

RELIGION AND ITS EFFECT ON SOCIAL COHESION

IN AN EMERGING ETHNIC COMMUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a preliminary analysis of social cohesion in a community of newly arrived Tongans in Pacific County, a West Coast urban area.¹ My analysis focuses on the role of the churches and demonstrates that in this new environment, as in their homeland, churches play an important, but dual role. On the one hand, they cause divisiveness in the emerging community and on the other, they serve to unify it. This review of religion is expressed by Clifford Geertz in his analysis of religion in Java. He states that "contrary to some theorists, religion does not play only an integrative, socially harmonizing role in society but also a divisive one, thus reflecting the balance between integrative and disintegrative forces which exist in any social system" (1976:355). The Tongan case, however, is not strictly parallel to that of Java. In Java, doctrinal and ideological conflicts are deep and significant. In Tonga, there is a fairly uniform commitment to Christianity which is in itself socially cohesive. Conflict among the Tongans appears to be structural, not ideological, caused by the continuous struggle for status. Different brands of Christianity and different congregations within churches serve as forums for achieving recognition.

Conflict is actually reflective of the optative elements in Tongan culture. Church affiliation is but another area in which Tongans can exercise choice. Tongans of different Christian faiths and of different congregations agree to disagree. At least at the local level, using Geertz's terminology, they practice "relativistic tolerance" (1976:373). At the national level, the conflict is not as muted, and competition often breaks out into open verbal warfare. Religious conflict within the Tongan community which I studied in the United States seemed to have characteristics of both local and national levels. This may be the result of the community's small size which has caused normally separated spheres within it to overlap.

In exploring Tongan social organization, both in Tonga and in my study area, the church and family create a unique balance. Churches link families and families link churches in an interlocking

pattern, made possible by the fact that families are multi-denominational and that portions of the extended families or kainga and in some cases entire famili comprise each Tongan church congregation. As Geertz states "this cross-cutting, balance-of-forces nature of social life is what allows several antagonistic social and cultural elements to be contained in a relatively balanced system. It is, in fact, the absence of such cross-cutting which bodes ill for the future of a social system" (1976:371).

To give a clear and comprehensible picture of the balance of forces in an emerging Tongan community in Pacific County, this paper will present (1) the role of the churches in Tonga with consideration of the overall social and political organization, (2) a comparison between the political, church, and family spheres in the emerging community, and (3) the divisive and cohesive aspects of the relationship among denominations, church congregations, and families.

My research was conducted over a two-year period in a West Coast urban area involving an average of 16 to 24 hours of work per week. Data gathering included participant observation at church services, weddings, funerals, and community meetings as well as formal and informal interviews. Since Tongans generally speak Tongan at community events and at home, I relied on bilingual speakers and informal translations. People, for the most part, were very cooperative and the community seemed pleased by my interest.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN TONGA

Tonga is a politically independent island kingdom in Western Polynesia known for its monarch and its churches. The main island, Tongatapu, is located approximately 450 miles southeast of Fiji and a similar distance southwest of Western Samoa. Of the 150 islands that comprise this group, 36 were inhabited at the time of the 1966 census. The total land area is 256 square miles, of which 85 percent is estimated to be suitable for cultivation (Maude 1971:106). The islands are divided into three sub-groups: (1) Tongatapu in the south; (2) Ha'api, the middle group; and (3) the northernmost group, Va'vau. Tongatapu has the majority of the population and is the location of the capital city, Nuku'alofa. The population is estimated to be over 100,000 (Baker 1977:231). The population is increasing at a rate of about 3 percent per year (Rogers 1969:213) and has quadrupled since 1921.

Tonga has the most stratified social organization in Oceania. Power is held by the king, a constitutional monarch, and the titled nobles, many of whom retain hereditary estates. In this system, all

directives come from this group and the villages have no political significance. The majority of the population are commoner-agriculturalists who have the right to an 8-1/2 acre parcel of land, if it is available, upon reaching adulthood. There is an emerging middle class made up of commoners and gentry or untitled nobles who have achieved success in Western institutions of church, state and education (Marcus 1976:17). Despite some new opportunities in Tonga, population pressure is making land, education, and jobs hard to come by, thus causing the "have nots," the commoners, to emigrate to New Zealand and the United States.

The important social units are the kinship groups and the churches. The family groups are the api or household and the famili, which can mean a household or a group of interacting households which work together. The head of the famili is a senior person, usually male, called the ulumotu'a. The api and famili are enmeshed in diffuse and widespread networks of extended kinship, the kainga. The kainga is an inclusive term incorporating one's universe of kin reckoned on a bilateral basis, the ultimate pool of resources available to an individual. The kainga is visible at funerals, weddings, and other important life events. The famili, on the other hand, is an exclusive term referring to a relatively stable group of relationships activated over time. The famili does not necessarily mean local group (Marcus 1979:223). Both Decktor Korn (1978:21) and Marcus (1974:91) recognize the extension of the term in modern times to mean a "family estate" defined by Decktor Korn as "typically a network of ranked, adult sibling segments and their immediate households, situated in Tonga and abroad, and engaging in a variety of occupations" (1978:21).

A primary function of the famili and the "family estate" is economic. Goods and services are circulated on the basis of reciprocity. The expansion of the famili is a function of individual strategies aimed at attaining economic and social advantage. The sum of individual choices, continuously exercised, is the reason for the variability in famili membership and in api composition. An individual within certain constraints activates kin relationships to maximize rights and minimize obligations.

Another dimension of Tongan culture that must be mentioned is the overriding concern for rank and status. Ethnographers (Kaepler 1971 and Decktor Korn 1978) observing both the societal and local level have commented on this pervasive theme. Marcus most recently in his article on status rivalry in Tonga stated: "persistence of chiefly hierarchies, the concern with formal rank, and the prevalence of personal and group competition for social status (noted in both historical and contemporary sources) are major features of social relations in western Polynesian societies such as Tonga" (1978:242). He details the activities and the objects of value that form the substance of status rivalry. These include demonstration

of social skill, distinctive performance such as conventional obligations such as giving tribute to the church or king where quantity is the marker, and the acquisition of valuable objects or resources such as church office or university degrees. There is a paradox since persons compete vigorously to dominate, but at the same time attempt to maintain a humble stance. Decktor Korn elaborates on this theme by showing how in the village the churches are a major source of prestige and status (1978: 402-407).

Variability is a major characteristic of Tongan social groups. A Tongan can move from one api to another, activate relationships in several famili or "family estates," serially but not simultaneously, and switch church affiliations and affiliations with social clubs and other voluntary groups. Decktor Korn, who did an entire thesis on the subject, explains this aspect of Tongan culture in terms of the well entrenched optative elements. The flexibility in the Tongan social system is expressed in the idiom fa'iteliha, translated as "to please oneself."

This idiom expresses a viewpoint about how people conduct themselves. According to this view, people have alternatives in ordering their lives and their choices are freely made. No adult need ask another's advice. Above all, a person does not have to explain himself, his motives, or his actions; on the contrary, fa'iteliha--he pleases himself. Important options available to ordinary Tongans include the possibility of switching denominational affiliation, changing household membership, shifting kin-group affiliation, moving to a different village, and varying the extent of participation in various local activities. With regard to all these elements, Tongans perceive their society as one in which there are few prescriptions or prohibitions, where people have alternatives in ordering their lives, and where individuals have considerable autonomy in exercising their options (Decktor Korn 1977: 102).

In Tonga, Christianity and its churches have a pervasive and powerful influence. This has been the case since the first king, Tupou I, was converted by the Wesleyan missionaries, and in turn converted the populace in the mid-nineteenth century. The impact of Western Protestantism has been enormous ideologically and structurally. Sione Latukefu, an historian who is also a Methodist ordained minister, outlines in his book Church and State in Tonga the process whereby Tupou I consolidated his power in part by incorporating Protestant Christian values into the Constitution

and modeling his government after that of Great Britain. Marcus goes as far as to say that "through the codification of the emancipation proclamation of 1862 in the Constitution, the introduction of an individualistic system of land tenure and the enforcement of Christian morality (for example, in the contingency of inheritance of land and succession to title upon legitimate birth in monogamous marriage), the law was the virtual medium of cultural transformation" (1977: 212). Over the last century the Western Christian and traditional elements have been reintegrated into what Marcus terms a "compromise culture" (1976:15). The anga faka Tonga (Tongan way) is a compromise culture and not an ideal pre-missionary construct.

The alliance of the monarchy and the Wesleyan Methodist church has continued to the present. The Free Wesleyan Church remains virtually a state church. The church and government hierarchies have replaced that of the traditional system in many respects (Marcus 1977:212). In fact, about half the population is subject to Free Wesleyan Church dictates. The rest look to the king, who is still revered, for leadership and moral guidance.

Since Western Christianity arrived, religious belief and church affiliation have been a source of intense conflict, including war and widespread persecution. The Wesleyan Methodists fought among themselves and with the Catholics. In the twentieth century new missions sent representatives to Tonga to enter the fray. According to the 1966 census, there are 19 different denominations present in Tonga, but only seven of these have membership of more than one percent of the total population. Three of the seven are the Methodist denominations. The Free Wesleyan Church, the church of the king, claims about 50 percent of the population and the Free Church of Tonga and the Church of Tonga have about 15 percent and 10 percent respectively. The Catholic Church has the second largest number of adherents with about 16 percent. The Mormons, who arrived in Tonga, at the turn of the century, have gained between 5 and 10 percent² (Decktor Korn 1978:398).

The multiplicity of churches is not the only characteristic of church participation which interests observers. Another is the degree of commitment to religion. The Beagleholes remarked on the Tongans' "red blooded Fundamentalism" (1941:124) and Decktor Korn indicates that "everyone is nominally an adherent of some denomination, and there are few in the village who can withstand the pressure to attend church at least once a week" (1978:401).

Both the Beagleholes and Decktor Korn discuss the balancing of divisive and cohesive forces in Tongan society. The Beagleholes see the four churches in the village they studied as playing a dual role:

On the one hand, the churches provide an explanation of this world and the next, together with a code or morality. Both explanation and code serve as integrating elements in the culture. On the other hand, the fact that there are four churches means that those in the village who are unusual, abnormal, a-social, anti-social--personality deviants in other words--can find haven in one of the churches when others do not please. Thus, changing church-affiliation provides a means of solving on a social plane interpersonal conflicts that might otherwise become strong enough to result in social disorganization and disintegration (1941:129).

While I think that the Beagleholes are correct in identifying the dual role of the churches, it is obvious they did not comprehend the full import of the optative elements in Tongan culture which permit all adults to please themselves in adopting a church affiliation. They also did not adequately distinguish between style and substance in religious belief, a distinction more recently clarified by Decktor Korn and Marcus. A Tongan appears to be a "born again Christian" in the American use of the term, but the expected potential for serious controversy regarding doctrine is missing. The important thing is not what you believe in, but that you believe. In fact, doctrinal differences are seldom discussed even among members of the same denomination.

Church participation is an avenue for the achievement of individual strategies and enhancing prestige. This fact is most evident when one examines the reasons for switching churches. The most frequent reason for shifting church affiliation is marriage between persons of different religions. It is the normal case in Tonga for a woman to move to her husband's church. Another is education. Churches provide a large part of the secondary education. Children often change religions when they go to secondary school in order to have access to this resource. Most denominations give preference to those of their own faith and some exclude non-members. Still another explanation is what Decktor Korn refers to as personal retooling. The adoption of a revised life strategy is a frequent reason for joining the Mormon church since it is the largest employer in Tonga and a major source of scholarships to study abroad (Decktor Korn 1978:413-16).

Decktor Korn goes into more detail analyzing the attitudes between churches and the effect of denominational diversity on the extended family. The families (famili) and even households (api) are very frequently multi-denominational. In her village, 30 percent of the households contained members of different denomina-

tions. She sees this as the reason that conflict between denominations is minimized in the village. At this level, the churches practice tolerant avoidance and proselytizing is kept to a minimum. In fact, there can be cooperation and families will participate in each others' denominational feasts. In contrast to the Beagleholes, she argues that "multiplicity of denominations is a well-integrated element of Tongan society . . . multiplicity of denominations and the freedom to switch affiliation are thus consistent with the other optative elements of Tongan social organization (1978:418).

At the national level, there is antagonism and competition among the various denominations although recently there has been some ecumenical movements by the Catholics and the Methodists. The Mormons have declined to participate. Interdenominational competition is pursued through proselytizing and access to secondary education. Free Wesleyans and Mormons both have missionaries. Neither denomination, consistent with maintaining peace in the village, permits its missionaries to seek adherents in the home village although this approach tends to diminish effectiveness. The most powerful weapon is access to secondary education. All seven major denominations have some control over secondary education except the Church of Tonga. About 85 percent of secondary students are educated in church supported facilities. Higher education is an important element of status competition, and there are not enough places for all to attend. Because of this situation, a church's ability to provide an advanced education is a powerful lure to gain new adherents. The Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist and Anglican churches are the only denominations with places in their schools to attract converts. The others must merely attempt to hold their own (Decktor Korn 1978:408-11).

THE EMERGING TONGAN COMMUNITY IN PACIFIC COUNTY

Significant numbers of Tongans began coming to the United States in the late 1960s. By 1978, about 500 Tongans were entering the United States as immigrants every year. This figure does not include the large numbers of visitors and students who remain here for extended periods. The first Tongan immigrants were Mormons inspired by the promise of education and economic opportunities in Hawaii and the desire to visit the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City. The Tongan community in my study began to form in the mid-1960s. The first settlers in Pacific County were Mormons who later brought family members, including brothers and sisters, many of whom were members of other religious denominations--Free Wesleyan, Free Church of Tonga, Catholic. With the reassembly of the multi-denominational famili and kainga through the operation of the family estate in chain migration, the characteristic phenomenon of church proliferation was recreated, but in altered form.

There are now approximately 8,000 Tongans living in the United States and about 3,000 live in or near Pacific County. The Tongans have not chosen to live in the central city, but in the less dense suburban cities in the county surrounding the international airport. Pacific County is a suburb of a major West Coast metropolitan area. The land area is approximately 400 square miles with an overall population of about 500,000. The County has ten cities with populations of over 25,000. These cities stretch North to South and are connected by several North-South transportation routes.

The Tongan community is spread in a linear pattern over approximately 250 miles. In fact, one person responded to my question concerning where people lived by saying they were "scattered." In a sense this is true, but there are population concentrations and important landmarks. Four sizeable population concentrations presently exist with another in formation. These are: (1) Woodville, in the Northeast which, while outside the study area is part of its sphere of influence and is included in the population estimates; (2) Santa Marta, in the North, the site of the original settlement directly adjacent to the airport; (3) Pacific City, in the center, the largest population center; and (4) Smithtown, the newly developing settlement area in the South. Within the communities mentioned, the Tongans gravitate to certain neighborhoods. In many cases, Tongan families live near one another.

The two major landmarks for the Tongan community are the airport and the Elmwood Funeral Home. Elmwood is a smaller city between Santa Marta and Pacific City. The large Mormon owned funeral home is nearly in the geographic center of the community. The churches, some of which have separate Tongan congregations, are other points of orientation.

Ethnic and economic factors in a push-pull dynamic have strongly influenced the formation of the Tongan community and led to its present configuration and location. The economic pull was exerted by the airport as a source of employment. The very location of the first settlement in Santa Marta and the present job distribution reflect the economic pull of that occupational center. A great many Tongan men and women are employed at the airport. Typical male occupations include refueling airplanes and loading baggage. Both men and women pack meals for the food services. One informant told me that about 400 Tongans work at the airport, which is a substantial portion of the adult population. Other employment for men outside the airport includes yard work, and factory assembly line work. The Tongan women do housework and are "live-ins" caring for invalids in their homes. They are also maids in hotels and convalescent homes, nurses' aides and secretaries. Few Tongans have professional jobs, but there are presently students in local colleges and universities. A large proportion of the population is under the age of 18.

The ethnic factor contributing to the present location and distribution of the Tongans in Pacific County is the avoidance of the Samoans. Informants have stated that Tongans stay away from the central city because the "Samoans live there." To my knowledge, only one or two Tongans live in the central city. Other persons, including the Director of the Elmwood Funeral Home, reported that Tongans were replacing the Samoans in that community. So while there is not an absolute segregation of the two communities, there is evidence that Tongans have tried to stay out of the Samoan territory and vice versa.

Two similarities are striking when one compares the social organization in Tonga with the emerging one on the West Coast. These are: (1) the transplanted multiplicity of denominations and the associated antagonism and competition, and (2) the cohesive role of the extended family, the famili and kainga. There are also two critical differences: (1) the complete absence of members of the noble class and, therefore, of all traditional political leadership and social stratification, and (2) the predominance of Mormons.

The Tongans in Pacific County belong to at least six denominations--Mormon, Methodist, Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Pentecostal, and Bahai. The Methodists are both Free Wesleyans and members of the Free Church of Tonga. There are no wholly Tongan denominations or churches as there are in Tonga. Instead, two models are evident: The Methodists have associated themselves in a variety of ways and to different degrees with the United Methodist churches in Pacific County as separate Tongan congregations. These congregations have their own ministers and generally their own services. They are largely financially separate and independent. The United Methodist churches provide a facility, sometimes free of charge, and may give other assistance. Four Tongan Methodist congregations existed in 1978. Of these, two are Free Wesleyan and two are Free Church of Tonga, while one more Free Wesleyan congregation is now being formed.

The Mormons and Catholics conform to the second model. In Tonga, these denominations have always been integrated into the highly centralized main church organizations. This centralization is in contrast to the Methodist denominations. One, the Free Wesleyan, is an independent member of a loosely federated World Council of Churches and the other two are totally Tongan. The situation has not changed in the United States. Mormons and Catholics join and are then part of existing American congregations. They participate in regular services and do not have their own ministers or priests although they could, if they rose within the normal hierarchy. The Mormons do have several bishops, but they are without churches. Their title is a mark of respect. Apparently, to compensate for this total integration, the Mormons and Catholics have formed Tongan denominational associations which are for Tongans

only and meet regularly for fellowship and to discuss religion and sometimes social issues. The associations have elected officers and written charters. The Tongans are members of ten Mormon congregations or Wards and the Catholics are scattered in churches throughout the County. There are two Mormon denominational associations and one Catholic.

My data on the other denominations, while less complete, indicate that Tongans are members of at least two Seventh Day Adventist congregations which appear to have a degree of unity. The Pentecostals and the other denominations are integrated with American congregations. None of these denominations has an association.

The Mormons represent from 70 to 80 percent of the Tongan population and the Free Wesleyans about 10 to 15 percent. The Catholics and Free Church of Tonga each represent about 5 percent. The other denominations range in size, but are much smaller. As one can see, the balance between Methodists and Mormons is the reverse to that in Tonga. In Pacific County, the power of numbers is with the Mormons. They are also more established and generally have better jobs and better incomes. All these facts point to leadership for the Mormons in the emerging community. This is a contradiction of the status quo in Tonga, where the Methodist church plays the major role and is identified by Marcus as having assumed major societal functions. Dislocation and turmoil may be anticipated, as it does appear that there is a power vacuum and the logical leaders in terms of current realities have not come to the fore.

The relationships between the various denominations and congregations in the Tongan community do not replicate precisely those in Tonga. Here, there is not a clear distinction between the national and local level with antagonism and competition characterizing one and "relativistic tolerance" the other. Both attitudes exist, but are more intertwined. Since there is no national field of action, all relationships must be worked out on one plane. The formal attitudes between the denominations could generally be characterized as studied indifference. The population and congregations are dispersed so that denominations are able to avoid unwanted contact and the instances of open conflict seen in Tonga do not occur. At the same time, there is no cooperation and when opportunities occur for joint action, they are thwarted.

The greatest degree of antipathy exists among Tongan congregations of the same denomination or, in the case of the Mormons, between the two denominational associations. Within the Methodist denomination, the proliferation of congregations has been caused by historic and contemporary conflicts. Current conflicts stem in many instances from status rivalry.

The Free Wesleyan and Free Church of Tonga are products of an intense conflict in Tonga which occurred during the reign of Queen Salote. She attempted to create a unified Methodist church from existing factions, but many Free Church of Tonga members wished to remain independent (Wood and Ellem 1979:198-99). This stance has been proudly recalled to me by a Free Church of Tonga minister. This incident establishes the basis for the division between Free Wesleyan and Free Church of Tonga in Pacific County and while the adherents may have initially joined together in worship, as soon as there were enough persons to form an independent group, the Free Church members split and moved to another location.

Internal strife has caused the subdivision of the Free Wesleyans, Free Church of Tonga members, and the Mormons. The Free Wesleyan controversy is overtly centered around the competition of two ministers. The minister of the original church is a lay leader, and not a fully ordained minister. However, he was able to establish a thriving congregation in Pacific City. The second minister, who is ordained, came from Tonga several years after the first Tongan congregation was formed. The two ministers were not able to cooperate in the same congregation so the second minister moved to Santa Marta to establish his own congregation taking his family and several others with him. Subsequently, he has helped to set up two other Tongan congregations in Pacific County cities.

A second area of divergence between the Free Wesleyans is the disagreement about the type of relationship that should be developed between the host United Methodist Churches and the Tongan congregations. One congregation is moving to establish close ties and some members would like to be part of the host church. The other congregation is intent on eventually becoming an independent church within the United Methodist Church structure. They feel that having their own church would enable them to maintain the anga faka Tonga. There is no intent to establish branches of the Free Wesleyan Church here; instead the Tongans are being encouraged to associate with the United Methodist Church.

The break between the two Free Church of Tonga congregations was sparked by the disagreement about affiliation with the main church in Tonga. One group within the church wanted to stay affiliated with the mother church while the other wanted to retain its autonomy, electing its own officers and maintaining financial independence. The controversy eventually ended in a court battle over church assets.

The most recent example of intra-denominational fighting involves the Mormon denominations' association. Originally, there was one association meeting once a month in different churches in the County. A bitter controversy occurred over leadership. Finally, the Mormon church exercised its authority by decreeing that the

association must split in two with each half meeting within its separate jurisdiction. Previously, Mormon church boundaries had been ignored in order to form this single group of Tongan Mormons.

Unlike the situation in Tonga, there seems to be relatively little church switching among Tongans in the United States. When this does occur, the change is usually to the Mormon church. My evidence shows that there are two reasons for switching to Mormonism in Pacific County. The first reason is marriage. A denominational change by the wife to her husband's church is the rule in Tonga and generally here also. This issue may be a growing area of annoyance, however, because the predominance of Mormons means that to have a choice of mates, Methodist girls are marrying Mormon boys. Furthermore, Methodist males are converting to the Mormon religion when they marry Mormon women, contrary to established Tongan tradition. A second reason to become a Mormon, I am told, is in order to participate in their many activities for young people as well as adults. The concern for the young either switching denominations or leaving the church altogether has been expressed to me by many adults, particularly non-Mormons. They are attempting to develop youth activities, but with only marginal success. I also have evidence of church switching from certain denominations to non-Mormon ones.

A new dimension to this more open environment in the United States is the choice of non-participation in church activities. This appears to be becoming widespread, particularly among young men. This non-participation is sanctioned by adults, even by ministers. The reason most often given and accepted for non-attendance is work. Either Sunday is not a day off or it is the only day of rest for someone who is often holding down two jobs. Members, however, will maintain ties in the church and attend important events there.

One element that serves to integrate the community is an emerging sense of ethnic identity. Tongans are in the process of defining a unique ethnic identity and establishing ethnic boundaries in the new environment of ethnic pluralism. The process is an overt one. In many instances, members of the community comment on what elements in the Tongan cultural repertoire are advantageous to keep and what ones are not and should be discarded. The bases are a common birthplace, a shared language, and the commitment to the anga faka Tonga and its components are visible at funerals. A funeral is an event of great magnitude in the life of any Tongan and for the community, both in Pacific County and in Tonga. The centrality of the funeral in Tongan culture is described by Kaeppler:

An individual's funeral is probably his most important "rite de passage," for at this time are recorded for all to see and to pass down through oral tradition how the individual was related to

others, his dignity, rank, and how much and by whom he was beloved. Funerals are also the most important societal occasions, for here can best be seen how various elements of Tongan society fit together and it is here that much of the enculturation of the young in Tongan tradition takes place (1978:174).

In Pacific County the funeral mobilizes persons and resources. It is the vehicle for the display of symbols of ethnic identity and the essential unity of the community. The funeral, a celebration of ethnic values, cuts across church divisions and demonstrates what all Tongans have in common rather than how they may differ.

On many occasions in the course of my fieldwork, I was told that if I wanted to see Tongans, and learn how many there were in Pacific County, I must go to a Tongan funeral. I went to not one but many and the experiences were dramatic. Community members are notified through families by word of mouth of the death of a Tongan. As many as 300 to 400 persons routinely gather at only one or two days' notice. Persons attend the funeral because of family ties and the bond of ethnicity. One person told me that she attends funerals whether or not she is related to the deceased because "I know it is a Tongan man" (i.e. person). Another said he attended funerals because "we are all Tongans." He further emphasized that the death affects the whole community. The gathering of from 10 to 20 percent of the entire community despite short notice, distances and the difficulties of setting aside activities in and of itself indicates the significance and the unifying nature of the event.

The wake, a traditional part of Tongan funerals, is always held at the Elmwood Funeral Home in the geographic center of the Pacific County community. In a community of this size, deaths are relatively frequent and there will be perhaps twelve in a year, thus providing a frequent opportunity for the community to assemble. Many men and women wear the toavalu and the traditional mourning procedures are followed to a varying degree depending on the religion of the deceased. The composite nature of the Tongan culture is evident in the mixture of Western and Tongan elements in the service. The mourners are organized by church choirs and the leaders of the denomination of the deceased leads the service. The famili and kainga play important roles (cf. Kaeppler 1978:174-203 for more detail on the famili and kainga). After the wake, a large community meal is served in the church or community hall. Persons who have not participated in the wake come to the meal, which usually consists of a plate of sweets and coffee. These additional participants increase the number of persons affected by the event, as do those who take food and gifts of money to the home of the deceased, and those who go to the interment the following day. The funeral entails a

large scale redistribution of resources. A family may receive thousands of dollars and vast quantities of food. The money is used to defray the cost of the funeral. The food brought to the home is redistributed in the community. One family member told me about late night forays in pick-up trucks with young men delivering cakes, watermelons, pork and cooked food. Also large quantities of uncooked meat are distributed at the community meal.

The community-wide organizations constitute attempts to achieve social cohesion and community leadership. Unfortunately, they are largely subverted by the church divisions which reflect the national level politics in Tonga. Status rivalry is also a factor, as is the Tongans' resistance to making long-term commitments. The oldest organization is an ethnic society formed several years ago. It is based on a model used by other ethnic groups. The leadership reflects that of the churches and acts out the conflicts between them. The President is a Mormon bishop, one Vice-President is a Free Wesleyan minister and another Vice-President is an elder in the Free Church of Tonga. The Secretary and Treasurer are from the leadership of the Catholic denominational association. One of the Free Wesleyan ministers and his congregation do not participate, reportedly because of a feud. While the organization is now virtually inactive, its original purpose was to "help" the community, but there were no specific objectives. The officers are selected in order to encourage participation from church congregations. The fact that a Mormon is President is based on their predominance in the community. Previously, the President of this organization was the only male member of a high ranking noble family to migrate to the United States. He was also a Pentecostal minister. He has since returned to Tonga to assume the family title. During his tenure, the organization was able to cooperate with other ethnic groups and receive funds from a local government to run a summer school for Tongan youth.

The other community organization is a kava club. Its leadership is entirely Mormon, but there are members from many denominations. They are more active, meeting twice a month and sponsoring many social activities. The leaders of the group have said they would like to serve as a link to other groups and local governments and provide community services. They too are experiencing difficulty developing a course of action and members' interest is beginning to wane.

The lack of leadership becomes most evident when Tongans are asked to interact with other better organized groups such as the Samoans and the Japanese. The Samoans have two active associations who have been able to win government grants, provide help to families, and new migrants. They are increasingly able to influence local and national public policy. For instance, the

a prominent role at all of the minister's family events and she finds jobs for several family members. Another example of the family linking churches is a family where one brother is the leader of the Catholic denominational group; another is the head of a Free Church of Tonga; and yet another is or was a member of one of the Free Wesleyan churches, until he criticized the minister once too often. There are also numerous family ties between Tongan church congregations of the same denomination. In effect, the community is a loose network of churches linked by family ties, and of course, the underlying dimension of ethnicity.

Ethnicity for Tongans is a sense of what one might call "Christian Tonganness" reflecting the composite nature of Tongan culture in the twentieth century. The congregations and church participation foster and even promote actively the awareness of ethnic identity. This is logical since their existence depends upon this awareness. Tongans are participating because they are Tongan and on these occasions often speak the Tongan language and wear Tongan clothing. Also, socially and economically they can act like Tongans. They can and do employ personal strategies and mobilize resources as they would at home. This, in fact, is part of the rationale for the structure of the community as it exists today. Tongans, to pursue their personal strategies, want access to as many resources as possible and the church serves as a traditional source.

CONCLUSION

This paper has described the role of the Tongan denominational associations and congregations as they operate in the emerging Tongan community in Pacific County. An attempt has been made to show how religion plays both a divisive and cohesive role, a paradox not unlike many others in Tongan culture. At the same time other social forces were presented, if only briefly, in the same context. This analysis has shown that, as Geertz found in Java, there is a balance of forces with cross-cutting relationships which permit the community to cohere despite strong divisive forces exacerbating conflict. In the Tongan community there are several factors which promote conflict and several that mitigate against it.

Those promoting conflict are:

1. The transplanted multiplicity of religious denominations and the tendency for the churches to reflect the optative elements in Tongan culture. Hence, the churches become the forums for status rivalry.
2. The high degree of individualism expressed in the idiom "to please oneself." The Tongan way of life involves the

Samoans will be counted in the 1980 census, but only after long, hard bargaining with the Census Bureau. This step is important for achieving wider recognition as an ethnic group in the United States and gaining access to resources. The Tongans are asked to send representatives to conferences held by other Pacific Islander groups on such issues as health and education, but are generally unresponsive. The two representatives who do come are both educated and interested Tongan women. Unfortunately, they are not leaders and have no power to make the community act. Tongans also do not participate at school meetings and other local events. At various conferences and meetings held by other Pacific Islanders the frequent question is "where are the Tongans?"

What holds Tongans together and creates a viable community when the denominational controversies have been transplanted but the corresponding political and social structures have not? (This is unlike the Samoans whose ranked chiefs provide leadership). Paradoxically in structural terms, the Tongan congregations and denominational associations which are the major divisive forces in the community are also key elements in its unification. They, along with the famili and kainga, form a loosely overlapping structure with churches linking families and families linking churches. The denominational associations and Tongan congregations are composed of varying members of famili who worship together and frequently pool their resources in order to meet specific goals such as building a new church in Tonga or Pacific County. They also provide a reservoir of resources for occasions such as funerals or weddings when large expenditures are called for. The size and internal organization of the church groups vary. The Methodist groups are relatively small and meet weekly in the same location. In the case of the Free Wesleyan Church, a community meal is served each Sunday. The Mormons and Catholics are dispersed, meeting monthly and sometimes cooperating in church-related feasts. They become the only effective supra-family organizing body aside from the weak community organizations. Without them, there would be no recognizable structure in the community except the relatively socially and geographically isolated famili linked by the kainga ties which in fact only become occasionally operative at important life events.

Since the church groups are composed of famili and kainga members, they are linked by family relationships. The famili are multi-denominational which enables them to form bonds of varying strengths between churches. The higher the rank of the family member, or the closer or more numerous the ties, the stronger the bond. I have found also that certain relationships are activated here that were apparently not acknowledged or activated in Tonga. For example, during my fieldwork a young Mormon woman, an active community organizer, suddenly discovered that she was related to one of the Methodist ministers. Subsequently, her family played

pursuit of individual strategies within a fairly broadly defined cultural prescription.

3. The absence of the hierarchical structure represented by the nobility and the Free Wesleyan Church in Tonga has led to a community which lacks indigenous leadership.
4. The predominance of Mormons in Pacific County is a sharp reversal of the situation which exists in the homeland. This reversal causes a sense of dislocation and fosters competition for power.

Factors moderating conflict are:

1. The multi-denominational famili and kainga creating bonds of varying strengths between the frequently contesting denominations and Tongan congregations.
2. The denominational associations and Tongan congregations which link families and form the nuclei of the community.
3. The growing sense of ethnic identity based on the sense of common culture and a common language.

The resulting social organization is in itself a paradox much like the double image discussed by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein who noted that it is impossible to see both aspects of a double image simultaneously. Alternative interpretations of the same image cannot be seen at the same time. If, for example, an image is both a duck and a rabbit, some see a duck and some see a rabbit or, an individual can see one or the other alternately. In actuality, what is being seen is a duck-rabbit (Carpenter 1980:72). This same difficulty is encountered in the analysis of social structure and social organization. In the example of the Tongan community, there is a sort of double image created by the overlapping and interlocking membership of families and churches. Primacy can be assigned to either unifying or divisive forces, thus determining the emphasis of one's interpretation, but without necessarily negating the other equally demonstrable forces. The reality is a cohesive-divisive community.

The structure created in the U.S. Tongan community is based on the same principles noted by Decktor Korn (1977) in her analysis of local organization in Tonga. But in the American case, the environment and hence the ultimate result must be different. Here the overarching hierarchy formed by king and nobles is missing. With the predominance of Mormons and the reluctance of the Free Wesleyan church members to colonize, the Free Wesleyan church hierarchy is also lacking. There are, nevertheless, new demands that call for some unified action and leadership. Two examples are the initiatives taken by other ethnic groups and the desire

to gain access to new resources--local, state, and Federal funds. There are also pressures to become more individualistic entailed in the effort to make a living for the famili and to assist members of the family estate remaining in Tonga and elsewhere. Another unfamiliar pressure is the secular nature of American life which is a direct challenge to the integrated Christian compromise Tongan culture. Already there are apparent divisions between Tongan adults and their children who are being educated in American schools and among those who have established themselves and the recent arrivals.

While a balance of divisive and cohesive forces now exists in the Tongan community, circumstances may occur which challenge this already relatively unstable structure. The most likely possibility with disruptive potential is a change in the compromise culture now based on the integration of Tongan and Western elements, "Christian Tonganness." The secular nature of American society and the development of ethnic identity in the American mold should cause ethnic awareness to focus on traditional Tongan ethnic symbols. Christianity and being Tongan may no longer be necessarily associated elements. This ethnic awareness can in itself be a very unifying and cohesive force, but will probably diminish the influence and importance of the denominational associations and Tongan congregations. Religion and the churches then would no longer be able to play either an ideological or structural role in unifying the community. In addition, the Mormon church could gain increased dominance, and would most probably sever ties with whatever other churches there might be and with those Tongans who have chosen not to belong to any religious denomination. The dynamic tension of the community based on opposing forces may disappear.

Tongans will continue to be linked to some degree by family ties, but given the only sporadic activation of the kainga and the increasing importance of the nuclear family, particularly encouraged by the Mormon Church, cohesion based on the family may decline. The sense of ethnic identity could play an important role if it is not vitiated by the tendency to pursue individual strategies which, while they may please oneself, can also be destructive to the community.

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NOTES

¹All places have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the community.

²The figures provided are the most recent since the material in the 1976 census is not yet available. It is probable that the figures for denominational affiliation have changed and that the new religions such as the Mormon Faith have gained adherents. But to what extent this is true must await the release of the new census figures.

³Virtually all the migrants are commoners since no titled nobles or high ranking members of noble families have migrated permanently to the United States. The reasons are most probably economic and religious. First, in Tonga the nobles have land, power, and prestige. Many have no reason to leave and those who do may be held back by family ties. Second, the nobility tends not to be Mormon so that this pull to the United States is negated. All this is speculative because there are no data available. There are some fragments of noble families and the wife of one titled noble lives in the United States so that her children can get an education there.

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