was also the shrewd motivation behind Cook’s gifts of vegetable seeds. Missionaries of the London Missionary Society mentioned that the cattle and horses left behind by Cook were killed only some years before their own arrival in 1797. When the bull had thrown the mare and the stallion on his horns, the Tongans were so panic-stricken by this brutish gesture that they slaughtered the bull, the cow and three calves. This must, indeed, have happened only a few years earlier, since Bligh (1979:150) heard in 1789 that the cattle and horses left behind by Cook were still alive and had even given birth. In September 1797, during his second visit to Tonga, Captain Wilson of the London Missionary Society vessel *Duff* left behind in Tonga eight goats, three cats and a dog (WMMS 1823:28).

**Development of a particular commercial spirit**

The turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century was rather violent for both Tongans and Europeans (Van der Grijp 2004b; 2007). In 1799, three of the ten

7 Moreover, on his way to Tonga Tasman had visited the island of Mauritius, where grapefruit had been growing since the early seventeenth century. The grapefruit was probably introduced to Mauritius from Ambon by Corneille Matclief in 1606 (Langdon 1977:45).

8 According to Koch (1955:170), Cook was also responsible for the introduction of dogs in Tonga. From archaeology and comparative linguistics, however, we know that Tongans already had dogs before Cook.
missionaries of the London Missionary Society who had arrived two years previously, were killed in a local war. The others left Tonga on the first visiting European ship, with the exception of George Vason, who ‘went native’, that is, married several Tongan wives and participated actively in the wars. In 1806, the British trading vessel *Port-au-Prince* was attacked by Tongans in Ha’apai, stripped, burnt and sunk. Most of the crew members were killed, except those the Tongans considered useful in warfare: they could advise on the use of (European) firearms. The money on board the *Port-au-Prince* was sunk with the ship, because the Tongans thought that the round pieces of metal were just chips in a type of game, *pa’anga*, the later word for the Tongan dollar. Later, two American ships, the *Union* and the *Duke of Portland*, and two whalers in Vava’u were plundered. These violent confrontations were linked to the rivalry between Tongan chiefs and the ongoing wars during that period. After these violent episodes, commerce was resumed with every visiting Western ship. In 1827, the Irish Captain Peter Dillon had hardly thrown down his anchor when his ship was surrounded by outrigger canoes with Tongans offering yams, sweet potatoes, coconuts, bananas and sugar cane. One Tongan even came up with a duck (Dillon 1830:261). During the ensuing days, Dillon and his men exchanged 30 pigs and 300 kilograms of yams for large quantities of knives and other hardware. Indigenous supplies exceeded the demands of the European sailors many times over. Thus, we read in the ship’s log: ‘I do not hesitate to say that Tonga is the island in the South Seas where ships can most easily obtain provisions, which are extremely plentiful’ (Dillon 1830:271-2; author’s translation). In the same year, 1827, the ship of the French captain Dumont d’Urville was also surrounded by Tongans in outrigger canoes from dawn to dusk. They exchanged pigs, chickens and fruits for knives, bottles and blue glass beads.

As elsewhere in Polynesia, in Tonga it was not only agricultural products that were commercially exchanged. A particular form of exchange was sexual in nature, first encountered in the form of (imposed) hospitality and only later as trade. On the island of ‘Eu a the British, under Captain James Cook, were immediately given a warm welcome. The chief named Tione (in Cook’s spelling) treated him to a feast with roasted pigs and a kava ceremony.

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9 Vason remained in Tonga for four years, and later published his Tongan memoirs (Vason 1840).
10 One of them was William Mariner, who was to remain four years in Tonga, and later published his Tongan memoirs (Martin 1981).
11 The usual price of a yam of one or one-and-a-half kilograms was one bead, the price of a chicken five beads, and that of a pig 60 to 80 beads. These prices would not have been so high, according to Dumont d’Urville (1832:63), if his men had not been so eager for indigenous products, which devalued Western products considerably. One of his crew members, M. Quoy, noted in his journal that a chicken was worth two beads, considerably less than what his captain had indicated. For an empty bottle the French received five chickens, according to Quoy. They also exchanged knives, mirrors and rings for chickens. Furthermore, the French sold their weapons and many shells (Quoy in Dumont d’Urville 1832:343-4).
involving the Polynesian drink made from the *Piper methysticum*, and with songs and dances. The hospitality on Tongatapu went so far that Cook was offered the sexual services of a young woman. Cook refused the offer: ‘The good natured old Chief introduced to me a woman and gave me to understand that I might retire with her, she was next offered to Captain Furneaux but met with a refusal from both, tho she was neither old nor ugly’ (Cook 1961:254). A year later, on the Tongan island of Nomuka, Cook (1961:444) was abused when he refused a similar offer:

this woman and a man presented to me a young woman and gave me to understand she was at my service [...]. I was made to understand I might retire with her on credit, this not suit ing me neither the old Lady began first to argue with me and when that failed she abused me... what sort of man are you thus to refuse the embraces of so fine a young Woman.

Dumont d’Urville (1832:64), however, observed that Tongan women were more reserved in this respect than the women in New Zealand. Most Tongan women refused to respond to the French men’s advances, and those who were willing to offer their sexual favours demanded a high price, and did so only after having sought permission from their chief.12

As to the commercial value of drinking water, some disagreement arose between the Tongans and the French. Chief Tupou asked Dumont d’Urville how much he was prepared to pay for a barrel of water. Through his translator the French captain made clear that it was quite proper to pay for wood and food and that he was even willing to pay double or triple the price, but that throughout the world water belongs to everybody. Anyone who tried to prevent him from laying in a stock of drinking water would receive the full blast of his firearms, he threatened: ‘Nos canons et nos mousquets seraient chargés de solder ceux qui voudraient m’empêcher d’en prendre’ [our canons and our muskets would be loaded to pay those who would prevent us from taking some (drinking water)] (Dumont d’Urville 1832:75-6; author’s translation). Presumably, the chief was intimidated by this answer, and did not refer to the matter again. In this case the law of supply and demand apparently no longer applied; instead a ‘rationality’ of power through firearms prevailed. The Tongans themselves also made use of violence and threatened violence to...
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manipulate commerce. The powerful chief Tahofa of the village of Pea is a good example. Tahofa thought it beneath his dignity to trade with Europeans himself, but was surrounded by Tongans who traded under his orders. Dumont d’Urville (1832:89; author’s translation): ‘I noticed that, generally, they first turn to their chief [Tahofa] before making a deal, even a small one [...]. I also observe that he uses all his influence to keep the canoes of other districts away from our ship, or at least to let them have the smallest share of all the deals which are made around the ship’. Like the Europeans, the Tongans employed their own strategies in carrying out commercial transactions. One of these – which usually, apart from the above observation on Tahofa’s behaviour, took place out of sight of Europeans – was that the Tongan chiefs (‘eiki) claimed and obtained from their commoners (tu’a) a significant portion of the goods traded.

Tongans also changed their attitude towards Europeans, as witnessed by the ship’s log of the United States Exploring Expedition commanded by Captain Wilkes in 1840. Three crew members went ashore in search of indigenous arms, tools and ‘other curiosities’. For this purpose the three had brought with them a large selection of Western goods for exchange, but, while bargaining, their patience was put to the test:

For if their [asking] price is at once acceded to, they consider the bargain as a bad one. No inducement is sufficient for them to part with several articles of a kind at once; each must be disposed of separately, and on all, alike chaffering must be gone through with. The natives, before they bring articles for sale, fix their minds upon something they desire to obtain, and if that is not to be had, they take their things away again, it matters not whether the article is equivalent in value or not.13

It seems that the Tongans developed their own commercial spirit in response to the opportunities offered by visiting European ships. This, incidentally, had become clear half a century earlier. Upon its arrival in 1797, numerous Tongans, as usual, boarded the ship Duff of the London Missionary Society. They offered pigs, breadfruits, coconuts, spears, clubs and other items. However, they demanded a high price in exchange for their goods: ‘The Tongans’ demands were so high that but little was purchased’, Captain Wilson (1799:97) complained. Western clothes, iron, large nails in particular, and small green and blue beads were much in demand. However, as Wilson (1799:283) remarked about the Tongans during his second visit six months later, ‘they are so scrupulous in their dealing, that they generally hold out for the full value of every thing’. The Tongans had clearly become full commercial partners, which apparently was regretted by many Europeans, including the missionaries.

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13 Wilkes 1985:34. One of the three crew members, Mr. Vanderford, who had visited Tonga several times starting in 1810, confided to his captain that ‘he had never found the Tongan people such saucy fellows’ (Wilkes 1985:34).
The ten members of the London Missionary Society who settled in Tonga in 1797 and would remain for two years were not the first Europeans who came to settle on these islands. The end of the eighteenth century was also the period of the ‘beachcombers’: Western adventurers, usually escaped convicts, deserters, and shipwrecked sailors. Unlike these isolated ‘beachcombers’, the first missionaries introduced Western religion and civilization, or at least attempted to do so. This brought with it both a discourse about Christianity and a wealth of Western goods, products of the early-industrial British society from where the missionaries originated. The Tongans were particularly interested in iron tools. Each time the missionaries worked in their garden, curious Tongans surrounded them. While observing the foreigners, the Tongans, according to the missionaries, would feel negatively about their own country and people because they were ‘so ignorant of the ingenious arts with which we are acquainted’ (Wilson 1799:233). The missionaries did not always welcome this curiosity because, as they said, ‘the natives... are frequently so troublesome, that we are obliged to drive them away’ (Wilson 1799:234). The missionaries were often generous with the chiefs and supplied many of them with the much desired iron tools. One day, Chief Tuku’aho arrived with a spade that the missionaries had given him a week earlier. Tuku’aho wanted them to cut the iron blade into pieces to make a number of small tools. Later, they received similar requests from other chiefs. The missionaries taught some of the Tongans how to cultivate the soil with iron tools. After six months, when the ship Duff of the London Missionary Society returned from Tahiti at the end of September 1797, the missionaries distributed a new stock of goods among the inhabitants of the places where they were living by then. It was, according to the missionaries, ‘an immense quantity of useful and necessary iron tools of all sorts, as far exceeded our greatest expectation, and filled the natives with astonishment’ (Wilson 1799:272). The new stock achieved the desired effect for the missionaries, judging from a speech made by the Tongan high chief Mulikiha’amea, who held the Tu’i Ha’atakalaua title:

If the men of the sky [the missionaries], discovered by any attempts of violence, or secret whisperings, that they meant to take our land, and kill us, we ought all to strike hands, and root them out from among us; but they have brought great riches, they have given them to us freely, we reap the good fruits of their living among us, their articles are of great use to us, they behave themselves well; and what could we wish for more? (Cited in Vason 1840:117).

The first Wesleyan Methodist missionary in Tonga, Walter Lawry, who arrived in 1822, brought with him seven sheep, seven cows and a bull. The Tongans

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14 Lawry commented that ‘the poor natives were much amazed to see them’ (WMMS 1823:28). Apparently he thought he was first to introduce these animals to Tonga, which was not the case, James Cook having been the first.
were most interested in Lawry’s goods, to the extent that they stole washing which was drying on the line, as well as spades, saws, and various carpentry tools (Lawry’s diary 24 April 1823, in WMMS 1824:40). Lawry did not remain long in Tonga, in contrast to his colleagues who arrived some years later. With the support of Chief Tāufa’āhau these later missionaries were able to convert almost the whole population of Tonga within a few decades. The Methodist missionaries for their part helped Tāufa’āhau to centralize political power on the islands. In 1842, Roman Catholic missionaries from France established themselves in Tonga also (Van der Grijp 1993b). In 1845, Tāufa’āhau was installed as Tu’i Kanokupolu in a kava ceremony (West 1865:58-9) and received the royal name Siaosi Tāufa’āhau Tupou.\(^{15}\) In the next section we will have a close look at the consequences for trade.

**Production for a foreign market**

From 1846, the Methodist missionaries demanded that their converts produce coconut oil as a contribution to the church. This was the first time in history, as Gailey (1987:217-47) correctly observes, that Tongans actually produced for a market. Initially, the missionaries exported the oil to their Sydney headquarters; later they started selling the oil directly to European traders in Tonga. In 1854, Tonga’s King Siaosi Tāufa’āhau Tupou ordered that, every year, each adult man was to contribute to the mission four gallons (18 litres) of coconut oil. The missionaries took various measures to ‘encourage the manufacture of the article, and to facilitate its sale to resident foreign traders’ (West 1865:141). Thus, the Methodist church became a market institution, and provided its members with both the occasion and the motivation to participate in it, including the Protestant ethic of hard work (Weber 1958). In processing the oil, at first the rather inefficient method of ‘lignefaction’ was used. In 1855, in Ha’apai, a coconut-oil extraction factory was established which, however, went bankrupt within four years. The missionary West wrote that, as of 1856, ‘a number of foreigners now reside on different islands for the purpose of trade; so that the people find ready purchasers for their products, instead of being dependent, as in former times, upon the casual and uncertain visits of trading ships’ (1865:431). The Tongans requested clothing, cotton prints and hardware, and they paid in money or in oil, yams, pork or poultry. Among Tongans there was also a demand for bread, especially outside the yam season, and tinned fish for ceremonial occasions. These involved only small amounts of money and coconut oil compared to the obligatory church contributions.

\(^{15}\) Siaosi is the Tongan version of the name George, after the British king. Thus, the Hawaiian ruling chiefs were not the only Polynesians who ‘wanted the identity of the European great, whose names and habits they adopted as signs of their own dignity... and name their sons and heirs “King George”’ (Sahlins 1988:28).
Every year, the church collected large sums of money and quantities of coconut oil. In 1851, for example, during a church meeting on the island of Lifuka in Ha’apai, converts collected more than £20 in money and products. The King set the example of ‘giving alms of such things as he had’ by contributing a barrel of oil and a ton of yams (WMMS 1852:40). The Methodist missionaries: ‘[We had] numerous Missionary Meetings in the Circuit... In many [villages] an increased liberality has abounded to their account. His Majesty the King’s donation of £30 may have special mention: it rises like himself, far above the average of his people’ (WMMS 1868:106). According to the same missionaries, ‘the chiefs heartily co-operate with their people, and with ourselves in our endeavours to build up and strengthen our Native churches, and for this, noble sacrifices are yearly made’ (WMMS 1872:145). The French Catholic missionaries, the local competitors of the Methodist ones, mentioned with envy that the King had bought several European vessels in order to sell coconut oil in Sydney. The quantity of coconut oil collected for the church greatly exceeded the expenses of Tonga’s Methodist church. The total of £6,000 collected in 1869, for example, was £3,500 more than the total costs of the Methodist mission that year (WMMS 1870:121). In 1874, the King made a request through the missionary Baker to the Methodist Conference in Australia to transform the Methodist church in Tonga into an administratively and financially independent church, in other words no longer part of the Australian branch of the Methodist church. The request was turned down.

In Tonga the gifts to the church continued, and Baker was the champion collector. Many of the gifts were in coconut oil. Of the £2,300 collected during the annual meeting of 1868, for example, £1,200 was in oil and £1,100 in cash (WMMS 1869:106). The collections represented a considerable investment of labour. To meet the contribution of £3,000 in 1864, at least six million coconuts were processed. Apart from contributions in oil and cash, unpaid labour was demanded for building and maintaining churches, schools and mission-
ary houses. In 1864, the Tongan Methodists were able to completely cover the local mission costs of £2,500. The remaining income, however, was still forwarded to Sydney, where it was invested in the expansion of the Methodist mission elsewhere in the Pacific. In 1875, during the preparations for the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first Methodist missionaries, special appeal to the Tongans was made. This resulted in a total of more than £15,000, almost three times as much as the previous year (see Table 1).

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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
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Table 1. Contributions to the Methodist Church (1854-1876)

According to a Roman Catholic missionary there was much migration to Tongatapu, and the whole coast from Nuku’alofa to Ma’ufanga was occupied by European traders, including many small traders and three large trading houses. Here, everybody built European-style houses, the chiefs and Methodist missionaries included. Tongan houses (fale) were banned from the coast. The Catholic missionary concluded that ‘the movement which drags Tonga towards the fakapa pälangi [the European way of life] is not going to slow down’ (Lamaze 1877:89; author’s translation). Many Tongans, however, incurred debts as a result of the Methodist church collections. Some people were unable to pay their taxes. Land was expropriated. Dissatisfaction among Tongans increased, also because they had to provide more and more labour (without compensation). All these factors contributed to the nationalization of the Methodist church in 1885. It remained a Methodist church, but became independent of the Australian headquarters. The church collections contin-

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20 Brenchley quotes the example of building a large church in Nuku’alofa in 1865 at a cost of £600, in which 24,000 man-days of unpaid labour were also invested. If 350 labourers had received two shillings a day, being the basic indigenous wage of that time, another £3,000 would need be added to the building costs (Brenchley 1873, cited in Bolland 1974:29).

21 This was to celebrate the arrival of the missionaries Thomas and Hutchinson in 1826. The first Wesleyan Methodist missionary in Tonga was Walter Lawry in 1822, but he was not popular and not honoured with a celebration.

22 This missionary specified that it concerned one company from New Zealand, the company Godeffroy, and a company from Hamburg (Lamaze 1877:89). It seems, however, that the missionary made a mistake, because Godeffroy was a company from Hamburg, and probably the only one.
ued, but the amounts collected decreased considerably.\textsuperscript{23} During this period, Tongans did not use money as a means of commercial exchange, but they did use it as a morally obligatory payment to the church.

Meanwhile, the Methodist missionary Baker came to an agreement with the German trading house Godefroy that the latter would buy all of Tonga’s production of coconut oil. On 1 November 1876, Germany and Tonga signed a Treaty of Friendship, containing the clause that German ships could make use of the harbour facilities in Vava’u. The German trading house Godefroy was successful in monopolizing trade from Hamburg to Valparaiso, as well as the Chinese copra trade (Bollard 1981). Since 1857, Godefroy had been active in the Pacific. In the Samoan capital Apia, Godefroy established an agency with a credit of £10,000, and large coconut and cotton plantations were started elsewhere in Samoa. In 1861, Godefroy’s manager, August Unshelm, had German, British and American agents in Samoa, Tonga and Fiji. Unshelm had introduced the idea of planting cotton in between the coconut palms.\textsuperscript{24} Starting in 1867, these activities were extended to Tonga.\textsuperscript{25} In 1867, Theodor Weber, August Unshelm’s successor as Godefroy’s Pacific manager, introduced the production of copra. Copra (dried coconut meat) thereafter replaced coconut oil as the principal trading item of the islands.\textsuperscript{26} In Europe at that time, candles and soap were made of coconut oil. By using copra instead of coconut oil for these purposes, Weber transformed the whole trade in the South Pacific. Godefroy used about 20 ships, including chartered British ships (Spoehr

\textsuperscript{23} In 1889, for example, it was only £1,289 (Bollard 1974:32).

\textsuperscript{24} ‘The shipments of coconut oil and cotton to Hamburg ensured a considerable net profit to cover the firm’s outlay in trading goods. Supplying cotton to Europe at this time was a fortunate circumstance, since the war in the United States had deprived England’s mills of their chief source of supply’ (Spoehr 1963:34).

\textsuperscript{25} A Catholic missionary mentioned the arrival, in January 1870, of the first Godefroy representative in Vava’u, Aloïsio. Together with his Samoan wife Philomena and four workers, Aloïsio came to open a trading post for the ‘rich company from Hamburg’. The agent of the company, Mr. Dixon, did not know where to find accommodation for his personnel in Vava’u and was pleased with the Catholic missionary’s offer of an old house. The missionary also put his boat at their disposal until they could obtain their own. The captain of the company’s first visiting vessel, M. Kegel of the San Francisco, was said to be very pleased with the Catholic mission’s help to his company. Aloïsio happened to be a former student of the Catholic Clydesdale College; his wife Philomena was also a Catholic. Two of the accompanying workers, a young Tahitian couple, were Protestants; but within eight days they renounced this religion, according to the missionary. The two other workers of the company were ‘heathens from the islands below the equator’ and were shortly converted to Catholicism (Breton 1871:365-6).

\textsuperscript{26} Unshelm had died in a hurricane at sea. Weber was only 24 years old. In a monograph on Godefroy we read: ‘Between 1867 and 1869, Weber carried out what he and Unshelm had earlier discussed, the making of copra. Oil collected from distant islands was often impure, and it suffered spoilage from the long journeys to Hamburg and wasteful leakage from defective casks. Weber was the first to hit upon the plan of selling the nuts where collected and cutting up the meat for drying. The product was easily transportable, and the oil extracted from it on its arrival in Europe was of the best quality’ (Spoehr 1963:37).
For several decades, Godeffroy would dominate trade in Tonga.

In 1869, for the first time, the King of Tonga borrowed money from Godeffroy. In exchange for this, the Tongan government received all its taxes in the form of copra, which was then exported via Godeffroy. Through its missionary Baker, the Methodist church instituted a similar arrangement with Godeffroy. Godeffroy advanced money to individual Tongans for church contributions, and the debts were later redeemed with copra or with expropriated land. Thus, the German company not only obtained a monopoly on Tongan copra exports but also acquired a considerable quantity of land. Moreover, Godeffroy controlled most Tongan money transactions. When in the 1870s there was a shortage of cash in Tonga, Godeffroy supplied Tonga with money from Bolivia and Chile.27 In 1878, the family enterprise Godeffroy and Sons was transformed into a company based on shares, and renamed Deutsche Handels- und Plantagen Gesellschaft der Südseeinseln zu Hamburg.28 In 1881, after Baker had resigned as a Methodist missionary, King Tāufa‘āhau appointed him as Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Land. Steadily, Baker worked towards the development of the Tongan state along the lines of the Westminster model. As premier, Baker was able to settle the Tongan government’s debts within two years. Among his economic measures was the obligation for all Tongan men to plant coffee and cotton on their plots of land.29 In 1882, on Baker’s initiative, a new national constitution of 120 articles was drawn up.30 In the same year, the government ceased subsidizing missionary schools, and opened its own primary schools as well as a high school.31

By 1900, dissatisfaction among Tongans had increased about the exorbitant demands for money made by the churches, and later by the state. Tongans, however, were too tied to their gift morality (Sykes 2005) to be able to withdraw, witness an account of a session of the Tongan parliament as reported in a British colonial journal in neighbouring Fiji, the Fiji Times (hereafter FT):

27 This was the silver dollar with an impoverished degree of precious metal known as ‘iron money’. This money was probably put into circulation during the Bolivian civil war, but it quickly devalued too much for local use.

28 Most of the shares remained in the hands of the Godefroy family. In 1879, however, the Godefroy company was forced into bankruptcy because of making faulty new investments. At that time, the trading house had been in existence for 113 years (Hertz 1922; Schmack 1938).

29 According to Gailey (1987:225-6), in her search for gender meanings and practices, ‘coffee was koloa, a valuable, and thus a women’s product […]. [However], the expansion of commodity production stressed exchange value, not use-value […]. Koloa in the new sense was determined by the destiny of the product and its merits in the international market; the personhood of the makers of the item was irrelevant’.

30 For the history of the Tongan legal system see Lātūkefu (1974, 1975) and Powles (1979, 1990).

31 The missionary schools also included Tupou College, founded and headed by the Methodist missionary Moulton, Baker’s personal rival. The government high school was named Government College, and later Tonga College. The compulsory school age was from 5 to 15 years.
The parliament is still in session, and will doubtless continue its sittings as long as the food supplies hold out. The people of Tongatapu themselves will have to go hungry before long, if honoured much longer by the presence of the nobles and their numerous followers, who like a swarm of locusts are eating up every green thing in the country. If this state of affairs lasts much longer, a yam will be a curiosity, and a pig a thing of the past (FT, August 1891).

Certain traders had fallen out of favour, and their leases were discontinued. The Fiji Times mentioned local resistance to a price monopoly by certain European traders in Vava’u. Vava’uan growers organized themselves into what was called the Copra Ring and would have ‘arranged that not a single basket of copra should be sold to the trader who had hitherto been the largest buyer, unless he paid a higher price than that agreed to by the Ring’. The Vava’uans, however, did not have to put this threat into practice because ‘they well knew that no trader would be able to put up with that for long; for it would drive him mad to see his rivals, day after day, getting all the business at his cost,’ and ‘once more’ the Vava’uan growers received ‘a shilling for nine or ten pounds of dry copra’ (FT, 17-11-1887). This had the desired effect, since ‘large quantities’ of copra had been produced (FT, 17-11-1887). In March and April 1888, ‘no less than four vessels... laden with copra’ had sailed out of Vava’u (FT, 23-5-1888) and, in July of the same year, again ‘the Vava’uans [had] been busy making copra’ (FT, 9-8-1888). Four years later, however, on Tongatapu:

The “strike epidemic” has found its way even to this ultima thule, and the native [working on the wharf], no longer willing to accept three shillings as his day’s wage, is demanding loudly the “whole dollar” and threatening all manner of mischief if he does not get it. A few of the leading and restless spirits have formed themselves into an association (which is rapidly increasing in numbers) having for its object the raising of the rate of wages and the price of native produce (FT, May 1892).

The ‘troubles’ started when Tongans refused to work for the steamer Wainui at the usual rate of pay, and demanded more. The captain of the steamer refused to pay more, and managed to load the ship with his own crew. The workers association (kautaha) then threatened to burn the houses of those Tongans who sold their bananas for less than one shilling per bunch. A similar condition was imposed for copra. On the wharves labourers were ‘threatened with violence’ if they continued to work for less than one dollar per day. This was extended to other workers: ‘even nursemaids, sewing girls, and domestic servants were ordered to leave the house of their white employers’, that is, unless these workers received one dollar per day (FT, May 1892). The Tongan Police Court prosecuted three members of the association for ‘intimidation’ and ‘interfering in and
obstructing British subjects whilst at their work'. Four Tongan houses were actually burned down by members of the association: two houses in Houma, one in Faleha, and one in Ma’ufanga, ‘because their owners had disposed of native produce (oranges) at less than the fixed price’. Apparently, this had at least some effect, since Tongan growers ‘have lately received a somewhat better price [for copra] and are thus encouraged to make large quantities’ (FT, 13-7-1892). In 1895, the total Tongan copra export was between 12,000 and 13,000 tonnes. However, due to the recession in the 1890s in New Zealand and later in Australia, sea links were abandoned and exports started to decline. The imports from Samoa and thus Germany were much reduced. New cash crops, such as coffee and cotton, suffered from disease. Wool ceased to be a Tongan export product. By the end of the 1890s total export was only half what it had been. Many small European traders left Tonga.

Conclusions

In this article, we have seen the development of European-Tongan trade, which started with ceremonial gift-giving during the earliest contacts and soon transformed into barter. Barter continued for several centuries with voyagers of discovery, whalers and other European visitors engaged in global projects such as the Dutch East Indies Company and its competitors. Missionary intervention in Tonga resulted in the first production for a market (commodity production), namely the world market for coconut oil and later copra; for local standards, the amount of money involved in this was considerable. The dominant Methodist mission, indeed, functioned as a genuine multinational, with headquarters in London and Sydney, extracting money from Tonga and reinvesting this ‘global capital’ elsewhere in order to increase its efficiency. This may be seen as one of the roots of globalization, or rather of proto-globalization. Tongan protest against this international floating of capital resulted in the emancipation and autonomy of the Tongan Methodist Church from Australian headquarters, although the massive obligatory contributions of money to the church continued and, as demonstrated elsewhere (Evans 2001; Van der Grijp 1993a, 2004c), they continue down to the present day.

32 The British Consul R.B. Leefe Esq. played a major role in this court case. The fines of $5, $5, and $3 respectively, as the Fiji Times (May 1892) stated, were ‘evidently very unwillingly’ imposed by the Magistrate, who himself was supposed to be ‘one of the leading men in this movement’.
33 In these cases there was no prosecution, because ‘no clue has been discovered, and the perpetrators of these villainies are still at large’ (FT, 15-6-1892).
34 Between 6,000 and 7,000 of these were produced on Tongatapu alone (FT, 21-1-1896).
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