

TONGAN AUTHORITY STRUCTURE: CONCEPTS FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Introduction

The appellation "feudalistic" has frequently been applied to the means of allocating authority in a number of Polynesian societies. Most notable among these are Hawaii, Tahiti, Tonga and the Marquesas. The use of the term "feudal," of course, implies a resemblance to the authority structure of Medieval Europe. However, since the investigators who described Polynesian social systems often used, as their sole criteria of feudalism, the existence of lord-vassal relationships and/or the granting of fiefs, it follows that frequently only a limited part of the authority structure of the above societies has been examined to determine whether or not they compare with that of Medieval Europe. Therefore, it is reasonable to interpret the assertions that certain Polynesian societies were "feudal," to mean that the implied comparison holds only for the criteria utilized. The objection may arise that the comparison of even these few criteria is not valid, since the lord-vassal relationships in the two areas were not equivalent. This is true in terms of the total content of the relationships; the system of ritual which symbolized the social relation was quite different in Polynesia and Feudal Europe. But, if the frame of reference for comparing the two systems is in terms of the social action only, then the above objection loses much of its validity.

If it can be assumed for the moment that the lord-vassal, fief granting relationships in both Europe and Polynesia were socially equivalent, it would follow that many other social elements in the two societies might be equatable, inasmuch as the relationships between these elements in any society are not random. The intent of this paper is to take the first steps toward determining the equivalences, if any, between these elements. To do this, a Polynesian "feudal" society (Tonga, during the early 1800's) will be analyzed so as to allow future comparison with European feudal societies. Obviously, in any comparison of this sort, the units of comparison must be chosen in such a way that they are equally applicable in either of the systems to be compared. This qualification rules out the possibility of using the categories derived for comparing Western societies with one another, since non-Western societies frequently lack the counterparts of what, in Western societies, appear to be discrete institutions, such as kinship, government, technology, and economy. When attempting cross cultural comparison, the limitations of the use of these traditional categories become very apparent; then there is great confusion over such questions as, where does the kinship system end and the political system begin; is a certain element of behavior to be classified as religion or technology; and can this or that society be said to have a political system. In order to obviate these difficulties the methodology employed in this paper is directed toward analyzing the social system of Tonga in terms of the social relations between individuals and groups without sorting these relations into preconceived categories. It is hoped

that a similar analysis of Feudal Europe would allow comparison between systems which are frequently held to be incomparable.

The approach used herein is as follows: first, a model will be derived of the Tongan social system with reference to the types of social groupings, the basis for the affiliation of the individuals in these groupings, and the allocation of authority in these groupings. Second, the variations from the model will be described in order to give a more coherent picture of the Tongan social system. Finally, an attempt will be made to determine what mechanisms maintain the social system, in the form which it is found to have.

Population and Economy of Tonga

The Tongan archipelago comprises over one hundred islands, which are naturally divided into three groups, Vavau in the north, Haapai in the center, and Tongatabu in the south. The largest island has an area of 150 square miles, whereas the smallest of the islands are only a few acres in area. The distance from the center of the Vavau group to the center of Haapai is approximately 150 miles and from the center of Haapai to the center of Tongatabu is another 100 miles.

The population of these islands at the beginning of the nineteenth century has been estimated at 6,000 for Haapai, 6,000 for Vavau, and 8,000 for Tongatabu. Of the total population of 20,000, approximately 6,000 can be assumed to have been males of fighting age. (Gifford 1929:5-6)

The land was intensively cultivated, and normally enough food was produced through both horticulture and fishing to provide the inhabitants, throughout the year, with more food than they could consume. However, there were occasional famines during which the lower classes fared better than their superiors, since the former were able to hide their produce in times of scarcity.

Sea transportation was furnished by canoes, the largest of which could carry upwards of one hundred persons and provisions. Journeys as far as 400 miles without touching land were common.

Tongan Social Groups

The household group: The smallest social grouping in Tonga, considered relevant to this discussion, was the small household group; usually a number of persons who lived under the same roof. The nucleus of this group was a male ego and his wife, the remainder of the household consisting of their own and adopted children. Inasmuch as this group might be characterized as one based on kinship, then kinship must be taken to mean a set of reciprocal obligations, a good many of them rather diffuse, and a feeling of solidarity with certain emotional overtones. Kinship could not mean only a principle of affiliation, since the individuals were associated variously by a) socially recognized biological ties (ascriptive affiliation), b) marriage (a more or less voluntary association established by certain rules defined by the society), c) adoption

(a voluntary association on the part of one party and involuntary on the part of the other). Therefore, a kinsman must be defined as a person toward whom one acts and feels in a certain way, not a person with whom one is associated vis à vis certain rules of descent. If this definition is accepted, then it follows that in Tonga, as well as in the rest of the world, kinsmen are aligned in groups which may be seen to have certain genealogical and marriage ties, but many other ties, not always obvious, are also operative. Whereas this may be considered a simple minded analysis, it serves to point up the need to keep distinct, the behavioral aspects of affiliation and the criteria on which the affiliation is based. The need for this sort of distinction, though perhaps not very convincing in relation to the household group, will become more apparent as the larger groupings are considered.

The household group was associated with a plot of land to which the male head of the household held the usufruct rights. Succession to these rights was generally by primogeniture in the male line. In the event that a man had no sons, the land could be left to a daughter, a brother, or a sister's son. The heir always had to have the approval of the chief (see below) who owned the land.

Theoretically the head of the household held absolute powers over all members of this group, and also over their personal property. Obviously, so-called absolute power is always mitigated by many considerations, including the personalities of all persons concerned and pressures from outside groups. Thus, it is always necessary to distinguish between what various persons can in theory do, and what they actually do. This was not done, at the level of the household group, by any of the persons who wrote on Tonga; therefore only a limited part of the Tongan social system is available for analysis at this level. Nevertheless, a few valid assumptions can be made on the material available. There is, for example, a high degree of certainty that the head of the household was held responsible, by persons outside of the household group, for the actions of his subordinates.

A man was always superordinate in terms of authority to his wife; this applied even if his wife's rank was superior to his. A child showed great respect toward his father and all of his father's brothers. This respect relationship extended to the father's sister and, in this instance, was especially severe. Extremely permissive relations existed between a sister's son and mother's brother. The same type of familiarity applied also to father's father, mother's father and mother's sister.(1).

The Subdistrict: A number of household groups, dispersed over the countryside, were under the authority of a titled chief who held residual rights to all the land in his subdistrict. There is no evidence of any intermediate authority between the household and subdistrict levels. The ties which existed between the various persons in a subdistrict, besides those of territorial contiguity, have to be inferred from a very hazy analysis given by Gifford. He appears to have identified the subdistrict as a "lineage" and describes it as follows:

The lineages are patrilineal. Each consists of a nucleus of related chiefs about whom are grouped inferior relatives, the lowest and most remote of the commoners. Some commoners are not aware of their lineage as such, but most are, and claim relationship to some chief, usually the one under whom they live. Thus the commoners living under the chief Ata are reckoned as of his lineage. . . . The landed chiefs of today are all grouped in lineages. Modern representatives of former powerful chiefs against whom the political situation has turned, and, who have sunk to the status of commoners, are as a rule unconnected with the modern lineages. . . .

Everything points to the necessity of a line of powerful chiefs for a nucleus about which the lineage groups itself. Without such chiefs it appears to wilt and die and its membership gradually aligns itself with other rising lineages. This process of realignment naturally contravenes the rule of patrilineal descent, which theoretically, and largely in practice, determines lineage membership. Adoption into lineages is practiced.

There was no rule against marriage within the haa [lineage]. Close blood relationship was the only bar. Patrilocal residence is said to have been the rule with both chiefs and commoners, a factor which would tend to keep the patrilineal haa localized. (Gifford 1929:30-31)

Although Gifford at first states that a "lineage" is a patrilineal descent group, it may be seen that membership in a "lineage" was determined by a) patrilineal descent, b) non-unilineal descent, c) a claim of non-unilineal descent, d) residence in the "lineage" territory. Any one of these factors or any of the possible combinations of them appears to have validated membership in the "lineage."

The apparently muddled composition of the Tongan "lineages," on analysis, can be seen to conform to a few simple principles. Obviously the "lineages" were not groups of individuals related through patrilineal descent lines. However the nucleus of chiefs about which the "lineage" was formed were members of the same patri-descent group since inheritance of chiefly titles was by primogeniture in the patrilineal lines, and it was from the name of the chiefs' descent groups that the "lineages" took their names. Therefore, all persons living on land belonging to chiefs who were in the same patri-descent line, were members of the same "lineage." This partially accounts for the fact that the same "lineage" name occurred among widely separated groups.

Although chiefs of different subdistricts had the same "lineage" name as chiefs of a number of other subdistricts, there was no necessary connection between them for purposes of administration, unless one of them happened also to be the district chief (see below). In this latter event, the inferior units would also be considered as "sublineages" in relation to the superior unit, although it was only the chiefs who were related in the patrilineal line.

It is evident from the above that the members of a subdistrict, besides the line of chiefs which governed that unit, had no consistent genealogical ties with one another (either actual or stipulated). They were variously related by non-unilineal descent and affinal ties. Many of them could probably trace descent non-unilineally to a common ancestor with their chief. However, a few did not even claim that they were related to the chief in this way. Since the concern of Polynesian groups with genealogies is usually related to the validation of titles and property holding, this latter fact indicates that such validation was of no particular importance to these persons, who had only usufruct rights to the land. The household groups held the land at the discretion of the chiefs, and this fact overruled all genealogical considerations.

Briefly summarized, the structure of a subdistrict appears to have been as follows: the only principle of affiliation applicable for all members of the group was common residence on land owned by a chief. Succession to the chieftainship, and thus inheritance of all the land, was through the patrilineal line of the chief. Inheritance of the usufruct rights to the land was also through the patrilineal line. However, the chief could revoke the rights of any person to use his land. The members of the household groups were affiliated, variously, by non-unilineal ties and marriage. Many of the household groups claimed a common ancestor with the chief, however some made no such claim.

The presence of patrilineages among the chiefs of Tonga and the supposed membership of the chiefs' subjects in these patrilineages suggests that the Tongan social system, in relation to descent groups, landholding and authority structure was a development from a former unilineal descent system wherein all persons were members of an actual patrilineage which owned a certain territory, on which only members of the patrilineal descent line and their wives and children lived. The reasoning behind this is as follows:

Goodenough has indicated that unilineal landholding groups are not compatible with a scarcity of land:

In any community where cultivatable land is not overabundant in relation to population, and all rights to land depend on membership in a strictly unilinear kin group, a serious problem must soon arise. Unilinear groups inevitably fluctuate considerably in size. The matrilineal lineages on Truk, for example, readily double or halve their membership in the space of one or two generations. As a result, one lineage may have twice as much land as its members need while another has not enough to go around. Unless devices are developed to redistribute land rights to persons outside the owning group, intra-community conflict is inevitable. (Goodenough 1955:19)

When land was scarce among the matrilineages on Truk it was redistributed by separating use rights from membership in the owning group. Thereby a lineage could grant usufruct rights in its land to the sons of a lineage member who was living patrilocally. The sons would form the nucleus of a new matrilineage, and on the death of their father would receive ownership rights in the land.

If the original Tongans were divided into patrilineages, as described above, which were faced with a land shortage, and if they accomplished a redistribution of the land in the same way as the Trukese, by granting usufruct rights to non-lineage members, but not giving eventual ownership rights, then the Tongan system described herein would be a logical consequence. The patrilineages holding rights to the land could eventually emerge as an upper class through the disfranchisement of the groups who could never have more than use rights to the land. This situation need not have arisen on Truk where groups which were given use rights were eventually granted ownership.

One of the major assumptions involved in the above thesis is that the patrilineal group would not grant ownership rights, whereas it is known that certain matrilineal groups in the same situation did so. However this assumption seems justified in that certain structural elements, which in matrilineal groups would facilitate the relinquishment of ownership rights, are not present in patrilineal descent groups. Thus in matrilineal Truk, redistribution of ownership rights involved granting lineage land to the sons of the lineage members. The parallel situation in Tonga would have been the granting of lineage land to the sisters' sons of lineage members. Since there is good psychoanalytic as well as empirical data that the bond between a man and his son in a matrilineal society is stronger than the bond between a man and his sister's son in a patrilineal society, it follows that the transfer of ownership rights to one's sister's son is less likely to occur than the transfer of these rights to one's own son, in the respective matrilineal and patrilineal situations.

Logically the next step in this analysis of the Tongan social system would be to demonstrate how the subdistricts link into the larger groupings of Tongan society. However, since this demonstration is made easier by an understanding of the Tongan class structure, a discussion of titles, ranks, and professional occupations follows:

Titles and Rank: The literature on class structure in Tonga tends to be as confused as the data on the descent and residence groups. This is due, in part, to the failure of the writers to distinguish consistently between title holding and the system of ranking. The holder of a title always had either administrative powers over the persons in a given territory or he was retained in an advisory capacity by a person having administrative powers. Title holding, however, did not necessarily imply ceremonial precedence over all persons holding lower titles. In contrast, superior rank always implied ceremonial precedence but not necessarily administrative or advisory status. Usually, the holder of a title had to have a certain rank (2).

There were four distinct ranks in Tonga, hierarchically graded in the following order; nobles, matabules, mua and tua. The nobility included the chiefs and the children of the chiefs by their noble wives. The child of a chief by a non-noble woman was a non-noble. The child of a noble woman by a non-noble man was always a noble. Thus nobility descended through the female line. This fact has been used as evidence to substantiate the presence of a former descent system in Tonga, wherein title as

well as rank were inherited matrilineally. However, the inheritance of rank through the mother and title through the father can be explained without postulating former matrilineality. The Tongan chiefs were polygynous, and if all of their children had been nobles, the nobility would soon have numerically exceeded the lower classes. If, as was the case, only the offspring of noble women were nobles, then the number of the nobility would be kept within reasonable limits. Furthermore, the much closer identification of a child with its mother than with its father, which is usual in polygynous families, would also contribute toward the ranking of a child commensurate with its mother's rank. These processes are in no way incompatible with patrilineal inheritance of titles.

The matabule class included the advisors to the chiefs, their wives and (it is assumed) a number of their offspring (the exact nature of the inheritance of matabule and mua rank cannot be determined from the literature). The mua were the warrior class and the descendants of warriors. Finally, the lowest class of people were the tua, who worked the land, and were the servants of the chiefs.

The descendants of the chiefs and their advisors (Matabules), who were not in line for succession to their titles, reverted to increasingly lower rank, and in one or two generations would normally be tuas. Thus, birth was only one of the criteria by which rank was determined. Validation of rank was also dependent on such factors as title holding, occupation, prestige and relationships with titled and high ranking persons. The son of a chief by a matabule wife might be ranked as a matabule, mua or tua, depending on his occupation. Similarly the younger sons of chiefs by their noble wives might hold lower than noble rank if they were not favored by their father.

The normal rule in the Tongan class system was downward mobility. Gifford states that "regression is a simpler process than progression and for every person who rises in rank there are many who correspondingly sink." (Gifford 1929:112) The primary asset necessary for upward mobility was, usually, fighting prowess. The sons of tuas could rise to the rank of mua by being successful in war and being favored by a chief. A chief might also raise a tua or mua to matabule rank if the person showed particular abilities as an advisor. Only a few persons ever rose to the rank of noble, and this was usually accomplished through warfare, wherein a chief would appoint one of his matabules or muas as governor of a conquered territory, and this position would subsequently validate the matabule's or mua's claim to nobility.

The highest title in Tonga was that of chief. A chief theoretically held absolute power in the territory over which he had jurisdiction. The title of Matabule was held by the senior advisors and attendants to the superior chiefs, and the title of Mua was held by the advisors to inferior chiefs and the junior advisors of superior chiefs.

All of the titles were inherited patrilineally. Usually the oldest son inherited his father's title, however, if he were too young to fulfill the duties his father's younger brother might hold the title until the former had come of age.

Professional occupations: The professional occupations in Tonga varied as to whether they were hereditary or not. The more skilled professions were inherited, not in the sense that a man was obliged to follow the occupation of his father, but in that persons usually chose to practice the skills taught them by their fathers. A few of the less valued skills were practiced by anyone who had the inclination to do so. The two lowest occupations, farming and cooking, for the chiefs, were hereditary by legal requirement, since the chiefs demanded that the children of their cooks and peasants perform the same services as their parents. The following list of Tongan occupations, indicating the rank of the persons who practiced them, is taken from Mariner (1818:vol II:91).

	[canoe builders]		
	[cutters of whale-teeth]	>	Followed by both matabules and muas
	[ornaments]		
Hereditary by choice	< [superintendents of funeral rites]		
	[stone masons]		
	[net makers]		
	[fishermen]		
	[large house builders]	>	Followed by both muas and tuas
Hereditary or not	< [tattooers]		
	[club carvers]		
	[barbers]		
Hereditary by demand	< [cooks]		Followed only by tuas
	[peasants]	>	

Individuals gained prestige and material benefits, including presents from the chiefs, for practicing the higher skills. The more skilled a man was in his profession, the more esteemed he was in the community. As indicated above, it is probably a fair assumption that the rank of a person derived from his occupation and his skill in it, as well as from his genealogical connections.

The District and Higher levels of Authority: To continue the interrupted discussion of the authority structure, it will be recalled that the sub-district was the next higher level of authority over the household groups. A number of subdistricts were united in a district under the authority of a single chief. While the subdistrict chiefs owned the land in relation to their peasants, these chiefs held only provisional rights to the land in relation to the district chiefs. These latter, in turn, held only provisional rights to the land in relation to their superiors and so on up to the king. The subdistrict chief who was autonomous in his own territory, owed tribute in the form of food and other goods, and military

aid to the district chief. If the tribute was not paid, then the district chief had the legal right to deprive the inferior chief of his position. Whether the district chief would in fact have done this would have depended on his strength in relation to that of the subdistrict chief. A district chief could create new subdistricts by granting portions of his own land to his noble relatives or to other nobles, whom he judged worthy, in return for the usual tribute and military aid.

The level of authority above that of the district was the island group, corresponding to the three natural divisions of Tonga (Vavau, Haapai, and Tongatabu). The chiefs of the island groups stood in the same relation to the chiefs of the district as these latter did to the chiefs of the subdistrict. Finally, a king, standing in similar relationship to the chiefs of the island groups, was the top level of authority in the system. Since the king lived in one of the island groups, he was also the chief of that group. Whether or not he was also the chief of a district is not ascertainable from the literature.

From the foregoing it may be seen that a chief at any level of integration was theoretically autonomous within his own territory and owed tribute and military aid to his superior chief. He was also obliged to appear at the court of his superior chief when requested to do so. A superior chief in all instances held residual rights to all land of his subordinates, and the latter maintained their positions by carrying out their obligations in good faith.

The retinue of superior chiefs (district or higher) consisted of inferior chief, untitled nobles and titled and untitled matabules. The retinue of the inferior chief consisted of a body of fighting men, most of whom had the rank of mua and some of whom were tuas. The process by which this retinue came to be attached to a chief is described by Mariner (1818:vol II:285ff) as follows:

We will suppose that the present king or any other great chief has a son six or seven years of age, his playmates are the sons of the inferior chiefs, matabooles, and muas of his father's establishment, who freely associate with him, accompany him upon excursions, and imitate, in many respects, the habits of their parents: he does not, however, designedly play the chief, and conduct himself with arrogance towards them; they know his superior rank without being reminded of it; . . . in some of his country excursions, he perhaps meets with two or three of the sons of tuas, who by their strength and agility in wrestling, or bravery in boxing, or some other ostensible quality, recommend themselves to his notice, and therefore also become his companions. Thus they grow up in years together, and as the young chief approaches towards manhood, he does not exact, but he receives, with more or less affability, the respect and attention which his inferior associates readily pay him, and who now may be termed his cow-tangata, i.e., associates, supporters and defenders of his cause. He has not yet however, any matabooles [titled matabules] in his train, for all these are in the immediate service of the old chief, and the son of a mataboole cannot be a mataboole till his father is

dead, and then he would not perform the functions of a mataboole, unless he were grown to man's estate, and even then he would not be in the service of the younger chief, but of the elder. By and by the old chief dies, and the young one succeeds to his authority, and all the matabooles of his father become his matabooles, and the inferior chiefs and moos also enter his service in addition to those he had before. . . .

The members of a superior chief's retinue who actually dwelt within or near his fencing were as follows: all of his titled matabules, since their presence was constantly required in their advisory capacity; a few of the inferior chiefs; and approximately half of the muas both titled and untitled. The chiefs were responsible for the feeding and quartering of all of these persons. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that during famines more of these dependents of the chiefs died than persons of the lower classes since the latter were always able to reserve food for themselves despite the great taxes. (Mariner:1818: 400)

The primary loyalties of any Tongan were theoretically to the titled chief immediately superior to him. The ideal Tongan followed the orders of his chief without question, even if this involved fighting an even higher chief. That this ideal pattern seemed to have been followed in practice is borne out by the details of the wars in Tonga, as they are described by Mariner. Frequently, close relatives, such as father and son or brothers, fought one another since they lived under different chiefs. However, a person holding a high position might be excused by his superior chief from fighting against a relative.

Public meetings in Tonga were held at the subdistrict, district or higher level. Unlike similar meetings in other areas of Polynesia there was no discussion among the persons holding various titles. Only the chief or his Matabule talked and communicated his order to the people. Of course, many of the directions given at these meetings were decided on at conferences between the chiefs and their advisors.

The outline of the Tongan social system so far given may be viewed as a model of the authority structure. It is not a statistical model and it is doubtful whether it is an ideal model, either from the point of view of how the people thought the system actually operated, or how they thought that it should operate. It is certainly not a model of how the system did in fact operate. It might best be thought of as a framework which is arbitrarily derived so as to give coherence to the authority structure, and to act as a base from which variation can be measured. Variations from this base are not to be thought of as aberrations or as not conforming to the model. The variations may statistically be more frequent than similar elements presented by the model; this, however, should not throw doubt on the validity of the model, since it is used only as a frame of reference to further study of the workings of the system. What follows then, is a description of some of the more important variations from the model.

Whereas the model does not provide for any intermediate levels of authority between the household groups and subdistrict, Tongan matabule's and mua's frequently had their own plantations. They held these lands under subdistrict, district or higher chiefs. There is no information to indicate the degree of authority that these persons held over the peasants working their land. It is likely, however, that the peasants on a matabule's or mua's plantation owed allegiance primarily to their superior chief and that the powers of the matabule's and mua's over their plantation workers were much less arbitrary than the power of the chiefs over their peoples.

In the model system it was indicated that each person had only one immediately superior chief under whom he held land. It was, however, also possible for an inferior chief to hold land under a number of superior chiefs. Thus a chief's holdings might be spread out over a number of districts and islands. Exactly to whom a chief owed allegiance in such a case is not stipulated in the references, however, it seems probable that his obligations were primarily to only one of his superiors and only secondarily to the other grantors of land, (this is similar to the land holding system of late feudal Europe).

The model system pictures a graduated series of territorial units with subdistricts integrated into districts, districts into island groups and the island groups united under one ruler. Frequently, the various sub-groups asserted their independence from the larger groups. The chief of the Vavau islands did not pay tribute regularly to the king; this rebellion was facilitated by his separation from the king who at that time lived in the southern group of islands. A much more marked example of the independent actions of various chiefs occurred at the death of the king Toogoo Ahoo, who left neither son nor brother to succeed him. Several distant relatives claimed the sovereignty, and the island of Tongatabu was soon divided into at least thirteen warring factions, each of which had erected a fortress and waged war with all the rest.

In the model, the chiefs have arbitrary powers over all persons within their territory. This situation was, of course, mitigated by the usual internal checks on arbitrary power, such as discontent of subjects, fear of assassination and the counsel of advisors. In addition to these checks the matabules of the superior chiefs kept watch over the activities of the inferior chiefs, especially the younger ones, and if they were found to be abusing their people, their superiors could exert pressure to rectify such circumstances.

Another variation from the model system was in the method by which a successor to a chiefly title was chosen. The mode of inheritance was described as patrilineal by primogeniture, except in the instance that the oldest son was too young to assume power, wherein the title would be held by a father's brother until the son came of age. It was usual, however, for a number of other considerations to enter into the determination of succession to a title. At the death of a chief any number of his patrilineal relatives might claim the title. In this event, the strength and number of the followers of these persons, together with their reputations

and the preferences of a superior chief, would all enter into the determination of the successor.

The followers of a chief might decide that the "legal" heir to the title was incompetent, and decide among themselves that another person, usually a close relative of the former chief, should rule. Wars, overruled any considerations of inheritance. A chief could dispose of newly won land among his followers, who would depose the former owners of the land and move themselves into the latter's positions. Territory won in war might also be left in the hands of the former owners, who would take an oath of allegiance to their new chief and pay tribute to him.

From the foregoing it may be concluded that the principles on which succession to a title were based were much more complicated than the simple preference for certain genealogical kin outlined in the model. A number of interacting preferences giving form to social actions determined who would govern a given territory. It is, in fact, a fair assumption that any facet of the social structure in Tonga, and elsewhere, is similarly determined. The tendency of many anthropologists to focus on the genealogical determinants of social structure frequently obscures other important determinants. One example of this type of obfuscation is the use of the catch-all category "fictional kinship" which serves to equate relationships which are based on a whole host of different preferences.

Social systems may be analyzed in terms of their structural elements only. For example, it can be determined that a group of people are aligned spatially, by patrilineal affiliation, without determining what preferences for social action result in this type of affiliation. However, inasmuch as this type of study allows of predictability, the preferences for social action have to be correctly assumed. Thus, Goodenough's prediction of the breakdown of matrilineal inheritance under pressure of land shortage assumes a preference to avoid intracommunity conflict and a preference not to redistribute land in such a way as to keep the matrilineages intact. These two assumptions and many more were made in this paper in predicting the fate of patrilineages under similar conditions of land shortage. Obviously a much greater predictability would result if the presence or absence of the assumed variables would be empirically determined. One reason that this is usually not done is that many of the preferences for social action are taken to be different kinds of phenomena than so-called "structural elements." Yet, they both appear to be the same thing viewed from different points. For example, patrilineal affiliation is considered to be a structural element, inasmuch as it represents a way of aligning persons which can be expressed sociometrically. A preference for warfare is not usually considered to be a structural element but is variously categorized as a "value" or an element of "ethos." This latter, however, seen from another point of view, is also a structural element, since the alignment of individuals for warfare, which may result from this preference, can also be expressed sociometrically. To reverse this illustration, actual patrilineal affiliation may result from a preference for patrilineal affiliation or it may be the result of a number of other preferences for social action. Similarly a preference for warfare does not necessarily result in a social alignment based on this

preference, since other preferences may be more influential. Thus it may be seen that what are usually considered to be discrete categories, i.e.; elements of social structure and elements of ethos or values can and should be treated as two sides of the same coin.

Some factors which contributed to the relative autonomy of the Tongan territorial units

It appears to be a valid assumption that the various chiefs of Tonga placed a high value on autonomy for, inasmuch as they could, they directed their efforts so as to be completely free of the control of other chiefs. That the majority of chiefs were forced to surrender some of their autonomy by subjecting themselves to other chiefs, indicates that they also valued such things as territorial expansion, loyalty, security, and surrender in hopeless situations. The degree to which they were autonomous, thus depended on the degree to which these other values could be upheld in an autonomous situation. This in turn depended on certain empirical factors, such as the relative strength of the chiefs, and the distribution of power at a given time. On Tonga, a chief had to have a vast numerical superiority in fighting men in order to defeat a rival on the latter's territory. This was due to the strong defenses, similar to early medieval fortifications, to which the chiefs and their followers retreated when attacked. A chief having a superior force of ten to one had attempted for eleven years to breach one of the fortresses, located among the thirteen warring factions of Tongatabu, and had repeatedly failed. Finally, with the introduction of carronades, he was able to take this fortress, but did not follow up his victory. Even the carronades, however, were ineffective against fortresses erected on high levels. The strong defenses of the Tongans were thus a major factor in preserving the autonomy of numerically weak factions.

Another factor which promoted the independence of the Tongan chiefs was the long distances between island groups, which made it difficult for a superior chief to maintain control over his distant subjects, and encouraged the latter's recurrent declarations of independence.

Since the Tongans did not perceive any external threats in the form of invasions from other areas, there was no pressure for centralization of authority in order to defend against foreign attack.

Conclusions

Although the primary intent of this paper was not to draw comparisons between early Feudal Europe and Tonga, in a preliminary analysis, the authority structures of these two areas give the impression of being, to a large extent equivalent, and predicated on the same values. This is not to say that the elements of ritual and belief were equivalent. However, as far as the system of social action is concerned, these elements are unimportant. The same values may be derived from vastly different systems of belief and, it is the values, not the beliefs, which determine what social actions will occur. This is nicely illustrated by Mariner:

The Tongan people do not indeed believe in any future state of rewards and punishments, but they believe in that first of all religious tenets, that there is a power and intelligence superior to all that is human, which is able to control their actions, and which discovers all their most secret thoughts; and though they consider this power and intelligence to be inherent in a number of individual beings, the principle of belief is precisely the same; it is perhaps equally strong, and as practically useful as if they considered it all concentrated in their chief god. They firmly believe that the gods approve of virtue, and are displeased with vice; that every man has his titular deity, who will protect him as long as he conducts himself as he ought to, but if he does not, will leave him to the approaches of misfortune, disease and death. (Mariner 1818:140ff)

A Tongan may uphold the social norms because he believes the gods will punish him in this life if he transgresses them; a European may hold the same value because he fears hell, but the value, however derived, serves the same social purpose in either society. This particular illustration is used since one of the most frequent objections to comparing so-called primitive Polynesia with feudal Europe is that Europe had a Catholic Church while Polynesia did not. Within the framework of this analysis the belief system is not germane. The church as a social system is another problem which, however, is easily met. The church, or more precisely, the persons holding ecclesiastical positions in early feudal society were, for purposes of the social system, no different than non-clerics. Thus a bishop might hold a fief, and render service to his lord just as any other man.

Although it would take another paper to attempt to demonstrate adequately and convincingly the equivalences noted above, between early Feudal Europe and Tonga, it is hoped that at least the validity of attempting such comparison has been indicated.

Notes

- (1) These relations applied, of course, to all persons who were addressed by the terms indicated, whether they were actual genealogical relatives or not.
- (2) Since some of the Tongan terms for titles are identical to those for rank, the terms will be capitalized when the reference is to title and not capitalized when the reference is to rank.

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