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## DRINKING IN THE POLYNESIAN KINGDOM OF TONGA

by

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### ABSTRACT

The paper provides information on the drinking of kava (*Piper methysticum*) in the Polynesian Kingdom of Tonga. The importance of drinking in traditional and contemporary Tongan society is discussed as well as changes which have taken place over time.

### Introduction

The Kingdom of Tonga is located approximately 550 miles southwest of the islands of Samoa and approximately 450 miles southeast of the islands of Fiji. The islands have a total land mass of some 269 square miles and the largest and principal island of the group is Tongatapu Island (100 square miles). Recent Carbon 14 analysis indicates that Tongatapu was the first of the Polynesian Islands to be settled, with a Carbon 14 date indicating occupation from at least 1140 B.C. (Groube 1971:303). The estimated population of the Kingdom in December of 1973 was 92,587. The last and most thorough census of 1966 indicated that 98.31 per cent of the 77,429 inhabitants were Tongans. Tongans are strong Christians and in 1966 only 61 individuals did not list any religious affiliation (Fiebia 1968:23).

The islands were formerly a protectorate of Great Britain but on 4 June 1970 they became fully independent and entered the British Commonwealth. Tongans have a Constitutional Monarchy (dating from the Constitution of 1875) combined with a Parliament. The current monarch of Tonga, who acceded to the throne in 1967 after the death of his mother (Her Majesty Queen Salote Tupou III), is His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, K.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., K.B.E., C.B.E., B.A., L.L.B., and Honorary Doctor, University of the South Pacific [Knight Commander of (of the Order of) Saint Michael and Saint George; Knight Grand Cross of the (Royal) Victorian

Order; Knight Commander of (the order of) the British Empire; and Commander of (the order of) the British Empire].

Although much has been written about *kava* ceremonies in Tonga (Pratt 1922; Collocott 1927; Gifford 1929; Beaglehole and Beaglehole 1941; Newell 1947; Lemert 1967; Bott 1972 and Leach 1972) no authors have satisfactorily dealt with the basic question raised by Lemert when he criticized the work of the Beagleholes: no one has explained "why drinking *kava* rather than other beverages continues to function as an integrating force in Tongan life" (1967:190). Lemert pointed out that this is an extremely important question since "home brew" has been available for some time as one "alternative of male interaction." One must also add that there are numerous commercial establishments in Tonga which provide alcoholic beverages which could, theoretically at least, serve as substitutes for *kava* drinking.

Why the persistence of *kava* drinking over the years, both informal consumption (loosely structured) and formal ceremonial consumption (highly structured drinking patterns)? To deal with this question one must combine contemporary ethnographic evidence with accurate ethnohistorical evidence to obtain a diachronic and plausible interpretation. The major point presented in this paper is that *kava* drinking has been the way in which Tongans have maintained their identity. The most important *kava* ceremony in Tonga, the *Taumafa kava* (or monarch's *kava*) continues to provide the major focal point for Tongan unity.<sup>1</sup>

### Drinking in Tonga

To place the *Taumafa kava* ceremony into perspective, background information on the drinking of *kava* and alcoholic beverages is in order. With the prerequisite alcohol license, individual Tongans (and non-Tongans residing in Tonga) may purchase alcoholic beverages for consumption off of the premises from major stores in Tonga. The alcoholic beverages may also be partaken of in at least three main "clubs" on Tongatapu. The three clubs on Tongatapu present an intriguing structural pattern of drinking behavior. At one end of a continuum one has the "Tonga Club" which is frequented primarily by Tongan males and only secondarily by some Europeans (males and females). At the other end of a continuum one has the prestigious and exclusive all-male "Nuku'alofa Club" (the second oldest private club in the South Pacific, founded on May 15, 1914). The Nuku'alofa Club is frequented by resident Tongans and non-Tongans and various transient males. One night a year this club is open to members' wives for a dance. The third club has a mediating position on the continuum and is the "Nuku'alofa Yacht and Motor Boat Club." This club is frequented by both Tongans and non-Tongans, males

and females, and may be called the family club in Tonga. Men and women drink side by side, frequent dances and activities are held, and movies are shown for children on some Saturdays and afternoons. No *kava* is served in any of these clubs and the standard fare is "Fiji Beer" or "Steinlager," scotch and water, gin and tonic, or rum and coke. Alcoholic beverages can also be purchased for approximately triple the club prices from the various hotels in the Kingdom.

An intriguing aspect of the Nuku'alofa Yacht and Motor Boat Club was the presence, on numerous occasions, of several Tongans who belonged to Churches whose members were (theoretically) supposed to abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages. Once they entered the club, however, the rules were changed and they "shouted" drinks with the best of them! When questioned about this seeming inconsistency in their religious beliefs, some Tongans stated that the club was "neutral" territory. This would appear to happen in more than one club as an article pointed out about a political campaign where "just about everything was tried."

[The Tongan candidate for the Legislative Assembly] approached fellow church-goers in the . . . community but at the same time sported whiskies and Steinlagers at Nuku'alofa bars (Anonymous 1969).<sup>2</sup>

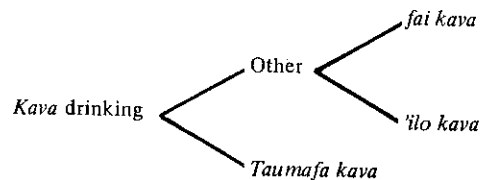
There are numerous *kava* bars throughout the islands of Tonga. In the various *kava* bars, individuals may purchase small coconut shell cups of *kava* which cost a few cents. Just as *kava-palangi* or alcoholic beverages may be purchased in the large stores, *kava Tonga* or small bundles of the root of the *Piper methysticum* may be purchased from the small shops (*fale koloa*, literally "house of riches" or "house of treasure") which are in every village and in Nuku'alofa.

### Significance of Kava Drinking

Lemert has written that "Tongans distinguish three types of *kava* drinking" namely [1] *fai-kava*, or the *kava* drinking of the common people; [2] the '*ilo kava*, the honorific term applied to the *kava* drinking of the '*eiki* (high ranking individuals); and [3] the *Taumafa kava*, or the monarch's (or Royal) *kava* ceremony (1967:188). This threefold distinction is too fine and I am in agreement with His Royal Highness Tu'i Pelehake, the Premier of Tonga and His Majesty's brother, who has pointed out that "there are two types of *kava* ceremonies, the ordinary *kava* ceremony and the King's *Kava* Ceremony (*Taumafa kava*)" (1955:48). The ceremony known as '*ilo kava* should be seen as a mediating ceremony between the *fai kava* (informal) and *Taumafa kava* (highly formal) ceremonies. For all essential purposes there are only two types of *kava* ceremonies in Tonga: those in which the reigning ruler

is present, highly formal, and those in which the reigning ruler is absent, with varying degrees of informality depending on the occasion and the participants (see Figure 1).

Fig. 1 Kava drinking.



The basic structural feature of any kava drinking session is the same: an elliptically shaped "circle" is formed, with the "guest of honor" at one end of the circle and the *kava* bowl and *kava* makers at the other end. It is not necessary to delve into either the pharmacological properties of the *Piper methysticum* or the ceremony of preparation since both properties and preparation are adequately covered in the cited literature. It suffices to say that [1] the *kava* drink is prepared in the *kava* bowl and [2] the *kava* drink is then distributed to the various seated participants in the *kava* circle according to the established and agreed upon cultural rules. The rules of *kava* drinking now require the first coconut cup (or leaf cup) to be presented to the highest ranking individual present who is the guest of honor. The *matapule* (master of ceremonies) of the guest of honor, or someone serving in the capacity for the *matapule*, then determines the further distribution of the *kava* drinks. *Kava* is distributed to the next highest ranking individual present (seated closest to the guest of honor) and then eventually to the lowest ranking individual present (furthest away from the guest of honor), so that finally all individuals in the circle, from highest rank to lowest rank, finally receive some *kava*.

In aboriginal and contemporary Tongan society, "rank" was relative to the particular occasion and this is certainly true for all Tongan *kava* drinking sessions. It is because of this "relativity of rank" for all occasions that one can state that there are only two *kava* ceremonies in Tonga: the *Taumafa kava* and all others. In the *Taumafa kava* ceremony the reigning ruler is the "presiding chief" and His Majesty currently receives the first bowl of *kava*. All other individuals in the *Taumafa kava* ceremony are then "ranked" accordingly from the King. For every other *kava* drinking situation, when the King is not present, the order of presentation for the drinking of the first cup of *kava* (and subsequent cups of *kava*) simply depends on who is present on

that particular occasion. There is no set pattern of *kava* distribution when the King is not there. The only theoretical generalization that one can make for all non-*Taumafa kava* drinking sessions is that "the *kava* is distributed according to the agreed upon rank of those individuals present." This admittedly low-level generalization is true whether we term all non-*Taumafa kava* sessions either 'ilo *kava* ceremonies or *fai-kava* sessions.

For particular non-*Taumafa kava* sessions when individuals cannot agree in advance upon their relative rank *vis-à-vis* one another, they then avoid one another at certain *kava* sessions. For early-contacted Tonga this behavior is quite clear from the account of the French navigator Dumont D'Urville in Tonga 1827. He wrote about the rarity of certain *kava* sessions because of the lack of certain major individuals and:

above all because of the claims of Palou [also known as Fatukimotulalo, an important and powerful and non-titled individual] and Tahofa [also known as Fae], who took care to avoid any [*kava*] gatherings where they could not occupy the highest place (MS:10).

In contemporary Tonga, elaborate genealogies (both real and fictive) are often traced out for seating positions in non-*Taumafa kava* sessions. Some changes have taken place in all *kava* sessions since the advent of Europeans and, briefly stated, in aboriginal Tongan society the "rank" for a *kava* circle was determined on the basis of the personal rank of the individual whereas in contemporary Tongan society it is the rank of the "title" which an individual has which is the determining factor in seating (and drinking) arrangements.<sup>3</sup>

What is important for all *kava* drinking in Tonga is [1] that it occurs today and [2] the basic structural features (bowl, circle, and relative order of serving) have remained essentially stable over the years. The non-*Taumafa kava* sessions serve as a "safety valve" for Tongan society and provide a frequent chance to discuss the latest gossip, rumors, or general conversation. The Beagleholes pointed out in their 1941 work that the topics of conversation in an informal *kava* session frequently deal with:

the state of cultivation, the gossip and scandal of the village, the strange ways of white people, news and rumour from other villages far and near, actions of government representatives from policemen to high officials, chance remarks from passing acquaintances on the island roads, religious doctrine and dogma, dreams and strange events — all [of] these and many other topics are considered from every possible angle and point of view (1941:20).

In brief, an informal and small-sized *kava* session is not an extremely spectacular event, much like the drinking in a tavern or bar among good friends. The *Taumafa kava*, on the other hand, provides Tongans with a particular focal point for their own identity and is discussed below.

### Tongans and Europeans

When the Wesleyan Missionaries first arrived in Tonga in the early nineteenth century the role (and fate) of the Christians was often a topic of heated discussion at various *kava* sessions. The following example from a missionary in the islands from August 16, 1822, to October 3, 1823, makes this quite clear:

At the Cava Ring this morning [Nov. 29, 1822] there were several speeches delivered very prejudicial to our peace. Mafee [making the] Malanga [speech] said that the white people were come as spies and would soon [be] followed by others from England who would take away all Tonga from them. "See, said he, "These people are always praying to their Atuas [otua], as the other Missionaries [of the London Missionary Society in Tonga from 1797 to 1800] were; and what was the consequence of their praying? Why, the wars broke out and all the old chiefs were killed." Malabow one of the Matabolles related his dream, the burden of which was that the old chiefs came back from Boolotoo last night, and seeing the fencing of our garden, said, "What is that?" They were answered, "It is the white people's Ahey [api], or place of abode." Upon which, they became much displeased, and said, "The white people will pray you all dead." Much more to the same purpose was said in the Cava ring party. The multitude believed all and are much dissatisfied with us (Walter: November 29, 1822).

In the nineteenth century, *kava* drinking sessions were a way of discussing current affairs and maintaining Tongan unity in the face of missionary influence on Tongan life. One European non-missionary observer of nineteenth century Tongan life wrote:

The practise of *kava*-drinking seems to be falling much into disuse, particularly among the Christians, who are not encouraged to continue it by the [Wesleyan] missionaries (Erskine 1853:149).

The missionaries were opposed to *kava* drinking yet the Tongans continued drinking. The *kava* ceremonies clarified the basic cultural problems (and rules) of Tongan society and, as such, the ceremonies were difficult to eliminate. John Thomas, a Wesleyan missionary in the islands from 1826 to 1850 and again from 1855 to 1859, also provides us with some information concerning the discussions at the *kava* ceremonies regarding the missionaries:

The King was not at school this morning. Several others were [also] kept away at a cava party. I learned from an Englishman at this place that various things are talked about [at the *kava* parties] of an unfavourable nature respecting us, calculated to grieve us if we were strangers to the devices of Satan and the fallen state of the heathen [or non-Wesleyan Tongans]. But we leave these things to the Lord who will give us strength (1830:Letter-Journal).

In aboriginal times, and this would be true for early-contacted Tonga as well as contemporary Tonga, informal *kava* sessions took place not only for general discussions, but also took place at various points in the life cycle. *Kava* ceremonies played an important part in celebrating births, weddings, and funerals. Aoyagi (1966:167-172) and Newell (1947:404) point this out for the twentieth century and as one nineteenth century non-missionary observer noted:

Breakfasted at Thomas Wright's: heard there of the death of the chief Luaka: went to see the funeral ceremony. The cava rings were formed (Bays 1831:121).

His Royal Highness Tu'i Pelehake has pointed out that *kava* drinking provides "a seal on all occasions" whether they be formal gatherings or informal gatherings (1955:48). When a person of importance visited somewhere, a *kava* session was held to honor the individual. When the above mentioned Dumont D'Urville landed at Tongatapu in 1827 he reported:

Soon after our arrival at the anchorage, a native came to present me with a great ceremony a green branch of *kava* (piper methysticum). Singleton [a European residing in the islands since 1806], whom I questioned about the reason for this gift, informed me that this branch had been sent to me by the old queen Tuoi-Tonga-Fafine, and that in doing so she did me a great honour. The branch put the ship under the protection of the gods of the country and would guarantee it against any misfortune. Consequently I received the sacred branch with respect and I had it planted in a spot within view of the ship, which seemed to please the natives who witnessed the ceremony (MS:1a).

The presentation of the root was a prelude to an elaborate *kava* ceremony which the French navigator subsequently took part in and which served as a "seal of approval" for his visit.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to *kava* ceremonies being important in the particular life cycle of the individual, *kava* ceremonies also play an important role in the organization of Tongan society in general. *Kava* ceremonies took place when individuals received their titles in Tongan society or when they were stripped from their title for some reason. When an individual is installed into a chiefly position, the essence of the installation, as Collocott has accurately pointed out, "is the calling into his place into the *kava*-ring, to receive his cup by his new title" (1927:38).

In 1938, for example, His Majesty King Taufa'ahua Tupou IV (then the Crown Prince) took part in an elaborate *pongipongi* ceremony when he received the title of Tupouto'a:

The *Kava* ceremony occupied two hours and was presided over by Queen Salote [Tupou III]. The [Crown] Prince was officially recognized as Tubouto'a and his position in respect of the *Kava* rings was confirmed when he drank a bowl of *kava* in his new name. . . . The *Kava* ring was composed of 150 Chiefs and Matabules (Masters of

Ceremony) from the whole of the [Island] Group. . . . After the *Kava* Ceremony came the presentation of food. This was Tubouto'a's mark of homage and allegiance to the Sovereign, and is a relic of the old custom of the "Inasi" (presentation of the first fruits of the land to the Tu'i Toga) (Anonymous 1938:43-44).

An excellent description of the installation of the individual who was to become known as King George Tupou I is provided by John Thomas and points out the "seal of approval" in the ceremony of drinking *kava*:

The ceremony of appointing to [the] office [of *Tu'i Kanokupolu*] took place at a cava-meeting. The cava has been considered sacred; and ALMOST EVERYTHING TO BE SETTLED IN THESE ISLANDS IS DONE AT A CAVA MEETING, at which great order is observed [STRESS added] (Thomas 1845:156).

In aboriginal Tongan society (and early contacted Tongan society prior to the celebrated Tongan Constitution of 1875) consensus and flexibility were key concepts in the relationship between the ruler and the ruled (Urbanowicz 1973:114-115). An individual who wanted to be a chief of a particular group of people had to have not only the consent of the people but also of the fellow chiefs. Even the *Tu'i Tonga*, one of the leading titled individuals in Tongan society, could not be appointed to his position without the support and consent of the *Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua* or (later) the *Tu'i Kanokupolu*. If a particular chief did not have the support of other chiefs, he could lose his title and position in Tongan society.

In 1840, some battles took place on Tongatapu which resulted in two chiefs having their titles removed. The *Tu'i Kanokupolu* Jiosaia Tupou and King George Tupou met and Thomas recorded the event:

After this [meeting] the two Kings met with their chiefs and did depose Ata and another chief [called by the title] Vahi (the latter has been the cause of the wars) and appointed a new Ata and Vahai in their place (Thomas *Journal*: February 14, 1830).

The former *Ata* had land on Tongatapu Island and this was also removed from him and transferred to the new *Ata* (Rabone *Journal*: February 28, 1840). Although there is no extant evidence which specifically mentions the *kava* ceremony which accompanied this particular "title removal" it undoubtedly took place. The following account makes this clear concerning another individual who lost his title at another point in time because of his Wesleyan beliefs:

This morning about 1 o'clock we were aroused from a sleep by a messenger from Beka where the [Wesleyan] Chapel was opened last week, who came to say that a persecuting party had arrived there, and they supposed it was to dispose of [the titled individual known as] Tuivakano for having embraced Christianity, and drove the Christian party from their homes. Messengers have been going to Beka, and

coming to our Chief all day to state how things were going on. Old Vaea of Houma was the principal person in the Party, AND AFTER CEREMONIES OF DRINKING KAVA WERE BEGUN, HE STATED THAT HIS OBJECT WAS TO APPOINT ANOTHER TUIVAKANO because this one had embraced Christianity, and that as he himself had not embraced Christianity he wished still to have a Tuivakano that he might serve. (This with other observations make me think that the affair is not only a Chiefdom, but somewhat Idolatrous). He wished to be understood as not intending any persecution, but as only anxious to follow up the former service of the Gods, and that as there were some Idolatrous houses in the fortifications, he thought proper that William [Tu'i Vakano] should leave it lest any disrespect should be shown or violence be used to the Idol temples, if the term be not too grand for them. THEY THEREFORE PREPARED THE KAVA WHICH WAS TO BE DRUNK AT THE CEREMONY OF HIS DISMISSAL FROM THE OFFICE, AND CHIEFDOM, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF HIS SUCCESSOR. The Kava is always taken to the persons composing the Party by particular direction of the principal person in the company; and when the waiter gave notice that the bowl was full, old Vaea said "Let Vaea mo Mataello Tuivakano (former name) go down and let Tuivakano come up. THIS WAS THE OFFICIAL SENTENCE WHICH CONSTITUTED HIM NO LONGER TUIVAKANO AND HE INSTANTLY LEFT FOR ANOTHER PART OF THE KAVA RING. Soon after this, old Maafu and Lavaka two chiefs still heathen [or non-Wesleyan], who made the greatest figure in the persecution last year, arrived at the fortifications, and this evening we have heard that Vaea mo Mataele NOW NO LONGER TUIVAKANO shall leave Beka, with all the Christian people [All STRESS added] (Hobbs *Journal*: September 12, 1835).

Not only were individuals installed as leaders in Tongan society or removed from their positions of authority at a *kava* ceremony, but land was also apportioned out in aboriginal times during certain *kava* ceremonies. As another nineteenth century Wesleyan Missionary reported:

This has been a very important day. At the *Kava* ring this morning, two or three Malagas, or speeches were delivered, after which the whole island [of Tongatapu] was divided into different provinces and persons appointed to govern in subjection to the King [*Tu'i Kanokupolu* Jiosaia Tupou]. This is an ancient custom revived (Tucker 1837).<sup>5</sup>

The various *kava* ceremonies in aboriginal Tongan society served a variety of purposes. *Kava* ceremonies could be held just to share information and opinions but they also served to provide a "seal of approval" on more important functions, such as title installation or removal or the division of land. The drinking of *kava* always was an important aspect of Tongan life and over the years has been the major way in which Tongans have shared and discussed social activities. *Kava* drinking has been the way that Tongans maintained their own cultural identity in the face of cultural (namely "religious") colonialism.

### The 'Inasi Ceremony and the Taumafa Kava

In aboriginal Tongan society the major event which unified the entire island group was the ceremony known as the *'inasi*. The *'inasi* was an extremely important event which gave substance to a unified Tonga long before the celebrated bloody unification of the islands by the *Tu'i Kanokupolu* King George Tupou I after various wars in 1837, 1840, and 1852. In the twentieth century a unique structural transformation has taken place and the unifying principles which were supplied by the *'inasi* have now been taken over by annual "agricultural shows" which His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV attends.<sup>6</sup>

The term *'inasi* was transcribed in the nineteenth century Wesleyan dictionary as "Inaji" and defined as "a heathen ceremony; portion, part, share" (Rabone 1845:17). An earlier nineteenth century definition from Mariner, when the term was transcribed as "Inachi," has "a share; also the name of a certain public ceremony of a religious nature" (1817:no page number). The contemporary twentieth century dictionary defines it as a verb to mean "to have or receive a share" and as a noun:

(in old Tonga) presentation of food to the Tu'itonga in a way that came to be regarded as inconsistent with the Christian religion (Churchward 1959:561).

In aboriginal Tonga, as opposed to twentieth century interpretations of what aboriginal Tonga was like, the *'inasi* ceremony was neither confined strictly to foodstuffs nor was it presented solely in the presence of the *Tu'i Tonga*. In this latter point W. Lawry is quite clear when he wrote in October of 1822 (when an eyewitness to an *'inasi* ceremony) from the island of Tongatapu, the only place where the *'inasi* was held:

It is remarkable, however, that at present there is no Tooitonga — so they wave their yams before the place where he used to sit (Diary: October 21, 1822).

Although yams are mentioned by Lawry, it is quite evident from extant manuscript accounts that more than food was involved in the *'inasi* ceremony: the Island of Uvea, approximately 550 miles from Tongatapu Island (and outside of the archipelago proper) sent "pearl shells as tribute" for the *'inasi* ceremony; the Island of Niua Fo'ou, approximately 390 miles from Tongatapu sent "iron wood of a superior kind" as well as "kie's, or fine matts to wear." Foodstuffs were also sent to the *'inasi* ceremony but they were certainly not confined to yams: Toku Island, approximately 200 miles from Tongatapu sent "the young of a sea bird" and the Island of Nomuka, approximately 70 miles from Tongatapu, "sent fish from the sacred lake [which was] carefully prepared" for the ceremony (Thomas MS:5:23-24).

The *'inasi* ceremony then involved more than the presentation of foodstuffs as Mariner, the non-missionary eyewitness of the 1806-1810

period, pointed out: it was a "certain public ceremony of a religious nature." Aboriginal Tongan religious beliefs were an important part of the ceremony since, when the *Tu'i Tonga* was present, the products were presented to him; when he was not present, they were presented in his absence to the gods. Thomas wrote of the *Tu'i Tonga* that he was:

viewed as the representative of the god Hikuleo, a kind of connecting link therefore between the people, and the god and his place was at Olotete [on the Island of Tongatapu] (MS:1a:252).

Hikule'o was the god of nature and there were two yearly *'inasi* ceremonies, the *'inasi 'ufimui* and the *'inasi 'ufimotu'a*. The *'inasi 'ufimui*, held at the height of winter in the Southern Hemisphere, June-July, was an acknowledgement of the "first young yams" and the crops which were planted and also a "thanksgiving to the odooa" or *'otua* named Hikule'o (Wilson 1799:259). The *'inasi 'ufimotu'a* (with *motu'a* meaning mature) was held in approximately the September-November period. Thomas wrote that this ceremony:

consisted of offerings of old yams brought to the Civil Ruler to show the prosperity of the land, and that the old stock had lasted till the new were fit to dig up (MS:5:19).

Although this ceremony involved the "Civil Ruler" (either the *Tu'i Ha'a Takalaua* or the *Tu'i Kanokupolu*, depending on what time period we are writing about) religious beliefs were still inextricably interwoven with the ceremony. In his *Journal* for October of 1828 the Wesleyan Missionary W. Cross wrote:

Today there is to be an annual meeting of the principal part of the inhabitants of the island, to be held at the Mua [on Tongatapu]. The design of this meeting is that they may present their offerings to their gods. According to the Tonga customs it is the business of the Tuikanakabola to preside at this meeting. But he having renounced his former religion was very reluctant to go. But thro the persuasions of some of his people he is going but does not intend to officiate in any way. This meeting is nearly kept up several days (1828:October 10/12).

Both *'inasi* ceremonies in Tonga were a time when all work on Tongatapu ceased and during the nine-day period of the *'inasi 'ufimotu'a* ceremony singing, dancing, and games also took place (Wilson 1799:259; Mariner 1817:207-215).

This was all a part of the religious and political aspects involved in giving thanks to the gods and acknowledging their powers. The products brought to the Mu'a on Tongatapu were redistributed among the chiefs and the priests of the various deities, including the *Tu'i Tonga* as representative of Hikule'o.<sup>7</sup>

In the wake of the extensive "Westernization" of Tonga neither of the *'inasi* ceremonies are currently held, BUT there are new unifying themes for modern Tonga: in lieu of the *'inasi 'ufimui* which took place in aboriginal

Tonga in approximately June, His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV now opens the Tonga Legislative Assembly with a formal speech. In lieu of the 'inasi 'ufimotu'a ceremony which took place in approximately the September-November period, His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV now travels to the various islands in the archipelago for the official opening of the yearly agriculture shows. The role of the 'inasi in the past has thus been taken over (or has been substituted) by Legislative Assembly activities and the yearly agriculture shows.

The formal closing of the Legislative Assembly also takes place in approximately the same time period as the yearly agriculture shows. However, it is His Majesty's travelling to the various islands for the agriculture shows and the inevitable formal *Taumafa kava* ceremony which takes place on each island which serves as the new (and extremely necessary) focal point for Tongan unity. The opening and closing speeches by His Majesty to the Legislative Assembly focus around Tonga's accomplishments and hopes for the future. The speeches to the assembled individuals serve the same function as the speeches given at the 'inasi BUT it is the activities associated with the agricultural shows with the formal *Taumafa kava* which provide the contemporary "seal of approval" on Tongan life.

The individual island shows last for several days and the circuit of the entire archipelago for all of the shows can last several weeks. The shows are complete with dancing, the presentation of foodstuffs to His Majesty (for redistribution to the Royal Party), and involve the judging of livestock, crops, traditional Tongan handicrafts (including *kava* bowls, Tongan "wooden pillows" or *kali*, and fine mats). Competition between various individuals (and villages) takes place in the form of soccer, horse and bicycle racing, foodstuff and fine mat presentation.

In brief, what was once performed on the Island of Tongatapu under the rubric of the 'inasi ceremony now takes place on the various islands under the rubric of "yearly agriculture show."

The 'inasi was a combination of "public amusement" and "religious observance" and the agriculture shows today are a combination of amusement and religious re-dedication to the land. Speeches at the agriculture shows deal with the accomplishments of the previous agricultural year and the role of religion in Tongan life. When His Majesty travels to each of the shows on the various islands (Niua'fou, Niuatoputapu, Vava'u, Ha'apai, and 'Eua) the traditional homages are accorded him on each of the islands: dances are performed, baked food is given as a welcome, and the eventual *Taumafa kava* takes place. The *Taumafa kava*, with His Majesty as the guest of honor at the various islands, provides all assembled Tongans with a sense of belonging to Tonga. His Majesty is accompanied by special *matapules* who see that the *kava* circle is arranged properly. His Majesty receives the first bowl of *kava* and then the other assembled island dignitaries receive theirs, in descending

order of rank. The contemporary *Taumafa kava* at the shows provides Tongans with observable and symbolic Tongan unity of a regular basis.

The *Taumafa kava* is not only important at the yearly shows, but it also played a key part of His Majesty's installation as Monarch in 1967. The 1967 ceremony provided the entire archipelago with the essence of Tonga. A "dual installation" actually took place. A formal European-type installation was held on the 4th of July but on the 6th of July the *Taumafa kava* circle consisting of some 290 important Tongans was created to provide the "seal of approval" on His Majesty's installation. Of the 1967 event Grosvenor has pointed out:

Two days after the Christian coronation [on July 4], the Tongan monarch sat down in a circle with his chiefs for the *kava* ceremony. Outsiders are not invited to this ancient rite in which the chiefs acknowledge him as King. . . . THE CEREMONIAL DRINKING OF KAVA FORMALIZES TONGAN ANNOUNCEMENTS AND TITLES (1968:343).

Another view of the 1967 installation and coronation is provided by Inder:

There were two [coronations]. There was a Westminster Abbey-type spectacle on the Tuesday, when they dressed in ermine, brocades, coronets, medals, three-cornered hats and toppers, cutaways, and striped morning suits of Victorian vintage. Then there was the *taumafakava*, or traditional installation, on the Thursday, when the king and his nobles and *matapules* — with mats around their middles — formed a great egg-shaped *kava* ring so the king could hear them pay him allegiance in Polynesian fashion. For Tongans, both installations were a success. . . . For most Tongans the *kava* ceremony is the real installation of the king. From all the outlying islands the chiefs had come to drink *kava* with their monarch, and thus the ordinary man in Tonga was left in no doubt of the authority of his chiefs. They were the men who had sealed their order in the great *kava* ring.

There had been two rehearsals for the chapel ceremony, both private, and there was one for the royal *kava* installation, the previous week. This rehearsal was a vital one, for at it, in the absence of the king, the nobles and the *matapules* had argued out the strict order of seniority (1967:45-47).<sup>8</sup>

The *Taumafa kava*, whether it takes place at installation ceremonies or yearly agricultural shows, is the way in which Tongans have maintained (and continue to perpetuate) their cultural identity. No less a personage than the Honorable V'ahala (a leading authority on Tongan traditions and Governor of Ha'apai) has stated about the *Taumafa kava* ceremony that:

Before the Christian faith came to this country, the organizing of the country relied mostly on this ceremony which was a meeting place for the people. In this circle the Traditions, Cultures, and Customs were taught and discussed . . . [Translation provided by the Tongan Traditions Committee] (1959:4).

The *Taumafa kava* ceremony helps to maintain Tongan culture to this day. With increasing change, Tongans are maintaining their cultural identity by means of [1] increased informal *kava* consumption and [2] creation of the "agricultural shows" with the accompanying formal *Taumafa kava* ceremony.

### Conclusions

The question was raised "why the persistence of *kava* drinking over the years and the apparent increase and interest in *kava* consumption since alcoholic beverages are readily available?" The interpretations presented in this paper stress that [1] *kava* drinking of all types has been the way in which Tongans have maintained their cultural identity over the years; [2] *kava* drinking has provided and continues to provide an important "safety valve" feature which allows for informal discussion of contemporary problems; [3] *kava* drinking provides a necessary "seal of approval" on virtually all important Tongan events, from birth to death in the life cycle; and [4] *kava* drinking is decidedly "Tongan" as opposed to the *kava-palangi* of non-Tongans. Tongans prefer to identify with Tongans rather than identify with non-Tongans.

There are two types of *kava* drinking in Tonga: those occasions on which the reigning Monarch is absent and those occasions on which the Monarch is present. The presence of the reigning Monarch constitutes a *Taumafa kava* and it is the only occasion when one can predict with any certainty as to the serving order of the *kava*. The precedence of serving for all non-*Taumafa kava* sessions (whether termed *fai-kava* or *'ilo kava*) depend on the occasion and those present.

As Tongans continue to undergo rapid change in the latter third of the twentieth century, one can predict a continued increase in *kava* consumption since *kava* drinking is the focal point for the maintenance and perpetuation of Tongan unity and identity. One observes this increase in the activities concerning the yearly agricultural shows.

A *kava* drinking session is a model of Tongan society and the scale of the model merely shifts as one goes from the various non-*Taumafa kava* sessions to the *Taumafa kava* ceremony. Increasing *kava* consumption patterns are a reflection of a greater (and growing) awareness of what it means to be a Tongan in the twentieth century. Paraphrasing Oliver, Tongans appear Western but have remained Tongan (1962:179), or as Inder stated concerning the dual features of His Majesty's 1967 coronation, "Thus, in the end, Tongan and Western influences shared the billing, as usual, the Tongan way the more dominant" (1967:47). When the ratio between *kava* consumption patterns and alcoholic consumption patterns shifts towards a preponderance of alcohol consumption, Tonga will indeed have some problems for

this will be an indication that the basic fabric of their culture and society has shifted.

### NOTES

1. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Third Annual Meeting of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (March 13-17, 1974) for a Symposium on "Alcohol and Kava Use in the Pacific Islands." Research was conducted in Tonga from July to October of 1970 and from August to October of 1971. In the intervening months archival research was conducted in the major libraries of Fiji, New Zealand, and Australia, with most of the research being done in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, Australia.
2. There is at least one other alcohol-dispensing club in the Kingdom, namely the "Vava'u Club" in Vava'u. Since my work in Tonga a new hotel has opened in Vava'u, and alcohol prices probably follow the prices of the hotels on Tongatapu. It should be pointed out that in 1970 and 1971 the various clubs and hotels were selling beverages in obvious violation of Tonga's "Blue Laws" which (theoretically) forbid essentially all non-religious business activities on Sundays.
3. For further information on rank and title see Urbanowicz 1973:114.
4. Tongans not only presented *kava* roots to important individuals but also took *kava* roots on visits to important places. The Wesleyan Missionary W. Cross, in the islands from 1827 to 1833 and again from 1834 to 1835, pointed this out: "The [Tongan] Chief observed that on former occasions when they visited and [sic.] island it was their custom to take large pieces of *kava* for the gods; and that to Nomuka alone they used to take at least 10 pieces" (Cross 1830b).
5. A similar detailed description from Hobbs supports the idea of title removal and land distribution at a *kava* ceremony: "A 'fai Kava' i.e. meeting for drinking Kava took place at Nuku'alofa on Tuesday the 18th at which [Jiosaia] Tubou presided of course as the Tui-kanokubolu. Taufaha-ahou [also known as King George Tupou] and all the other principal persons were there, and word was sent to Lavaka at the Be to come and attend before our people and Taufaha-ahou left the Island, but Lavaka [still] refused. The ceremony therefore proceeded without Lavaka. THE PRINCIPAL OBJECT OF THE KAVA MEETING WAS TO STATE OFFICIALLY FROM THE TUI-KANOKUBOLU WHO WAS THE[N] [TO] OCCUPY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE DIFFERENT DISTRICTS IN TONGA since the rebellion; and the principal things affected by this appointment are as follows: Old Fatu who was the 1st heathen [or non-Wesleyan] chief who submitted, and who had now come to Nukualofa to the Tui-kanokubolu has got a considerable augmentation of his power in being appointed Tui-Hahake. OLD LAVAKA IS OFFICIALLY DEPRIVED OF ALL HIS POWER BY THE APPOINTMENT OF OLD SEMI AND FOKE as Tuihaamea, because the fortress at the Be stands in Haamea" [all STRESS added] (Hobbs *Journal*: April 22, 1837).
6. I witnessed a *Taumafa kava* ceremony on the island of 'Eua over the period 14 September to 17 September, 1971, having travelled to the island with the royal part on *H.M.V. Kao*. Enroute to 'Eua from the island of Tongatapu, a journey of some four hours, I was fortunate to have approximately a three hour and forty-five minute private discussion with His Majesty King Taufaha-ahou Tupou IV (on just about everything under the Tongan sun, including *kava*). Much of my thinking about *kava* has been influenced by my discussions with His Majesty AS WELL AS by numerous discussions with other Tongans, of all ranks. I also took part in numerous *kava* ceremonies in Tonga occasionally where I was treated as the guest of honor.
7. The *'inasi* ceremony was not only an important ceremony in aboriginal Tongan society but it also had parallels in other parts of Polynesia (Goldman 1970:134; and Sahlins 1958:24-25). The Tongans were a horticultural people and indeed, today, agriculture along with "tourism" are the mainstays of the Tongan economy. The yam

- or 'ufi was the main crop and W. Cross wrote "the yam is a vegetable that is to the inhabitants of Tonga, what bread is to many in our native land" (Cross 1830a). The aboriginal Tongan names of the respective parts of the year were based on the lunar month and thirteen separately designated time periods (Dyson *Papers 1858-1908*: April 7, 1863). These names clearly show the importance of the yam to the Tongans and Thomas wrote that the month of June was termed "Hilinga kekeke" by the Tongans and that "they expect the soil to produce forth now" and of the yams at this time of the year that they are "the earliest and the best yams." For the month of October, Thomas wrote "Ooloo enga - Uluega" which is 'Ulenga for "ooloo, the head, enga yellow" and at this time the yams "became yellow" (Thomas 1827: no page).
8. This same aspect of a "dual installation" also took place when His Majesty's mother, Queen Salote Tupou III, was installed as Queen in 1918 (after the death of her father, King George Tupou II). As Collocott pointed out: "a coronation ceremony in the European model was followed by a native installation with appropriate kava ceremony on the mala'e at Nuku'alofa" (1927:38).

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