There is a certain amount of timelessness inherent in some ethnographic reports: a timelessness which stems from the quest of the synchronic description cum analysis of culture. This timelessness is present even though I am in agreement with Locher’s basic point that “there is a new interest in the relation between anthropology and history” (Locher 1967: 77). Unfortunately, this relationship has yet to be intensified.

Change obviously takes place over time, yet all too often statements in the published accounts have compressed many of the unique aspects of Tongan culture into a homogenized whole. The massive work of Griffith (1929) has various points in it where one is not certain what was an aboriginal Tonga and what was the Tonga of Griffith’s research period of 1920–1921. In order to describe aboriginal Tonga and analyze changes in Tonga, one must “begin at the beginning” and gather the most reliable information on aboriginal Tonga, i.e., early-contacted Tonga. By itself, twentieth-century “memory culture” of what aboriginal Tonga was like (from which many researchers get their idealistic ethnographic base lines) is not sufficient to say what Tonga was like in the past. Memory culture descriptions,

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in numerous respects, are not superior to reputable eye-witness descriptions of aboriginal Tonga.

CONTACT AND DESCRIPTIONS

Part of the Tongan archipelago was first contacted by the Dutch navigators Schouten and Le Maire in 1616, and various contacts with Europeans followed: 1643 (Tasman), 1767 (Wallis), 1773, 1774, and 1777 (Cook), 1781 (Maurel), 1787 (La Perouse), 1789 (Bingham) (D'Entrecasteaux and Labillardiere), and 1793 (Malaspina) (see Colson 1885; Tudor 1990: 125–127). These contacts between Europeans and Tongans lasted for periods of a few days to several weeks. The accounts of these men made Europeans aware of Tonga and placed Tonga on Europe’s map. The accounts spurred Europeans to send men to proselytize the peoples of the Pacific. Tonga, along with Tahiti, was one of the first island groups to be sent European missionaries in the late eighteenth century.

The first missionaries were of the Missionary Society of London (form-

ed in 1795 and later termed the London Missionary Society, or LMS) and they arrived at Tongatapu on April 10, 1797 (Benson 1960: 113; Wilson 1979: 96). Ten male missionaries landed and some remained until 1800, but the attempt at religious conversion ended in a debacle. One missionary, Vason, married a Tongan woman and was converted to the anga-faka-Tonga or ‘Tongan way of life’ (Vason 1810). The Wesleyan Missionary Society established a mission station on Tongatapu in August of 1822 manned by one missionary, Walter Lawry, who was accompanied by his wife and several servants (including Europeans and a Marquesan islander) (see Lawry’s Diary for August, 1822). This attempt at Christian conversion also ended in failure with Lawry being ordered by London to be “remov’d from Tonga to Van Diemen’s Land” (Lawry, Diary: July 26, 1823). Lawry eventually left the island in October of 1823, and it wasn’t until 1826 that a second Wesleyan mission was attempted in the archipelago. In June of 1826 the Wesleyan missionaries John Thomas and John Hutchinson arrived, with their wives, and this mission eventually proved successful. From 1826 onwards Tongans entered into sustained European contact.

The various published accounts of the individuals of this period (1816–1826), combined with twentieth-century field work, have allowed us to make inferences about aboriginal Tongan culture (Cout 1959, for example). Yet no systematic attempt has ever been made to incorporate manuscript materials into (1) an original ethnographic base line, and (2) an analysis of changing Tongan culture. What were the processes by which the aboriginal Tongan culture of 1800 developed into the Constitutional Monarchy of 1875?

The date of 1875 is extremely important in Tongan studies, for in many respects the Tonga of pre-1875 was not the same as the Tonga of post-1875. In 1875 the Tongan Constitution was promulgated by the Tai Kanokop e King George Tupou I, with the help of European advice. The Constitution was the result of Western influence on Tonga and the culmination of all of the written Tongan laws in effect in the archipelago in 1839. The date of 1830 given in Murdock’s Ethnographic atlas (1967) for Tonga, for cross-cultural research of a certain type, can be extremely misleading, for by this time two major wars (as a result of nineteenth-century Western influence) had been fought in the archipelago (1837 and 1840). The Tongan language reduced to a systematic orthography (c. 1830), and a European-induced codified system of laws had already been in effect for certain parts of the archipelago for many years (in the island groups of Vava’u and Ha’apai). Certainly Goldman’s most recent work which suggests 1800 as the “terminal date” for aboriginal Polynesian
society merits closer consideration than 1850 for Tonga (Goldman 1970: xxvi).

Utilizing 1800 as a reference date for Tonga, one has a dynamically operating and changing Polynesian society, with an elaborate system of rank (based on kinship ties) and status (based on kinship and achievement). Changes in the rank and status systems resulted from Western contact but those have not always been successfully analyzed or reported in ethnographic accounts.8

ABORIGINAL TONGA

There are four major titles in Tonga with which we are concerned: Tu'i Tonga, Tu'i Ha'a Talatala, Tu'i Kanokupolu, and Tamohi. When the various missionaries arrived in the archipelago, they grasped part of the cultural system of ranking. The Wesleyan missionary Lawry recorded in his diary for September 13, 1823, that:

the following is the order in which the present Chiefs of the Friendly Islands rank: Vii -
1. Tuvai'onga [Tu'i Tonga]
2. Tu'a-Tia'afa [Tu'i Ha'a Talatala]
3. Tuia'afasaiai [Tu'i Kanokupolu]

Another Wesleyan missionary, John Thomas (in the archipelago from

8 The only way in which a researcher can attempt a reconstruction of aboriginal culture is for that researcher to examine the earliest extant documentation pertaining to that culture and then make comparisons between the old information and new information gained by contemporary field work. Urbanistica (1972) provides a detailed explanation of the methodology of the documentary research.

Ethnographic techniques were used to extract ethnographic information of the past from the documentary materials. Ethnography is that the application of historical method to a body of documents specifically chosen for the construction of an historical ethnography (see Fenton 1962; Sturtevant 1942). Ethnography focuses on the "ethos". In the term, is presenting an ethnography of a given group of people; the "ethos" refers to the writing of history, but to the application of historical method to gather verifiable ethnographic facts of the past. Ethnography is not a study of change per se, although it eventually contributes to studies of change. The term ethnography as used by ethnographers is not synonymous with culture history, as the distinguished Pacific historian H. R. Muse has written (1971: 21).

Every ethnographer is, in essence, an ethnographer, since every ethnographer must read background material prior to beginning field work and must weigh and assess previous research reports and every ethnologist is at heart an ethnographer, combining archival research with field work among the contemporary people. This is why I went to Tonga. Also see Cohn 1968, Dodge 1968, and Lurie 1951. Original ethnography has been maintained throughout this paper.

1826 to 1850 and again from 1855 to 1859) wrote in one of his manuscript accounts:

Formerly there were three ranks of nobles in Tonga to which the term Eiki or Lord applied, of these the Tuialala stood first, then the Tamaha, and next the Haui or civil ruler (Thomas ms. 5:1).

The Tamahau was the title given to the female child of the sister of the Tu'i Tonga, who herself had the title of Tu'i Tonga Fafine. The different ranking of the tu'i for Thomas and Lawry stems from the fact that there were Tamahau before there were Haui. Included in the haui at various points in time were the titled individuals Tu'i Ha'a Talatala and Tu'i Kanokupolu.

The Tu'i Tonga was the embodiment of the sacred and the secular in aboriginal Tonga and the nominal leader of all Tongans. In approximately the fifteenth century, however, a division was made between the sacred and secular aspects of leadership and the Tu'i Tonga Kau'u'ufonua delegated his secular authorities to a brother, and the title of Tu'i Ha'a Talatala was begun. A description from a manuscript account, ostensibly "written by [the last] Tamaha Amelie, and begun in May the 27th, day of the year 1844" (Colloccott ms. 2: 19) provides some basic information on this title. The Tamaha, who was described as "the living oracle of the Tongans" (Thomas ms. 5: 59), probably dictated the account since she was well over sixty years of age in the 1840's. The Tamaha spoke of the Tu'i Tonga Kau'u'ufonua and how he "portioned out to each of his brothers at island to be king over" and how he:

appointed Mougamotu Tu'i Hasta'akoumanu, and he was to reside at Founamotu as he was to be protector of the Tuivalala (as the Tuivalala were apt to be assassinated), and the Tuivalala was safe because his younger brother kept guard over him (Colloccott ms. 2: 21).

Mo'angamotu was thus the first Tu'i Ha'a Talatala.

In approximately the seventeenth century a Tu'i Ha'a Talatala delegated some of his secular responsibilities to a son, and the title of Tu'i Kanokupolu was created. The Tu'i Ha'a Talatala Mo'angamotu gave his son Ngia the title of Tu'i Kanokupolu and also "royal estates at the West end of Tonga [nearly called Hihifo]" (Thomas, ms. 5: 1).

With the Tu'i Tonga responsible for the sacred matters of leadership and the haui (either the Tu'i Ha'a Talatala or Tu'i Kanokupolu), depending on what period one is speaking about) responsible for secular matters, the Tu'i Tonga eventually became dependent on the haui for his titled position. The haui literally had to have the strength and authority to "install" the Tu'i Tonga with the title. Consensus and flexibility were always key aspects
of aboriginal Tongan culture and a leader needed the support of the people around him. Such support came from numerous plural marriages and successful leadership. Lauilolotonga, the last individual to hold the title of Tu'i Tonga, was delayed in being appointed to his position in the early part of the nineteenth century because of the inability of a secular ruler to support him. Thomas wrote of the law as King, that:

It is said had the King's party been successful in the war in the Anga, it was the intention of the King to have presented his daughter Ha'amahou to Lauilolotonga as his wife, and to have appointed him to office as Tu'i Tonga but though a battle was fought and many fell on both sides — no victory was gained — The evils they had hoped to have removed were allowed to remain — as the King could not remove them — his daughter was therefore not given — neither was the chief appointed to office, but remained at Va'avau where he had been brought up (Thomas ss. 4:195).

After the separation of sacred from secular matters in aboriginal Tonga, the Tu'i Tonga was still esteemed and revered but more as an intercessor with the Tongans deities. Thomas wrote of the Tu'i Tonga:

The office of the Tu'i Tonga was still esteemed, and became one of vast importance, even as the connective link between the gods and the people; he was not a high priest but a friend, or representative of the gods, his office as with his person was considered sacred (Thomas ss. 5:1).

Other eyewitnesses of the early nineteenth century corroborated this, as the Wesleyan missionary N. Turner relates:

Many were present at the service this afternoon and were very attentive. The Tu'i Tonga was there, who is by birth and rank according to their former superstitions the greatest man in all these islands. Tho the nature of his office forbids him to have anything to do with public affairs. According to the ancient customs of Tonga he is altogether a sacred person (N. Turner, Letter-Journal dated November 29, 1828; reporting events of October 28, 1828).

Eventually, however, as a result of Western contact (specifically the Wesleyan missionaries in the early nineteenth century) the position of the Tu'i Tonga was totally eclipsed by that of the Tu'i Kanokupa. Lauilolotonga, the last Tu'i Tonga, had eventually been installed in his office in 1827 and held the title until his death in 1865. Although he requested that a Tu'i Tonga be appointed after his death, no such appointment was made by the Tu'i Kanokupa King George Tupou. As a point of fact, at a Tongan parliamentary meeting in 1875 King George Tupou stated:

You must remember that I was conferred with the following two titles during the meeting that was held in Vava'u, Tu'i Tonga and Tu'i Kanokupolu together with my own title of Tu'i Kanokupa (Hunter 1963:4).

This was the ultimate consolidation of King George's rise to power. A recent assessment by Latefe'iu of King George, or Taufa'ahau, is worth considering:

It appears, however, that Taufa'ahau's initial acceptance of Christianity was only a part of his general desire to adopt the ways of the white man, his wealth, superior knowledge and weapons of war, and also (incidentally) his religion, to achieve his ambitions (Latefe'iu 1970:61).

With the eventual decline in the rank and status of the Tu'i Tonga and the concomitant rise of the Tu'i Kanokupa, the position of the Tamahau also suffered a decline. Where the titles of Tu'i Tonga and Tu'i Kanokupa meant that the individual so invested was responsible, respectively, for sacred and secular matters, Thomas has pointed out that in aboriginal Tonga the Tamahau "is more a title of honour than office" (ms. 4:30). Although the Tamahau was usually held by a man, Thomas also pointed out that "there may, in the absence of a female, be a male Tamahau — which thing has been known to occur, but generally it is a female" (ibid.).

The rank and status associated with that of the Tamahau was extremely high in Tongan culture, and early nineteenth-century observers were astute enough to point this out. The French navigator, Dumont D'Urville reported of his 1827 visit to Tongatapu:

all the people of Tonga, without exception, even the tout-tonga and the tout-Kana-Kaholo themselves, had to accord the homage of nose-roe, while she was not obliged to honour anyone in this way (ibid.).

The measure was the indication of respect that an inferior had to show to a superior, with the inferior person bowing down to touch the head to the soles of the superior person's feet.

Dumont D'Urville, however, was also aware of the fact that by showing deferential respect one did not necessarily acknowledge the greater power and authority, and he pointed out that the Tamahau "was revered in the islands although she only had any real authority over her personal property and her people in Ardeo" (ibid.). She not only had authority over "Ardeo," or Ha'atehea (an area on Tongatapu), but it also extended into the Ha'upai islands. Of the person designated the Tamahau, Thomas wrote:
while it raised the individual in the estimation of all her friends, she was by this means brought so near to the gods, as to be a kind of divinity herself to the people, and was much sought unto as such (Thomas ss. 5-4).

The Wesleyan missionary Webb was quite correct when he wrote that “the Tamuha is the greatest personage in the whole group of islands” (Webb, Letter-Journal of March 1, 1843, for the events of August 12, 1842). Where the ‘Tai Tonga was the representative of the gods on earth, the Tamuha herself was virtually viewed as a god.

Although the Wesleyans made numerous attempts to convert the ‘Tai Tonga Lualllanga to Wesleyanism, they failed (and the ‘Tai Tonga became a Catholic); on the other hand, the Tamuha converted to Wesleyanism and the missionaries scored quite a coup on aboriginal religious beliefs when this happened. Thomas wrote in his Journal that “Tammu has turned to Cool — also her brother Fehokotahio, and all the people of Tonga have turned” (Thomas, Journal 5, December 12, 1832). Gradually, Tongan culture changed in the nineteenth century under the pressure of the Wesleyan missionaries.

The four titles of ‘Tai Tonga, ‘Tai Ha‘a TaKulana, ‘Tai Kanokupola, and Tamuha thus represented the core titles of aboriginal Tongan culture. From these four titles all other titles developed and as Thomas stated (as cited earlier), “formerly there were three ranks of nobles in Tonga” for whom one would apply the term ‘eiki (Thomas ss. 5: 1). The concept of ‘eiki has changed over time in Tonga, but this change has not always been understood and interpreted by all European observers. Writing of these four core titles in the nineteenth century, one astute eyewitness to changing Tongan culture did comprehend the changes in part:

It may be noticed that the term ‘eiki applied to the above chiefs and their families almost exclusively in years by years, and was a very choice word, but of later years it has become more common (Thomas ss. A1961: 7).

In aboriginal Tonga, individuals closely related to the ‘Tai Tonga were termed the ‘Tai o ‘eiki, literally “the body of the ‘eiki” (Churchward 1959: 430). These included the ‘Tai Ha‘a TaKulana, ‘Tai Kanokupola, and the Tamuha. In aboriginal Tonga, ‘eiki was a concept of nobility, or noble birth. ‘Eiki is not immediately synonymous with ‘chief’ as numerous early European observers recorded.

One of the earliest voyage accounts of Schouten and Le Maire from 1616 has Artki for ‘King’ (Dampier 1770-1771: II: n.p.). The various vocabularies connected with Cook’s voyages have, for the Tongan vocabularies, ‘Eirae as ‘chief’ (Anderson, in Beaglehole 1967: 856), ‘Agge as ‘chief’ (Samwell, in Beaglehole 1967: 1045), and ‘Eirae as ‘chief’ in King’s 1821 vocabulary (King 1821: 447). Mariner’s 1817 edition has ‘Egi as ‘a chief; a god’ (II: n.p.) and with a cross-reference to ‘chief’ one finds in Mariner “a noble.” ‘Egi (chief of a district or island) too; (supreme chief or king) how” (ibid.). By the time of Mariner’s 1827 edition, however, some revisions had been made and for ‘Egi Mariner has “a chief; a god; the head man of a party” (1827: II, lv). This final definition roughly approximates the range of variation on the concept of ‘eiki in aboriginal Tongan culture. Not all ‘chiefs’ as perceived by European observers were ‘eiki to the Tongans and not all ‘eiki to the Tongans were chiefs.

At one point in the past the ‘Tai Tonga divided his lands between his kinsmen, his ‘eiki. The various ‘eiki established and belonged to their own named groups or ‘eiki of Ha‘a, a corporate descent group. Various ‘eiki of the Ha‘a were given titles to represent some specific aspect of the ‘eiki. When the ‘Tai Kanokupola Ngaite received his title, he gave his own son who was named Leilua the title of Ve’esiale which is roughly translated as the ‘wrong-footed man.’ With the title of Ve’esiale went some land on tongatapu. It is the title of the ‘eiki who passed on to another individual when the ‘eiki was no longer able to perform his duties. The title would not necessarily go to the oldest natural son of the ‘eiki. The title could be passed to a brother of the ‘eiki, the title could go to a son of a sister’s child, or the title could go to an adopted son of the ‘eiki. In aboriginal Tonga, succession to titles (and chieflyship) depended on a variety of factors, including a joint decision of the corporate descent group on the ability of the prospective ‘eiki, as well as his age, number of wives, and the number of supporters the ‘eiki could muster if he wanted to be a chief of the corporate descent group.8

It cannot be stressed enough that in aboriginal Tonga consensus and flexibility were key concepts. An ‘eiki who wanted to be a chief of a group of people had to have the consent of the people; and a chief also needed the consent of his fellow chiefs. Even the ‘Tai Tonga could not be appointed to the title without the consent and support of either the ‘Tai Ha‘a TaKulana or the ‘Tai Kanokupola. Thomas wrote in his Journal that “there is a union amongst the Tonga people, especially the chiefs, so that they consult each other before they determine anything” (February 11, 1826). A ‘Tai Kanokupola had to have the support of the various Ha‘a of Tonga to become ‘Tai Kanokupola. Thomas recorded how one individual had given up the Iato or Wesleyan religion:

8 See Urbanowicz (n.d. 1973) for a description and analysis of aboriginal Tongan adoption patterns and the changes in adoption and inheritance procedures as a result of the Tongan Constitution of 1875.
This evening Hihela came today to say that Tohoon had yielded to give up Lotoo and to be made the Tohoonwahbo. It's few days time all the old people are to meet at this part (Haako on Tongatapu) to make him. This is a serious event (Journal entry of December 1, 1827).

Other nineteenth-century observers also witnessed the "consensus and flexibility" aspect of Tonga culture: Cross wrote how the "Monarch is only a superior Chief, and is absolute no longer than he is supported by others, many of whom have nearly as much power as himself, and in some instances more" (Hunt 1846: 30). One non-missionary observer of 1850 wrote:

The government of the islands is despotisc, and not hereditary, but elective in the royal family. The eldest son of the king does not necessarily succeed his father, but another may be chosen from the sons of a former king, or a younger son may be elected before an elder if he be thought to have more capacity for government (Brudy 1852: 98).

Thus an *eki* who was chosen as a chief had to have the support of the people. He was a *tita* *eki*. In *abtenal Tonga*, there were also those *eki's* who did not have a title: these would be the *Sinou* *eki* for whose genealogical position, and not a name title, was the important characteristic. There were also those individuals who did have a title, yet were not *eki*. These would be *matamau* titles — titles given to an individual by an *eki*, and the matamau title-holder would look after a specific spot of land for the *eki*. Finally, in *abtenal Tonga*, (as well as today), there was the bulk of the populace: non-titled, non-eki individuals.

In *abtenal Tonga* then, *eki* stood for a concept of noble birth and Tongans used the term appropriately. The Tongans would be able to distinguish between: titled *eki's, such as the Ta'i Tonga, non-titled *eki's, a kinman of the Ta'i Tonga, titled man-eki's, a matamau, and the non-titled, non-*eki* bulk of the populace. In *abtenal Tonga*, these *eki's* was a concept of noble birth and not synonymous with "chief". In the twentieth century Thomas wrote:

From this it will be seen that there are many persons in the Friendly Islands, to whom the term *eki* applies — persons who have nothing to do with the government of the Islands, but who had or be supported according to their rank, and many of them did receive more than civil respect — they had what may be called divine homage paid them, and some of them appeared to think that that was their proper right and due (Thomas me. A1961: 10).

**CHANGES**

With sustained European contact, culminating in the Tongan Constitution of 1875, aboriginal Tonga culture changed. The Constitution was promulgated by the Ta'i Kauaippa King George Tupou with the aid of European advice. King George's refusal to install a Ta'i Tonga after the death of Lauhutonga in 1863 has already been discussed. With the Constitution of 1875 King George totally consolidated his position (receiving the titles of Ta'i Tonga and Ta'i Kauaippa) and removing the inherent consensus and flexibility concerning the rights of chieftainship. The flexible system of titles and inheritance passed out of existence and a rigid father-to-son inheritance system was initiated. Where before a person received a title because of ability and consensus, now a person received a title because of the law. A completely workable system of status achievement had been removed and in its place a system of ascribed status substituted.

With the Constitution of 1875 King George created the hereditary class of nobles, or *napele, who are included in the generic gloss *hucoki*. The Constitution created the *eki* *napele*, but some of these *eki* *napele* were only *matamau*, or titled man-eki in *abtenal Tonga*, and hence were only *eki* in name and not *eki* by noble birth. Prior to the Constitution, no one individual could hold more than one title, since the title-holder was responsible to a specific group of people. Now, as a result of the Constitution there are still holding two titles, the most notable being Honorable Kalanipu'u Fotofiti, and an individual has to divide his time, and hence his obligations, between two different groups of people.

In *abtenal Tonga*, women always had important positions in the society, with the *Tamahe* being the classic example. With the passage of time, the descendants of the *Tamahe* have suffered (Kappler 1971: 183), although the *Tamahe* herself had extremely high rank and status in
Tongan culture. In Aboriginal Tonga, the Tanaka and her descendants always were well treated.

INTERPRETATION AND SUMMARY

Crane obviously takes place over time and to discuss change in Tonga one must first know what Tonga was like. Tonga is the only Polynesian island group to successfully survive into the twentieth century. It is currently a Constitutional Monarchy under His Majesty King Taufa‘ahau Tupou IV. The survival and establishment of the constitutional monarchical form of government was due to a skillful and somewhat bloodthirsty unification of the archipelago in 1872 by King George Tupou, later known as "the First" and a Great-Great-Great Grandfather of his current majesty.

The uniqueness of the archipelago after the final war in 1857 and the subsequent reorganization and codification of the laws along Western European concepts brought about changes which have had ramifications in Tonga to this day. Scarr has shown that Tongans were advised in the nineteenth century that if Tongans wanted to avoid being "taken over" by larger foreign powers, Tonga would have to take on the trappings of Westernization. This Westernization was replete with a "Western facade" of a written Constitution and codified laws (Scarr 1968: 82). Thus the Constitution of 1875 must serve as a landmark for virtually any discussions pertaining to Tongan culture.

In a volume on psychological anthropology, it only seems fitting that there be some psychological aspects to the paper: psychological aspects concerning both the Tongans and the numerous Europeans who have been in Tonga and who have written on Tonga. For Aboriginal Tongans, rank was something which came about because one was born into the position. Status could be achieved by means of arranged marriages, skill at leadership or warfare, or anything which would virtually enhance an individual in the minds of fellow Tongans. The family was all important, or the genealogical relationships between individuals of the extended family. In Aboriginal Tonga, politics was "kinship writ large," something which meant to exist to this day. The Tonga Chronicle of October 17, 1911, had the following statement in reference to the wife of His Majesty King Taufa‘ahau Tupou IV:

Queen Mata‘aho in an interview with the Singapore newspaper Straits Times explained the tradition of the people and the monarchy in Tonga is like one big family with the King and Queen looked on as parents.

This may be how some view the monarchy today, and it would probably be consistent with a statement pertaining to Aboriginal Tonga, but it is not how nineteenth-century (and earlier) Europeans viewed Tonga. Aboriginal Tonga was an extended family, with virtually everyone being able to trace kinship just with everyone else. The concept of 'cek' or noble birth was a perfectly viable one in Aboriginal Tonga. For Tongans who were genealogically related to whom. The fact that only a proven individual could be made a leader of men in Aboriginal Tonga also made sense—but this did not make sense to Europeans. With European concepts of government, expected to find an articulating "wholeness" in Tonga; instead, as Wilson's statement makes clear, to their eyes they found chaos.

The Government of Tongatapu is a complex in itself, and the native's account of it is so difficult, each taking a particular pride in stating his own chief above others, that it is difficult to come to any certainly concerning it (Wilson 1799: 269).

Cook's earlier statement from 1777 is also in keeping with this approach:

Of the nature of Government we knew no more than the general outline, a subdivision is established among them that resembles the feudal system; but of its subdivisions and Constitution, or in what manner connected to form one body politics I confess myself totally ignorant (in Beaglehole 1967: 145).

Cook was not "totally ignorant" but he was honest in his reporting.

When the missionaries arrived, particularly the Wesleyan in the nineteenth century, they too were confused—but they did something about it: they did not submit to their confusion and act yet convert a culture! They sent back fantastic reports to Sydney and London and continued to receive money and supplies to "convert" the Tongans. It was a fortuitous moment in 1826 when the Wesleyan missionaries Thomas and Hutchinson arrived on Tongatapu: they brought their own supplies (to augment those abandoned by Lawry when that missionary left in 1823) to convert the Tongans, they capitalised on the Europeans who had been living in the archipelago for numerous years, and they also profited from the problems of the Tongans. As Thomas relates in his Journal for 1877:

I learn from a young man here, an Englishman, that Tonga at this time is principally in the possession of petty chiefs, some few years ago the great men departed this life and some were killed—even the King's family now have no power—but these chiefs fought and defended Tonga and they now possess the part they have reaped from their ancestors, so that at this time they seem much confused, having no head man (Thomas, Journal, entry of January 30, 1827. Emphasis added.)
Because there was no "head man" or secular ruler, there was no Tongan with the authority to order the missionaries to leave. The mission approach was that of "divide-and-conquer" and they turned Tongan against Tongan — chief against chief. The religious wars of the nineteenth century which resulted from Wesleyan interference in indigenous Tongan life were notorious for their ferocity. In January of 1837, the Wesleyan missionary Watkin could write of the destruction of the non-Wesleyan-led Tongan fortress of Ngetia and how "one Christian was killed and three wounded more than 25 brethren perished" (Watkin, Journal entry for January 11, 1837). Of the 1640 battles, the Wesleyan missionary P. Turner wrote,

The heathen seem determined to die in their faithlessness. I am told that they have made an oath to do so, before they will yield to the Xiina. (Turner, Journal, entry for July 19, 1840).

Of the ferocious 1840 wars, Thomas could write that he told the Tai’i Kanukapola Iosia Tuiou that "the heathens had acted more kind a great deal than the Christian and that they were less disposed for war" (Thomas, Journal, entry for August 4, 1840).

Aboriginal Tonga was forcefully pulled into the nineteenth century and more needs to be written on this distasteful period. The demise of indigenous Tongan culture was quickly visible in 1840 when the Wesleyan missionary John Thomas, probably one of the few missionaries who ever partially "understood" Tongan culture (and who had been ridiculed for it), wrote in his Journal of August 4, 1840, of the titled 'eati Ma'afu of the Ilea e Haeva, a staunch non-Wesleyan-induced pro-indigenous Tongan individual:

Old Ma'afu is angry and grieved, saying like one of old, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more."


d Thomas gathered a tremendous amount of potential ethnographic data, most of which (if not all of it) will remain in manuscript form. He reduced the problems of data-gathering when he was asking specific questions and the following somewhat poignant statement from his Journal of 1834 is worth re-reading: "conversed with a few persons, on some little matters connected with the Tonga history. My master ascertains — also I hope it is as a way to be corrected before it was the light — but whatever case I may take, it is scarcely possible to avoid making some mistakes, the more so, as various opinions are formed by various persons on the same subject" (Thomas, Journal, entry of February 20, 1838).

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