MOTIVES AND METHODS:
MISSIONARIES IN TONGA IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY

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A variety of writers, including Scarf, Rutherford, Kennedy, and Barney have presented more than adequate views of selected Tongan political matters after the mid-19th century and into the early part of the 20th century. Decker Krone's recent exemplary work clearly indicate that quite a bit of "re-thinking" is still needed in the realm of interpreting changing and aboriginal Tongan culture. It is the intention of this brief article to place early 19th century Tongan affairs into an additional ethnographic perspective by means of ethnohistorical techniques.

1. Earlier versions of this paper were prepared for a variety of Symposia sponsored by the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO), for the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, November 29 - December 1, 1972; the Second Annual Conference of the Association for Social Anthropology, April 25 - 27, 1973; and the Fourth Annual Meeting of the ASAO, March 26 - 30, 1973. Numerous individuals have contributed to Tonga work, none of whom, of course, is responsible for what is presented. Research was conducted in the Polynesian Kingdom of Tonga from July to October 1972 and again from August to October 1973. In the intervening months archival research was conducted in the major libraries of Fiji, New Zealand, and Australia. Most of the research was done in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, Australia. Permission to work with and cite from the various sources held by the numerous institutions is gratefully acknowledged (see Urbanowicz 1972:10-11).

2. Scarf 1968
3. Rutherford 1971
4. Kennedy 1972
5. Barney 1974
7. The term "ethnohistory" is not synonymous with "culture history" as the distinguished Pacific historian H. E. Maude has written (1971:21). The "history" in the term refers not to the writing of history, but to the application of historical methods to a given body of data, in order to gather verifiable ethnographic facts of the past. See, for example, Biggs (1969), Maranda (1964), Oppenheim (1973), Oliver (1974), or Urbanowicz (1973 and 1975). unquestionably, "historical processes are discussed in the various presentations, but the emphasis is on the collection and verification of ethnographic evidence of the past. Oliver's 1972 paper on "Why Tonga is Different" is a clear example of what can be accomplished in the realm of Pacific ethnography given a small amount of time and resources. Maranda's work as a classic, indication that some of the "specifics and generalizations (1974) are unwarranted, and Biggs and Oppenheim have each contributed to a further clarification of Maori life by means of ethnohistorical techniques.
EARLY 19TH CENTURY MISSIONARIES IN TONGA

ABORIGINAL TONGA

Research on Polynesian ethnography, and more specifically, "things Tongan" since 1969, leads me to conclude that traditional Tongan society was based on kinship, and politics in Tonga was literally "kinship writ large". As Tongan society increased in size, the number of leaders in society increased. Aboriginal Tongan society was divided into various ha'ate'a 'corporate land-holding and property-sharing descent groups', and every single Tonga was able to trace his or her ha'ate'a affiliation for various obligatory reasons in the life cycle (such as marriages, funerals, and wars).

When a Tonga chief dispatched an individual to look after a specific area of land, the individual sent was a kinsman. Consider the following, from a Wesleyan missionary who resided in Tonga for over 25 years, from 1826 to 1850 and again from 1855 to 1859.

Another Wesleyan missionary, Peter Turner, provides corroborating evidence in a journal entry: "The King has sent his eldest son to be the head ruler here at Vava'u and may be called a king under him." The Tonga system of appointing out relatives, with appropriate titles, to rule over certain portions of land unified the "mud and blood" of the ha'ate'a.

The first leader of all of the Tongas was the Tu'i Tonga 'sovereign of Tonga'. The Tu'i Tonga, as lineal descendant of the gods, was the embodiment of the sacred and secular in aboriginal Tongan life and the leader of all Tongans. In approximately the 15th century, a division was made between the sacred and secular operations of organising society, and the Tu'i Tonga delegated his secular responsibilities to a brother and the title of Tu'i Ha'a Tukualau was created. A manuscript account related how the Tu'i Tonga Kau'ulufonua: "...appointed Mauga Monitu Tui Hataka" and he was able to reside at Fonsamantu as he was to be protector of the Tucongas (as the Tucongas were apt to be assassinated), and the Tucongas was safe because his younger brother kept guard over him." In approximately the 17th century a Tu'i Ha'a Tukualau delegated some of his secular authority and responsibility to a son, and the title of Tu'i Kanokupolu was created. The individual known as Nata became the first Tu'i Kanokupolu, and he received "royal estates at the West end of Tonga [Lopitu] called Hihifo." When Andersson, who was with Cook in 1777, visited Tongatapu he wrote of the fact that Tongatapu Island was "divided into many districts" and one of these was "Hefe Hefo." When

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the first of the Wesleyan missionaries arrived in 1822, this district was still intact, and Lawry recommended to London that: "The next District Proper for a Mission Station is that of Hefe." When the first Tu'i Tonga divided his lands among his kinsmen, his kinsmen established their own titles indicative of their leadership. It was the title of an individual that was passed on to another leader when the first titled individual was no longer capable of performing his or her duties. The title could pass to his or her ha'ate'a affiliation for various obligatory reasons in the life cycle (such as marriages, funerals, and wars). When a Tonga chief dispatched an individual to look after a specific area of land, the individual sent was a kinsman. Consider the following, from a Wesleyan missionary who resided in Tonga for over 25 years, from 1826 to 1850 and again from 1855 to 1859.

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8. Thomas n.d. MS 1.

15. Although accurate and variable information pertaining to the first Tu'i Tonga, the legendary 'Aho'opia (c. 1750), is lacking, the procedures cited above (see note 11) in reference to the Tu'i Tonga Kau'ulufonua, lends one to believe that similar procedures took place for the first (and subsequent) Tu'i Tonga. Although note 11 cites Collessot, the statement was (intentionally) made by the last Tamato Ameda in 1844. The Tamato, an extremely high-ranking individual, was the highest earthly dignitary in Tongan society (Touf, 1826-1827). For additional examples, see the status and ranking systems, see Urbanowicz (1979) for several about adoption and rank see Urbanowicz (1979) for several about adoption and rank see Urbanowicz (1979).
In approximately 1800, Goldman's most useful "terminal date" for aboriginal Polynesian society in general, a numerical estimate of the Tongan population would probably fall within the range of 15 to 20 thousand people. In attempting to interpret aboriginal and changing Tongan society from 1800 on, the figure of approximately 15,000 Tongans is useful to keep in mind. Quite frankly, the failure to keep the size of the population in mind is one of the major reasons that there have been so many alternatives in interpreting aboriginal Polynesian society in general; scholars stressing the environment and Goldman emphasizing status rivalry as the interpretive paradigm.

There are obviously more Tongans in the 20th century than there were before European contact in Tonga, and various researchers have tended erroneously to project from the interaction patterns of 20th-century Tongans to what they (the researchers) have believed to be the interaction patterns of pre-European Tongans.

A considerable amount of convoluted thinking about Tonga has resulted. For example, researchers have consistently taken into account the fact that Tongan society is not traditional Tonga, and the fact that many of the Tongans may have formed their views of what aboriginal Tonga was by reading European accounts of Tonga. Consider, for example, the following statement from Gifford's work:

"Of the published works available in Tonga, the most extensive and most extensively published book on the South Pacific in general is "Mariner's Tonga Islands"."
failure on the Tongans, as some seem to suggest. Wood wrote of the Tongans of this period and of their "lawlessness and fiendish cruelty", and Littkewi wrote of the LMS venture that: "This well-meaning effort was doomed to fail right from the beginning, for the missionaries were ill-equipped for this tremendous task, and the Tongans themselves were not ready for the new religion". To state that the missionaries were ill-equipped is only partially correct; to state that the Tongans "were not ready" is far too little. Perhaps a better interpretation would also point out that the new religion brought was not ready for the Tongans! The subsequent successes of the Wesleyans would seem to prove this point.

THE WESLEYAN MISSION

The problem that faced the Wesleyans was simple: how to convert the Tongans. The motive of the Wesleyan missionaries was conversion, but, viewed against a larger background, the Wesleyans also wished to succeed where the LMS had failed. The solution to the problem of Christian colonialism in Tonga included (1) better-trained missionaries and (2) increased supplies of Western technological devices. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society began its colonial venture in Tonga in 1822 with the mission group led by Walter Lawry. Lawry and his wife and servants were in Tonga from August of 1822 until October of 1823, when he was ordered by his London Committee to be "removed from Tonga to Van Diemen's Land". Although his stay was short, and his attempt at converting Tongans failed, Lawry was an extremely important individual in setting the pattern for subsequent 19th century Wesleyan work in the islands. Lawry acknowledged the necessity for a constant supply line back to Sydney for material goods for the mission. The Wesleyans of the 19th century realized that material goods diffused much more rapidly than philosophical or ideological systems. In 1823 Lawry acknowledged the importance of material goods for the success of the missionaries:

. . . inasmuch as the only importance attached to the character of the missionaries is derived from their being annually visited by their relations (as the natives term it) and replenished with such property as most effectually secures the natives in our favour. And we are all most decidedly of the opinion that this measure should be adopted by the directors of the LMS. [1823:112] Lawry believed that material goods diffused much more rapidly than philosophical or ideological systems. In 1823 Lawry acknowledged the importance of material goods for the success of the missionaries.

27 Scarr 1968:86.
28 "Restructuring is said after Brookfield (1972:2) who writes of "Colonialism" as the "discriminatory, oppressive and deliberate perpetuation" of an area by individuals, who aim to restructure the patterns of organisation."
29 Oliver 1963:98.

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Although Walter Lawry was in the Tonga Islands for a little more than a year, his reports back to London influenced what was to follow. Specifically, Lawry stressed the supposed "ripeness" for a mission in Tonga and the need for material goods for the successful completion of the mission's work. Lawry's successor, John Thomas, arrived with his wife and another missionary family in June 1826. Thomas, more than any other 19th century European, provided us with some excellent accounts of Tonga.

It has been asserted above that in aboriginal Tongan society consensus and flexibility were key concepts of the political system. An individual who wanted to lead the people had to have support, and even the Tu'i Tonga 'Sovereign of Tonga' could not be appointed to office (or remain in office) without the support of the people. Thomas recorded that "there is a union amongst the Tonga people, especially the chiefs, so that they consult each other before they determine anything." 18

With the systematic introduction of Western material goods and eventually Western ideology in the 19th century, a not-so-subtle restructuring of aboriginal religious beliefs and the body politic began. Under Wesleyan encouragement, individual Tongan chiefs soon rose to power, and the most important was Tauafi Siau, later known as King George Tupou I.

In the early years of the mission, things did not go smoothly for the Wesleyans. The Tongans often told Thomas and Hutchinson what they had earlier said to Lawry: "Your religion is very good for you, and ours is very good for us." 19 Thomas noted that the Tongan chief Mata feared that if the Tongans "allowed the [Wesleyans] praying to go on the English will come by and by and take their land." 20 The important role of the individual Tongan chief must be noted. If a chief was converted, his people also converted with him. Thomas wrote: "It is said by the head Chief, or King, of Tonga, Tubou, that if a Tonga convert to Christianity, and on this one point their budget request had been vast, part of the mission expansion also had to cease. In the late 1820s Tauafi Siau wanted John Thomas in the Ha'apai group. Although Lātōikufo stated that the Wesleyans needed "approval from mission headquarters in London," before sending Thomas to Ha'apai, 21 in 1829 Turner wrote that he received a letter from New Zealand authorising "no more than £300 for the prosecution of this mission" and "in consequence of the information received we shall be obliged to relinquish the idea of Mr. Thomas going to commence a new station at the Ha'apai, for which he was prepared and only waiting a fair wind." 22

The Wesleyans made numerous attempts to convert the last Tu'i Tonga Laufilotonga but they failed, and he became a Catholic convert. A faith he professed until his death in 1855. The Tu'ai Tonga then converted to Wesleyanism and the Wesleyans scored quite a coup when this happened. Thomas wrote that "Tamai ha had turned to God — also her brother Fehokohabai, and all the people of Tonga [in the Ha'apai group] have turned." 23

The Wesleyan missionaries gradually gained a foothold in the islands, first on Tongatapu and then elsewhere. With the support of the Tana chiefs and the Ta'ahai, the Wesleyan missionaries eventually expanded their stations into the Ha'apai and Vava'u group of islands. The process, however, was slow, and the Wesleyan missionary Waskin (the islands from 1831 to 1837) wrote on the mission in 1835: "... in Tonga [it is] almost confined to Nuku'alofa, and a spirit of opposition to Christ appears to have grown

40. Lawry n.d. entry for Dec. 21, 1826.
42. Thomas 1826.
It is probable that should this take place a war would be the immediate consequence.\(^{110}\) JosuaTapuwasnotdeposed,andhecontinuedhisdiligentpositionastheTukai-Kanokupu until his death on November 18, 1845. In his position as Tui Tuki-Kanokupula, Josua Tapou did not exert pressure on the Tongan people to convert to Wesleyanism. Thomas wrote that certain chiefs were saying that "Tutou is tuefa [the old], that is without care of them. He does not speak to them about the new policy; and they are living on bad terms with each other and when Tapu did not get seriously involved in the work of the mission. Thomas was not at all pleased with that, as the following relates: "The chiefs are not a firm friend to the cause. He believes it to be the hindrance to the inhabitants of Tonga, but to the Church of Christ here.\(^{111}\) The Wesleyan missionary Tucker termed Josua Tapou's government "miserably inefficient.\(^{112}\) Such inefficiency, however, allowed the Wesleyans to become firmly entrenched in the islands.

Part of the Wesleyan methods also involved using the beachcombers who were in the archipelago as translators and interpreters. When Thomas arrived, he reported:

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 rescued from those enemies, so at this time they seem much confused, having no head.\(^{113}\)

Concerning the overall lack of Tongan leadership at this time, N. Turner wrote: "Mr. Lawry was certainly sent to the world in [sic] magazine that the offices of Tutu-Tuakokua and Tofutinga, where [sic] then filled. See Magi Sep. 1825 for no person is yet created to the last office.\(^{114}\)"

Because of the problems between Taufa'ahau and Laufa'ilonga (the Tu'Tonga to be), the Wesleyans were able to gain a stronger foothold in the archipelago. A major series of battles took place in the Ha'apai group of islands in 1826 between the forces of Laufa'ilonga and Taufa'ahau. Although Lituitaka has written that "it took place during a period when there were no Europeans such as William Mair or Vasco to give eyewitness accounts" and therefore, according to Lituitaka, "oral traditions were the only source of information on the events of 1825 and 1826," this is only partially correct. Although there were no eyewitnesses to the events, Thomas and Hutchinson did record such information in their manuscripts.\(^{115}\)

59. Cross 1830
61. Thomas 1834.
62. Tucker 1838.
64. Turner 1827.
65. Lituitaka 1830.
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As Thomas wrote in September of 1826, early this morning a canoe arrived here from the Hapies [or Ha'apai] (to the Inacal [Tusit]) which brought intelligence that they were at war at the Hapie Islands. The King [Taufa'ahau] of the Hapies and the Tut of Tonga (as he is called) have fallen out. However we expect it to be of short continuance to You or King of Ha'apie is likely to be the worst of it, as the other islands are all against him. By the end of October the battle still raged in the Ha'apai islands, and Hutchinson wrote back to England: "The war at the Hapies continues rage. If the King of Tonga (Laufilitonga) should be overcome, we shall soon be in serious circumstances; and all this is expected, as the people have received orders to prepare for war." Taufa'ahau was eventually victorious, and his star in the Tongan firmament began to rise.

THE WESTYANS AND ACCELERATED CHANGES

Although it may not have been deliberate missionary policy, the Wesleyan approach was literally that of "divide-and-conquer" as they turned Tongan against Tongan. The three religious wars in 1837, 1840, and 1852 were ferocious. Of the 1840 war, Thomas wrote that he told the Tu'i Kanokupolu Josua Tupou that "the heathens [for non-Western Tongans] had acted more kind a great deal than the Christians and that they were less disposed for war." The Wesleyan missionary P. Turner, commenting on one battle, stated: "The heathens seemed determined to die in their foolishness. I am told that they made an oath to do so, before they will yield to the Xmas."

Tongan society was altered from within and from without: from within by Tongans who were devious or change, and from without by Europeans who were advising and encouraging the Tongans to change. This internal and external restructuring process, however, must be viewed as a complementary one. Without the presence of the Wesleyan missionaries Tongan society would never have developed as it did.

The Wesleyans were aided in their restructuring process by the occasional appearance of vessels of the British Navy in Tongan waters. On visits from passing British vessels Thomas wrote: "From what I have heard by the natives in reference to the visit of His Majesty's Ship of War at Vavou, the effect will be very beneficial and lasting. The [Tongan] King and his people seem to think that religion is of more importance now than they were willing to believe." The Wesleyans also tried to get various ships to "remove" some of the beachcombers in the archipelago. The British vessel H M S. Serapian arrived at the islands in 1830, and the captain removed some Frenchmen who were "thieves and troublemakers."

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The British Wesleyans received tremendous moral support from the visits of the British men-of-war but when the French Roman Catholic priests attempted a similar method, the Wesleyans were not at all sympathetic. The Catholic mission in Tonga began in 1842 and since the Tu'i Kanokupolu was a Wesleyan convert, the Catholics concentrated on the Tu'i Tonga Laufilitonga. The Wesleyan P. Turner wrote that the Catholic priests "have induced some poor heathens [for non-Western Tongans] to come over to them by making them false promises of help from France." Turner continued: "And the Tutounga who has just become a Papist is to be the King of Tonga, and Taufa'ahau and some others are to be put on one side as of no importance."

Turner also wrote that "these things I told to the priests and showed them how unbecoming it was for them to meddle with the chiefs and the government of the Islands" and "That all true ministers of X[ten] trusted the gospel and lived holy before God and men. But that they were trying to intimidate the people by telling them of a [French] man-of-war, wd. come and give them help."

This is the same Wesleyan missionary who wrote of a visit by Taufa'ahau to the Wesleyan compound in 1842, when that Tongan "came to ask our opinion about punishing those who violate the laws of the land." At the time Turner also wrote that the Wesleyan missionaries "desired not to have much to do with the affairs of the land in a political sense" but Wesleyan activities and statements belied that "desire." At a later date the same person wrote: And the [Tongan] King and chiefs are becoming jealous of our interfering with what they think their prerogatives. We have been recommending to them a better code of laws, but O no things must remain as they are and we are against all evil for wishing to elevate them in the scale of civilization, and we have but little hopes of seeing them much better.

Briefly stated, the British Wesleyan missionaries did interfere in the politics of the Tongan islands. Not only did the missionaries structure traditional religious beliefs, but they also caused major changes in the political system. With the aid of various Wesleyans, three or four codes were promulgated in 1839, 1850, and 1862. These codes would never have come into existence had not the Wesleyans been in the islands. The three codes eventually culminated in the celebrated Tongan Constitution of 1875. Captains of various British vessels told the Wesleyans not to interfere with Tongan politics. One wrote that he advised the missionaries "against proposing laws to the natives." But the advice was not taken. Lützau has written off the influence of the Wesleyans on Tongan politics.

In spite of the Society's official policy of 'no politics/', missionaries in Tonga participated significantly in the political development of that country during the period covered by this study (1826-1875) ...
Tonga introduced its own form of civilization. The missionaries were instruments and agents bringing it about, but they did not initiate it. They further adds, "The one point I make firmly is that if the missionaries held this, they did not initiate it. It was all the desire of the Tongan people, and of the King [Taufa'ahau] in particular. Unfortunately, the 19th century evidence certainly does not support this non-initiative role of the Wesleyan missionaries. The missionaries were both the initiators and the major instruments of civilization in Tonga. It is Lutcher's contention (i.e., Tonga's) "most rapid westernization began in 1862" but the evidence presented indicates that Westernization began before 1862. In some respects, Westernisation began when Kaufonu and Le Meur first stepped in the både in 1614. The true beginning, however, of Westernisation was in 1822/1828 when Wesleyan missionaries began their flow inland of materials in the archipelago. In 1856 Tonga finally entered into sustained contact with the Western world. Although Sear has written of rigidity in Tongan sexual structure, springing "in part, from primitivism,"[19] aboriginal Tongan society displayed a great deal of flexibility. Cosmopolitan and traditional were not in opposition but did give the society room to function in its own ways. Although the Wesleyans may not have "understood the native culture"[20] they did not have enough to entrench themselves firmly in the island and they did this by astute support of Taufa'ahau.

CONCLUSIONS

Christian colonisation was ultimately introduced to Tonga through the Wesleyans (and their material goods) via weapons. This future state of religion had not resulted exclusively from the cross of the Tongan hearts to the moving visions of the emotional Wesleyans. The instruments that had saved these people for Jehovah was George Tubou [Taufa'ahau, eventual King] of all the Tongans, a sovereign who carried the sword amongst unbelievers and won the support of the Devil's party at last as he was gathered in his church. Thus, the two philosophers of the Sabbath. Before this servant of the Lord had been accused by his enemies under the influence of the Wesleyan preachers. He was one of the men of the Lord. And if Tonga had become a kingdom, it would have been because of religious influence, it was only the logical consequence of the teachings of the Wesleyan preachers who shaped the policies of the preacher-king in the forties and fifties. Indeed, the Wesleyans did shape the policies of Taufa'ahau in the 1840s and 1850s. Tippett attempts to stress the point, in a writing about "civilization" in Tonga, that "immediately after its conversion to Christianity..."
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In the exercise of this holy discipline over their fellow countrymen. They are valuable auxiliaries to our work.184

Such sentiments led to an eventual break which came in the 1860s; George Tupou I gradually separated himself from his Wesleyan advisers, with the exception of the Rev. S. W. Baker185 and so, it is only in this decade of the 20th century that a Tongan finally became the leader of the Tonga Church in Tonga.

85. Adams 1955; emphasis mine
86. See Rutherford 1971.

REFERENCES


10:105-12.


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