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George K. Tanham

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This Note, part of a study on security trends in the South Pacific, is based on library sources, interviews, and observations the author made during a week spent in Tonga in March 1988. It touches on Tongan politics and economic conditions, and focuses on a reform group in Tonga that is likely to become quite strong in coming years. An appendix presents a paper on Tonga in the 1990s by a Tongan citizen, Professor Futa Helu, who delivered it at the New Zealand Institute for International Affairs in May 1985. (FR)

PREFACE

This Note was sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense under the auspices of RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a Federally Funded Research and Development Center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. It is part of a larger study on security trends in the South Pacific.

The research is based on library sources, interviews, and observations during a week spent in Tonga in March 1988. Although not a comprehensive survey of Tongan affairs, the paper touches on Tongan politics and economic conditions. It focuses primarily on a reform group in Tonga that is likely to grow to considerable strength in coming years. Because the group has links to "progressive parties" in the South Pacific and will undoubtedly be influenced by them, observers in the United States may find the information presented here useful in assessing political and social trends in the South Pacific. Included as an appendix is a paper given to the author by a Tongan citizen, Professor Futa Helu, who presented it at the New Zealand Institute for International Affairs in May 1985. It provides a thoughtful, insightful look at Tonga and its future. The author thanks him for it.



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THE KINGDOM OF TONGA

BACKGROUND

The Kingdom of Tonga consists of 170 islands just west of the international dateline, 450 miles southeast of Fiji, 450 miles southwest of Samoa, and approximately 1200 miles northeast of New Zealand. Though the total area of the kingdom is approximately 362,500 square kilometers, only about 668 square kilometers is dry land. Three main island groups make up the country: Tongatapu, Vava'u and Ha'apai. Tongatapu, the largest, includes the capital, Nuku'alofa, and has a population of about 65,000. The 1984 census showed a total Tongan population of approximately 100,000. In spite of considerable emigration, Tonga's population is growing; it already has one of the highest density populations in the South Pacific, about 400 per square mile. Tongans are Polynesian and constitute over 98 percent of the citizenry. Tonga is proud that it never was a colony, although it was a British protectorate from 1901 to 1970.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Tonga's most famous modern king, George Tupou I, who ruled in the latter half of the 19th century, ended the endemic civil wars around mid century and united the islands under one king. He proclaimed a constitution in 1875 that provided for many individual freedoms, a constitutional monarchy, and a Western type of parliamentary system. However, the limitations on the king's powers are minimal. He introduced the kingdom's land tenure system, which vests rights to all land in the kingdom in the crown but offers every Tongan male over 16 a small town plot and about 8 acres of rural land.¹ The present king, Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, who has ruled for nearly 25 years, is liked and respected. He is the country's traditional spiritual leader and head of the Free Wesley Church, the kingdom's official church.

The king's brother, Prince Fatafehi Tu'ipalchake, is the prime minister and heads the cabinet; and Crown Prince Tupouto'a is the minister of both foreign affairs and defense. Most of the other cabinet members are nobles and are appointed for life by the king, though he can remove them. The cabinet, when it meets with the king, becomes a

¹The increase in the population has created a land shortage and this provision for land distribution is to be modified.

privy council. The parliament or legislative assembly is composed of three sets of members: eleven nobles who are the ministers and the governors of Vava'u and Ha'apai serve in parliament. In addition, nine other parliamentary seats are reserved for the nobility, who are elected by the 33 nobles of the realm. The common people elect nine members of parliament. Elections are held every three years. The parliamentary sessions, which sometimes last for five months, begin in May. Because the nobles hold the majority of seats (20), the people's representatives are always in the minority and therefore wield little power.

Although King Tupou IV is generally liked and respected and seems secure on his throne, he is 70 years of age—old for the South Pacific. The Crown Prince is treated with respect, but rumblings can be heard against him. Some view him as too Westernized, too often away from home, and too interested in women—some of whom the King does not approve. The Tongan kings have always married in order to insure rightful succession, but the Prince has resisted marriage to the point that he persuaded his younger brother to marry a woman who had been selected for him.²

The Crown Prince disturbs his father in other ways as well and perhaps even violates the law when he goes out on Sundays to a small island to enjoy himself with his friends. The sabbath is a legal day of rest in Tonga and no commercial activities or entertainment are allowed. The Tongan constitution states that the laws apply equally to all Tongans. However, the Crown Prince is a quick, intelligent, Sandhurst-educated man, and he is the legal heir. He will probably succeed his father, especially if he shows enlightened leadership, but his future may well depend on how he behaves. One diplomat in Tonga observed that the Prince wants all the perquisites of the king, and some subjects of the kingdom may not be sympathetic to this much royal privilege for the Prince.

UNREST AND REFORM

In spite of a calm and peaceful atmosphere and a reasonably happy population, Tonga has been changing, and a certain amount of unrest is detectable. Several factors contribute to the disquiet. A few of the more educated citizens are dissatisfied with the

²There is some speculation that the Crown Prince's younger brother, the favorite of King Tupou, may become king on his father's death. However, the Crown Prince is now the Regent and acts for the King when he is away.

present political system and would like to change it. Tongans living abroad have been exposed not only to the material benefits of the Western world but also to Western democracy and individual rights; they write home, send literature, and when they return home to visit, speak of life in New Zealand, Australia, or America. In addition, modern news media are exposing Tongans to new political and social concepts.

The churches have played an important role in Tongan society and have also acted as pseudo political parties to some extent. The Wesleyan church has for a long time been the leading church and indeed has tended to dominate Tongan affairs and the government. Its close association with the kings has given it that position, but it has also strengthened the monarchy and contributed to stability in the kingdom. After World War II, the Wesleyan church became badly splintered, which weakened its position. Two other churches are also challenging it. The Roman Catholics have begun to take a more active role in Tongan affairs, they have joined the Tongan Council of Churches, initiated a strong rural development program, and take a more active role in politics. More recently, the Mormons have begun to pour in money to the extent of about \$12 million in 1987, almost half as much as the government budget and a tremendous amount for Tonga. The Wesleyans resent the Mormons and accuse them of "buying members" because of their active recruitment. They see the Mormons as entirely too materialistic in their views.

A weakening of the Wesleyan church could also undermine the monarchy, and because of this, King Tupou I has joined the Wesleyans in an anti-Mormon campaign, although it does not seem to have slowed the Mormons. The Catholics have stayed out of the fight so far. In the political arena, the churches appear to have taken sides in the emerging political scene. The Mormons appear to support "the establishment" or government (nobles), while the Catholic and Wesleyans tend to support a small reform element in the country. The Wesleyans continue to support the king, but he is also head of the government. It thus appears that the Mormons and nobles, the monied groups, are in one camp, while reform elements, Wesleyan and Catholic leaders, and the king are in another. This is probably an oversimplification of a complex and changing situation, but it is generally correct. In any case, the churches reflect as well as affect the changing scene in Tonga and will influence future political developments.

In light of these influences, a small cadre of educated people who seek change is emerging. Certain government actions have inadvertently aided this cadre. In 1986, the

government replaced the progressive income tax with a flat 10 percent levy and, for the first time, imposed a sales tax. Because the latter was passed with almost no discussion it took the people by surprise, and some observers say that the public was outraged. Both actions seemed to hit the commoners hardest. One long-time American resident of Tonga, Patricia Matheson, believes that current criticism of the government began with the passage of the sales tax. In any case, it elicited such a strong reaction that officials stumped the country trying to explain it. Their explanations met with little success, and the public was further annoyed when it was discovered that officials were being highly paid to undertake this campaign.

A group of perhaps 30 to 40 educated young people have for several years discussed government reform; now they are actively advocating it. In the late 1970s, this group started a monthly radio program, Matalafo Laukai, on which visitors freely discussed and criticized government policies.³ On the broadcast of December 1984, the guest speakers, Dr. Sione Amanaki, President of the Free Wesleyan Church, Professor Futa Helu, Director of Atenisi Institute, and a public servant, Akilisi Pohiva, discussed the issue of what is a fair distribution of goods, criticized high and frequently increased ministerial salaries, and lamented the lack of a political opposition.⁴ At one point in the program, Akilisi Pohiva suggested that a study of the French Revolution, the 1917 Russian Revolution, and the recent Iranian Revolution could be useful in Tonga. This was all too much for the cabinet, which reacted by prohibiting any more of the programs and sacking Pohiva. These actions came as a shock as the group fully expected having its January 1985 program, and Pohiva had no warning about his dismissal.

In late 1986, Pohiva and several others began publication of a monthly called *Kele'a*,⁵ which is devoted to attacking government corruption and related matters and to championing the people's rights. Most people can afford the publication, which costs only 25 seniti (about 18 cents U.S.). *Kele'a* carries no advertisements, and its source of financing is not clear. However, it publishes on a fairly regular basis, carrying most of its articles in Tongan but a selected few translated into English.

The reformers have tried to expose government officials' graft and misuse of funds. One of the best known cases is Pohiva's accusations that the Minister of Police

³This program was carried on the government-owned broadcasting station, A3Z.

⁴The Catholic bishop had planned to participate but was unable to because of illness.

⁵*Kele'a* means "to blow the conch" or to assemble.

has accepted Parliamentary allowances for trips he did not take, failed to investigate charges of fraudulent use of travel funds by MPs, and failed to take his brother into custody for an offense he had allegedly committed. Ministers travel frequently and usually first class, which entitles them to \$700 per diem when in the United States. Allegedly, one received \$200,000 travel expenses in one year alone. They frequently bill government for travel and per diem when attending conferences where the sponsor has paid all expenses. The reformers have also attacked ministerial salaries, which they consider far too high compared with other government salaries. For example, ministerial salaries were increased 508 percent between 1972 and 1982, more than twice the rate of any other salaries.

The results of the March 1987 parliamentary elections evidenced a major change in Tongan tradition and suggest that the reformers' message is reaching the people. Previously, most Tongans had not cared much for politics and felt that parliament and its activities counted for little in their lives. By nature, they are loyal and reluctant to criticize those higher up in the social order. However, the Matalafo Laukai broadcasts, the *Ke'e'a*, and especially the government's 1986 taxation measures apparently aroused political consciousness among the people, at least in this election. Seven out of nine MPs were replaced by younger men from the reform group.⁶ Even though well aware that their representatives constituted only a small minority, the people clearly wanted their voices heard in the parliament. Given the efforts of the reformers and the passiveness of the government, public political interest will probably continue and grow.

Akilisi Pohiva appears to be the leader of the reform group. He attended the University of the South Pacific from 1976 to 1978, taught in the Tongan schools, and was elected as the MP from Tongatapu in 1987. He is the only non-noble or peoples' MP to devote full time to politics. His commoner colleagues in parliament are businessmen or lawyers. Intelligent and industrious, he has apparently devoted himself to reforming the government and perhaps means to change it drastically. He talks generally of socialism but is not very specific about it. In 1987 he sued the government for what he considers wrongful dismissal stemming from his 1984 firing and in 1988 he won the case, to the surprise of many. As noted above, he has publicly accused the Minister of Police, the Honorable *A.dau'ola*, of dishonesty and neglect of duty. The Minister then charged

⁶The political alignment of the nine commoner MPs elected in 1987 is as follows: Amino Lino and Mote Lemoto are pro-government, and Viliami Afeaki, Teisina Fuko, Akilisi Pohiva, Lilo Vakauta, Leki Niu, Hopato Sanft, and Sam Vaipulu are reformers.

Pohiva with libel, taking the suit to the criminal court; this meant that Pohiva had to prove his charges. Unable to do so for fear of exposing his informant, Pohiva lost the case, but he gained publicity for his cause through word of mouth and accounts in the government-controlled monthly magazine, *Tonga Today*. During the May 1988 session of parliament, he plans to start impeachment charges against the Minister of Finance. Undoubtedly, this move will likewise meet with failure, but both actions are part of Pohiva's campaign to expose to the public the corruption and misbehavior pervading the government. Pohiva's principal means of doing this is through *Kele'a*, although small meetings and word of mouth are also important.

In March 1988, the New Zealand Labour Party invited Pohiva to a conference in Wellington. After attending it, he proceeded to Australia where he met with Labour Party and trade union officials. During the period March 18 to March 20, he appeared in Melbourne with a group of South Pacific islanders who met to form a new political organization, the South Pacific Association of Progressive Parties.⁷ A number of South Pacific labor leaders were involved, the largest contingents having come from Australia and Fiji.⁸ Dr. Timoci Bavadra, president of the Fijian Labour Party and briefly Fijian prime minister, was elected president of the organization; Pohiva served as Tonga's representative. At this meeting Pohiva formally stated that Tonga was ripe for revolution.

The *eminence grise* of the reform group is probably Professor Futa Helu, the director of the Atenisi Institute in Nuku'alofa, which is the only private, non-church, non-government, tertiary school in Tonga.⁹ At the Institute, students are taught Greek and Latin as well as the classics. Professor Helu, a classicist himself, believes a classical education is the only sound one. He is a well-read, articulate man who is at ease with a number of subjects. (As a case in point, he even knew about The RAND Corporation.) It is difficult to know precisely where he stands politically, especially given the conservative environment in Tonga, but he certainly is a reformer with some socialist learnings.

⁷A small preparatory meeting for this conference was held in Wellington in June 1987.

⁸The Fijians included Krishna Datt and Mahendra Chaudhry, key Fijian labor leaders.

⁹The professor claims the school is a tertiary institution, but some observers remarked to the author that it was in reality a secondary school.

The reform group has enunciated no clear strategy, although its general direction can be discerned. The reformers have so far attacked the monarchy very little; indeed, some believe the king supports their efforts because he has not stopped them.¹⁰ It is their belief that the king too is concerned over the checkered performance and spotty behavior of some of his ministers. However, for internal traditional political reasons, the king may find it difficult to oust them.¹¹

The reform group directs its attention toward the nobles, who are a weak link in the present political system. Most Tongans are reluctant to attack the nobles openly, but it is not difficult to discover serious criticism emanating from the better-educated Tongans. Many of the nobles, being poorly educated, do not acquit themselves well either in their positions in the government or as members of the nobility. They are perceived by the reformers and their sympathizers as undisciplined, greedy, and lazy. Senior bureaucrats also are challenging the nobility and in some ways becoming a new monied aristocracy.

In addition to governing poorly, through their control of the land and their social position, the nobles have contrived to cheat commoners. In one case, a noble reclaimed land from a commoner for a pittance knowing beforehand that the land was to be leased to the government for a school at a high rent. The commoner did, in fact, take the case to court and win, and this has encouraged others who have suffered similar experiences to seek legal redress.

But not all nobles are corrupt. The Tu'ivakano of Nukunuku, whose estate is on Tongatapu, is loved and respected by his people because he cares for them, according to the often critical *Kele'a*.¹² Change comes slowly in Tonga, and many still support the noble class; however, the reformers have systematically set about to expose their weaknesses and shortcomings. Apparently this is their first strategic move, reform the government and make it honest and responsible. The reformers really oppose the entire monarchical system of government and could begin to attack the King if he continues to do nothing about reform and planning for the future.

¹⁰The Free Wesleyan Church supports the reformers, which reinforces this view.

¹¹Powerful and traditional noble families still exist and the king has to deal with them carefully.

¹²See February 1988 issue, pp. 7-8. Conversations with several residents of the village seem to confirm this. All said that they happily gave their first fruits to the noble, an old Tongan tradition.

Most of the establishment in Tonga recognize and disapprove of the political agitation and opposition but have little idea of how to cope with it. The government-owned newspaper *Tonga Today* carried a long editorial on this new phenomenon and pointed out the many freedoms Tongans enjoyed. It then chastised "ungrateful citizens" who would try their utmost "to dismantle and destroy the peaceful living and stableness of the kingdom." It concluded with Patrick Henry's ringing words "Give me liberty or give me death." Ironically, the reformers would probably cite these same words in their platform, if they had one.

The opposition is small but active and educated and appears to be gathering some momentum. The results of the 1987 election encouraged them; but many Tongans remain set in their ways, respectful of their system, and reluctant to openly criticize their leaders. Some Tongans defended the nobles and their roles in society, saying they are part of the "Tongan way." Most people hope the king will provide the needed leadership, but in his old age he seems uncertain as to how to proceed and no exceptional noble leader has appeared in the government. Perhaps the system cannot yet conceive of a commoner being capable of leading. No one seems to be looking ahead or planning for the future in any serious way. The present political structure badly needs review and possible change to improve its ability to cope with the problems the country must confront and to enable Tonga to function in a 20th century world.

ECONOMY

The basically unsound Tongan economy is experiencing extremely serious problems. It is far too dependent on outside sources for funds. Remittances from the estimated 40,000 to 50,000 Tongans living in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand total approximately \$50 million a year. Tonga also receives over \$15 million in foreign aid from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the European Economic Community. Meanwhile, its exports earn a mere \$5 million, and the government has been forced to borrow money for even the most modest developments. Although the aid may continue indefinitely, it seems unlikely that the enormous remittances from abroad will. Even the first generation immigrants' sense of responsibility for sending money home may diminish as their roots become fixed abroad and their responsibilities there become more demanding; almost certainly subsequent generations will. If the public or private sector were to make a determined effort, exports could increase modestly, but such does not seem to be the case. The government has drawn up five-year plans, put

forth special efforts to encourage small industry, and granted incentives to attract foreign capital, but to little avail.

Although current figures are difficult to obtain, apparently exports finance approximately 15 percent of imports. More disturbing is the fact that Tonga's imports are vital commodities such as food and fuel, while its export earnings come from coconuts, largely coconut oil. Even worse, the out-moded extraction mill cannot obtain enough coconuts as the old trees are failing and replanting has been inadequate. Even the desperate imbalance in trade does not seem to have produced adequate incentives to maintain, much less improve, this most important foreign currency earning industry. The situation is so bad that there is talk of importing copra! Tonga produces only 20 percent of its lumber requirements, and although an active reforestation program would improve this situation over the long run, none is underway. Agricultural production also remains inefficient. Fish are abundant in Tonga's waters, but Tonga still imports fish for food. Oil exploration has been unsuccessful, although the government still holds out hope. Admittedly, Tonga's resources are limited, but Tongan stewardship of natural assets has been woefully inadequate. Tonga has done little with what it has or could develop.

The government has tried to encourage small industries by establishing an industrial park on the outskirts of Nuku'alofa and has held out tax incentives. The response has been very modest, both from inside and outside the kingdom. One promising development is the importing of soap, adding Tongan perfume, and then exporting it for higher prices.

Hopes run high that tourism will increase and improve the trade deficit. Tonga can offer lovely sandy beaches, excellent snorkeling, deep-sea fishing, lovely scenery in the Vava'u islands, and native feasts and dancing. But these attractions are not very different from those of other Pacific islands with a commercial tourist infrastructure. In Tonga such a structure does not really exist, although efforts are underway to improve the airports, increase the local airline (Friendly Island Airways), and upgrade hotels and restaurants. Nevertheless, at present, tourist accommodations are very modest even on Tongatapu and the other islands have almost no facilities. Tonga produces quality handicrafts but little else to tempt the traveler. To some extent, the tourist industry faces the question of what comes first, the chicken or the egg? More tourists or better facilities? The Kingdom of Tonga—with its royal family, its history, its festivals and traditions, its South Seas topography—projects an exotic appeal. Whether this

combination can lure tourists and the tourist industry remains to be seen, especially with the fierce competition in the region.

Tonga has other economic troubles as well. In addition to the already high unemployment, its large population of young people will soon flood the labor market. As the cost of emigrating increases and many countries are limiting the number of immigrants from the South Pacific, more of these young people are remaining in Tonga and further exacerbating the unemployment problem, especially in light of the slow economic growth. Nevertheless, many of the best still leave.

While the literacy rate is high, and most Tongans finish primary education, only 10 to 15 percent go on to secondary school, and only a tiny portion to tertiary. And although there is an abundance of cheap labor, it is not particularly motivated or highly trained.¹³ This could change rapidly, however, as indicated by Tongans' performances abroad where they have quickly learned to work in highly developed industrial economies. Many have quite successfully adapted to the 20th century, enough to send back the large remittances noted.

Inflation is also taking its toll and in recent years has reached as high as 25 percent per year. It hits the most critical necessities, particularly food. The declining number of farmers and the rapidly increasing population further exacerbate the situation. Recent inflation in New Zealand has also contributed to rising prices, and fuel has increased slightly. The government imposes duties on all imports, further increasing prices. The trade deficit grows, inflation continues, the national debt rises, and very little is done about it. The young reformers are conscious of all these problems, and educated citizens are also becoming increasingly aware of them. Against the day the remittances stop, Tonga's economic plight should be recognized and addressed now.

¹³Several U.S. Peace Corps personnel were very concerned about the unwillingness of Tongans to do things correctly or consistently. For example, one Peace Corps member told of a young girl who had been carefully trained in how the library categorization and numbering system worked. The training had no effect, however, as the girl simply placed the returned books wherever there was a space on the shelf. Another said he tried to get his house painted but had to employ three Tongans in succession as each quit after the first week's pay as that provided enough money for a party and some weeks of subsistence.

CONCLUSIONS

The unsound economy and the failure to make serious plans for improving it are not encouraging for Tonga's future. An old but respected king is not likely to provide the dynamic leadership required to mend the economy and reorganize and improve the political apparatus. The nobles are increasingly seen as lazy, corrupt, and ineffective and as parasites rather than constructive officials of the nation. It is not surprising that a few educated Tongans should view with alarm the future of their country and wish to change and improve almost all aspects of society and government. Akilesi Pohiva, the leader of the reform group, is dedicating his life to bringing about a more efficient, honest, and responsible government. I was told he was the most radical of the group but he didn't strike me that way during our long discussion. However, his association with New Zealand and Australia labor leaders some of whom founded the Pacific Trade Union Forum and the Fiji Labour Party suggests that he will be exposed to similar leftist pressures. While I found no evidence of outside financial support to him, other than money for a truck from his brother in Canada, he must be receiving some financial assistance as he does not work but carries on his political activities fulltime including the monthly production of *Kele'a*. The new South Pacific Association of Progressive Parties could be a vehicle for helping Pohiva and other struggling leaders.

Given the precarious economy and the corrupt and ineffective political structure, the reformers have fertile ground to work in. While the basically conservative population is changing slowly, this may accelerate as the reformers gain outside support, become more experienced leaders, and sharpen their attacks on the system. It would not be surprising if Tonga became the next nation for political unrest in the South Pacific.

Appendix

TONGA IN THE 1990s

by Futa Helu

Chairman, President of the New Zealand Institute for International Affairs, members of the Institute and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and staff of the Anthropology Department of Victoria University, ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed a rare honour for me to be here today and talk to you on Tonga. It is very true New Zealanders and Tongans should know each other well not only because of their geographical closeness to each other but because our major interests do overlap at so many points. This has always been the case whether one is talking about our prehistory or about the present. Although Tonga could have been an early site for the development of Polynesian culture, Tongan culture itself did not receive its classical form until influences emanating from that same great westward movement of East Polynesians which culminated in the settlement of the Cooks and New Zealand, reached us. And in modern times, New Zealand and New Zealanders have played a decisive role in our defence and development, most notably in the economic and educational fields. New Zealand has always been the sole buyer of our second most important cash crop, bananas, and other vegetables and fruit. Recently the most powerful factor in our economy has been the New Zealand-initiated Working Holiday Scheme.

It has been agreed upon that I outline to you this afternoon what I see to be the main characteristics of my society in the 1990s. I do not want to sound as if I have joined Alvin Toffler and Co. in this new-fangled Science of futurology. I am a simple student of my culture who has been fortunate enough to observe first-hand its growth for a number of years, and I believe prophesying and tampering with the future is a tricky business indeed. More often than not it is playing with illusions whereas in the study of history we are dealing with past yet actual situations, and moreover, you come across concrete models all the time, and in the process one develops a sense of the great difficulty of keeping standards high and, also, that culture is, in general, declining.

Yet it is a fact that the deeper one tries to see into the past the more seemingly substantial the structure of a future appears and the more tantalising it becomes to produce statements about that future. There is a comforting thought, first emphasised in the study of politics by Machiavelli, viz., that human nature (and therefore human problems), by and large, remains the same even though less significant details do change from time to time.

I propose to enumerate some of the facts which I take to be germane to an appraisal of the situation and then set down some of the general propositions which I see as following from those facts and simply leave it at that. I shall do this by looking at four important aspects of our society—the economy, the population situation, education, and the overall sociopolitical scene.

THE ECONOMY

1. Agriculture

Although the size of the Tongan economy is, by world standards, really tiny it is at present facing grave difficulties. The root of this trouble I take to lie in the combination of two factors—the change from subsistence to cash economy and the lack of adequate exploitable resources. Tongan economy was, of course, traditionally agricultural and subsistence. Even 35 years ago the ratio of commercial to subsistence agriculture was still low, about 5 to 95 percent. The proportion of cash farming now, however, would be about 30 percent, so one of the most significant features of the economy now is the expanding cash sector and a correspondingly shrinking subsistence sector. This sudden expansion of the cash sector has taken in not only the traditional South Seas cash crops such as copra and bananas but has also absorbed crops of great social and ceremonial value such as the yam and *Kava* (*piper methysticum*). The yam is the vegetable of the highest social meaning in Tonga and *kava* from which our national drink is made has been the symbol of our culture. These two crops are currently top money-fetchers (not counting the vanilla bean which is a newcomer and is somewhat restricted to the northerly Vava'u group where it thrives best) in a Tongan market not only within Tonga but everywhere with a Tongan community.¹

Cash farming has brought with it the use of more sophisticated equipment, but only a low percentage of our farmers have the financial capacity to acquire these and

¹This is in contradiction to a U.S. Embassy report which claims coconut oil is the main export. [Footnote added.]

maintain them. Chemicals and pesticides have been used rather freely but whether excessive use would have deleterious effects we cannot at present say. Of late a campaign for alternative technology has been more or less active in the upper echelons of the Civil Service. But there is a fundamental flaw to this strategy, viz. alternative technology cannot assist the economy to attain the high growth targets set by the Government. Either these have to be substantially lowered or mechanised farming and high-level technology be promoted.

2. Transfers from Tongans Abroad

Because of external migration, nearly 40 percent of our farm labour force is abroad, and this causes very visible depressions in agricultural earnings. Yet migration more than makes up for this loss. For a number of years now remittances from Tongans living abroad (RTA for short) have been the biggest single entry in our National Income account. In the '83/'84 Financial Year, for instance, RTA amounted to over sixteen million pa'anga.² The agricultural exports, for the same period, accounted for only five and a half million pa'anga, a mere third of RTA. We must not, however, forget that RTA is not a source you can rely on forever. Even new countries which have traditionally hosted Tongans are beginning to close their doors. Further the Tongans who remit money to the mother country are ones who were born and grew up in Tonga, but many of them are not going to be here in the 1990s, and their children who were reared in a different environment are not going to have the same sentiments, the same attachment to the home folks as their parents had. Finally, about 80 percent of domestic consumption and private sector expenditures are covered ultimately by remittances from abroad.

There are, then, basically, two lifelines for Tonga—RTA and foreign aid. All major development projects and about 70 percent of total projects in Tonga are aid-funded. A Royal tour and a Government mission have recently taken our King and Queen and two Ministers of the Crown to Europe to arrange for the purchase of two aircrafts and one boat. The aircrafts will be the first planes of the newly formed Government-owned Tonga Airline. But for this deal we shall need about 11 million U.S. dollars which have to be raised through loans or aid. On either count, Tonga is going to

²A 1988 pa'anga equals approximately one Australian dollar or three-fourths of a U.S. dollar. [Footnote added.]

go it precariously—through RTA which will dry up sooner or later, and through foreign aid which puts fetters on our freedom to formulate policy.

3. Foreign Investment

Of late Tonga has been attempting to attract foreign investors. Some have actually come lured by the famous cheap labour of Tonga and the stable political system. As it is applied in Tonga, foreign investment as a strategy to assist economic development suffers from two weaknesses. First, the investments have been very small-scale and are, like alternative technology, unable to generate the economic momentum (multiplier effect or not) required by our disproportionately large targeted growth rates. Second, contrary to current opinion, foreign investment has not contributed significantly to our foreign exchange. This is partly due to administrative policy regarding investment being still undeveloped. For example, undistributed profits are the result of Tongan labour and therefore should be looked upon as a contribution to foreign exchange but are unknown to all except the companies themselves and there are no policy measures for their release.

The working capital of foreign concerns is usually raised through our local Tonga Development Bank and equipment is quite elementary, so that the original capital transfers are never substantial; and at any rate they do not represent a value in the world market. Capital formation therefore may be insignificant when compared with the benefits reaped by the overseas company.

Also, indications are such that foreign investors might encroach in areas where the Tongan low-level technical know-how is best suited—agriculture and agriculture-derived industries.

The situation is such that Tonga might miss out on the usual benefits of investment but take a full share of its ills. The only trading bank in the country, the partly overseas-owned Bank of Tonga, has become an important determinant of production and marketing policies. But because her top management and operational principles are set by a head office in New South Wales we cannot be sure that its policy will always be informed by national interests.

Legislation regarding investment is also undeveloped. Tonga does not have an equivalent of your 1964, or the New Zealand 1968, legislation on land acquisition by foreign companies. Incidentally, an overseas company by our standards is one of which

50 percent or more of shareholding value are owned by foreigners, about twice that required for a company in New Zealand to be categorised as an overseas one.

In a word, given the circumstances, foreign investment is not indispensable for Tonga. In fact there exist other means of dealing with the problems foreign investment is usually intended to solve.

4. Oil

To solve our economic difficulties, the Tonga Government had entertained hopes of finding oil in Tonga. Surface oil seepages were spotted in different parts of the southern group of the Kingdom in the 1960s and surveys were soon conducted by Webb-Tonga Petroleum Co., a firm newly established for the purpose of investigating for oil in Tonga. It started drilling in the mid-70s and in 1978 this firm drilled its fifth and last hole. All were dry ones. Other surveys have since been conducted, the last one being concluded early last year. No firm indication of the presence of hydrocarbons in Tonga has been forthcoming.

There could be three major drawbacks for Tonga so far as the existence of petroleum is concerned. Firstly, the archipelago is geologically too active. We witness the sudden appearance of some small pumice-ash island every ten years or so. The whole place is dotted with the sites of these little jack-in-the-boxes. This vulcanism must have been quite excessive in the past to cause any hydrocarbons in Tonga to escape into the air ages ago. The second geological flaw of Tonga is the Tonga Trench which is at least 5 to 6 miles deep within our sea territory and stretches as far as the Kermadecs in one direction and Samoa in the other. The Tonga Trench could have acted as an outlet for petroleum deposits, at least in the southern group of the Kingdom. And lastly, recent reports, especially the one on last year's survey, have spelled out in no uncertain terms that source rocks have not been identified in Tonga. According to the reports, most of the rocks of Tonga are Pleistocene and none are much older than Miocene. Our islands then are geologically quite young and have not had the time to develop the source rocks required for hydrocarbon generation.

The Tonga Government is now recruiting firms for further oil prospecting and aims at off-shore drilling.

5. Marine and Sea-Bed Resources

There seem to be ample resources for Tonga in the sea. Geologists have confirmed that sea-bed resources—nickel, manganese nodules, etc.—are quite considerable both in quantity and quality. They occur mostly in the deeper parts of our sea territory. There is enough, they imply, for all the development we may fancy.

But as to harvesting these riches, there are constraints and serious ones they are. We do not have and cannot hope to have soon the technology nor the trained manpower for such operations. Yet it is quite possible to shift our interest from oil and direct the attention of the interested firms at these resources instead. They can have access to the equipment for their exploitation and one could be very sure they are not at all oblivious to the existence of these resources.

As for the other resources—fish, shell-fish, etc.—of the sea, these are quite within our reach. But there has never been any attempt to find outside markets for this part of our marine resources. This is strange because our fish are abundant and of a high quality and the supply can be made to be as reliable as required. We send our surplus fish to canning factories in Fiji and Samoa instead!

This seems to be a much less problematic and a promising area for the development of our economy. The resources are certain and plentiful—our sea territory is approximately 100,000 square miles—and assuming that markets can be developed and given good planning and effective administration there would be no good reasons for this not to be a successful stay of the economy.

There are other problems, of course, but they relate more to the structure than the content of the economy and yet are just as important as to the quality and level of the economy's performance. One of those has been the clogging centralisation of important services and activities. Decentralisation according to natural endowment and as a strategy to offset urbanisation is needed in Tonga just as anywhere else, though centralisation in the sense of informational presence and wise planning should always be maintained.

Another tendency that can be corrected is Government or semi-government bodies acting as middlemen in more areas than is really good for the country. By discouraging competition in this way, middlemanship is, in effect, restricting production and barring the private sector from functions which it would do much better.

All in all, we can say that the Tongan economy is facing a bleak future. We cannot continue to put our faith on remittances and transfers from Tongans abroad. We cannot simply refuse to recognise that there can be strings attached to foreign aid. And Tonga has not been always wise in her development policies and priorities. Instead of operating in domains of proven possibilities—e.g. Marine and seabed resources—Tonga has gone off and spent too long a time on quite doubtful areas—e.g. oil, whose existence in Tonga all survey reports so far have consistently failed to confirm. Time is so vital and the opportunity cost has been tremendous.

A development which is still insignificant but which, given the economic constraints and Government policy, has the potential of pointing a direction for future development is in the sphere of reexporting. The most well-developed industry here is soap manufacturing. Soap is imported initially, crushed and the resultant powder recombined chemically with local vegetable aromatics in a second saponification process and re-exported. This form of elementary singaporisation can develop into a major feature of the economy and can also grow into an emphasis on services-catering industries though its level and scope would be limited by lack of full control of raw materials and a low-level technical know-how.³

POPULATION AND MIGRATION

One of the worrying things about Tonga's population is that for a long time now, natural increase has always been very positive. Recently the time span for doubling has been 15 years. It could be appreciably shorter now. According to a recent census there are nearly 100,000 people living in Tonga now. Tongans who live abroad total about half that figure. Average density within Tonga is quite high (in fact higher than many South Pacific countries and Sri Lanka), about 400 per square mile.

The facts of population dynamics are those of internal and external migration, and internal migration is primarily urbanisation. Because of the aforementioned centralisation of important services—e.g. higher education, employment opportunities—the district capitals have become powerful magnets that cause whole families and people to move en masse and settle in urban areas. The attendant ills of urbanisation—overexploiting of resources, juvenile crime, increased social problems, litigation, etc.—are becoming common, in addition to inefficient utilisation of resources in the places which people have moved from. Urbanisation then causes certain resources to be totally absent.

³A reference to some of Singapore's economic techniques. [Footnote added.]

Although previously urbanisation was seen as the end point of an internal process, the full picture of population movement now shows its true nature to be the starting point of a different and external process that takes people to Auckland or Wellington, to Sydney or Melbourne, to Honolulu, San Francisco or Salt Lake City. Of course there have been people who have short-circuited this process and jumped direct from their home village to a metropolitan destination. But by far the majority of our migrants have been "urbanised" in Tonga before sojourning abroad.

People of the South Sea islands including Tongans migrate to or overstay in New Zealand, Australia or the United States because they really want the material comforts and high consumption of these societies. So it is not true that South Sea islanders are not drawn to material possessions nor is it quite useful to say that they should not desire these things. Many of these migrants, however, give a different reason for migrating, one that is not, to their minds, as outwardly scandalous.

Apart from its economic benefits migration has a very real educative effect on Tongans. If, for some reason or other, some return to the Kingdom, they show themselves, almost without exception, to have become politically aware, sensitive to social issues, and economically progressive. Tongans are quite adaptive and so the innovations are quickly absorbed into the local culture which is thereby enriched.

What is not usually realised, however, is that Tongans who live abroad now constitute a powerful *political force*. Because of their economic thrust and inevitably higher social status, Tongans who live abroad will exert an increasingly powerful influence on Government policy back home. In fact they have already done this twice in recent years—in causing reversals in Cabinet determinations during the only major and successful strike in Tonga, the nurses' strike in 1980, and also in connection with legislation relating to land owned by migrant Tongans. Tongans who live abroad are certainly a force we shall have to reckon with from now on.

EDUCATION

Tongan education has always been good at the lowest level. Basic literacy in the three r's has been consistently high—over 90 percent all the time. At the secondary level, our education has not enjoyed a uniform reputation. Originally in the late 1860s and 1870s there was an attempt (made especially by Moulton) to put Tongan secondary education at academic par with that of England and Australia, though the medium of instruction was Tongan. After this laudably good start, the doctrine of relevance began

to take roots in Tongan educational planning. This required education to be geared to the needs of society and the levels of technology. A wholesale pruning of the Moultonian system ensued and syllabi levels lowered to suit local conditions. This plunged Tongan education into a long period of uncertainty and confusion from which she has not fully recovered yet! The important observation, however, is that the needs of society have in the meantime risen to very high levels, but education is still, in general, patterned on the needs of a society a little after the turn of the century.

For tertiary and higher studies we sent and are still sending our scholars overseas mainly to New Zealand and Australia. Since the 1960s, Tonga has been also served by the University of the South Pacific. But it is possible regionalism in this form may not be able to hold for long. Rumbblings, in fact, have been coming from the direction of Samoa and the Solomons. They complain that U.S.P. does not benefit anyone but Fiji. And Fiji itself, according to a recent Radio Tonga statement, is posed to annex U.S.P. and turn it into the University of Fiji. Fiji, of course, bears over 90 percent of the contribution toward the running of the institution. The lesson for Pacific islanders is this: the ideal of service may not be good educational policy and unless an institution of higher learning is based on a genuine desire for learning, it cannot be of lasting value.

Tongan education is a man with good feet, a rather wobbly midsection and no head. Literacy in the sense of general enlightenment and a basic familiarity with what can be called, following Naipaul, the international cultural tradition is non-existent. Education has always been regarded in a Socratic manner, as a tool for social development but never as a distinct movement with distinct characters, a distinct morality and a distinct way of doing things. Tongans have not yet arrived at this conception, but so much the poorer for them, educationally speaking. The institution where I work is in a very important sense an attempt to fill this vacuum.

Tonga in the past has never had a learned and critical elite which could give direction to its culture. Of late, however, some educated Tongans have cast a critical eye on the Government's economic policy and are voicing their findings in the media. I believe this movement is going to grow since Tonga now has scholars who take criticism to be the very heart of education, working in different fields including education. As the number of educated people increase so will this critical corrective, but it calls for fine tuning by society as well as government. It seems certain that somewhere in the 1990s the critical stance of educators and educated will have become a dominant force in Tonga.

SOCIOPOLITICAL SITUATION

The changes that have come over Tonga have been rapid and far-reaching. In the early period of European contact the changes were relatively slow though still quite significant for that time. But in recent years changes have been gathering such momentum as to be quite overwhelming. The areas where the changes have been most intense have been: westernisation of life style, growing materialism, the opening up of Tonga to the outside world and vice versa, the increase in the number of educated people, the emergence of new socioeconomic or religious groupings resulting in new distribution of power. Most of these changes, I know, take place because of fundamental changes occurring in the economic sphere, but all have combined to produce a new sociopolitical scene that seems to promise the end of the old polity.

I propose to look at the situation now by employing a "model" taken from an actual period of European history. This may seem far-fetched but I feel I can do no better than by saying that the situation in Tonga now is very like an Italian Renaissance in miniature. By this I mean that the five ingredients of social change in Italy before the 14th Century are all present in Tonga today. These are, 1. the transformation of a feudal-agricultural economy into a commercial one, 2. the emergence of a middle class, 3. the weakening of a "universal" church, 4. the decline in the social and political status of the traditional aristocracy, and 5. a new interest in education and the classics. I discuss these one by one.

COMMERCIALISM

The changeover from subsistence to cash agriculture has accelerated in recent years and brought with it increased trade and commerce. Tonga's external trade has not only increased in absolute bulk but also diversified in terms of commodities and markets as well, though New Zealand and Australia have remained our principal trading partners. Circumstances are that this increase and diversification may become dramatic in the future.

It is not only commercialism that has extended out of all recognition but also its spirit. Traditionally sharing and giving were basic qualities of Tongan society that gave it its distinctive flavour. *Kole*—requesting for things from relatives, neighbours, or anyone who has what one needs—is a social custom. It is based not on the ethic of economic exchange but on the social principle of generalised reciprocity. One who

has conducted *kole* on his/her relatives or neighbors does not enter in his records that he was owing this to so-and-so and has to pay it back but he understands that society, such as it is, will, in the normal course of events, present him with an opportunity to reciprocate.

One does not see this too often now. People who still *kole* off their friends or relatives now take something and try to effect a direct exchange. In fact, *kole* in its traditional form is beginning to be frowned upon. Land to which all male citizens are entitled on reaching sixteen, and which they were given for the asking, now has to be "paid for" in money or in kind. This "payment" goes to the land-distributing noble or agent. Land has become very scarce and so its "price" has shot up quite dramatically.

But commercial activities in Tonga have another product which is going to be of great moment to the social, economic, and political development of Tonga. This is the new middle class.

The Middle Class

For the first time in our history, we are now witnessing the emergence of a middle class in our society. We have had in the past, it is true, businessmen, but these were only very few isolated individuals—an average of four at any period, and they did not as a whole take their profession seriously or felt themselves to be members of a distinct social grouping. What we have today, however, are entrepreneurs in the modern sense of the word, who are conversant with the tricks of their trade as well as its principles, and also with the special interests of their class. They have established associations to promote these interests and have all the panoply and consciousness of a distinct social class.

The composition of our middle class deserves mention. Although Tongan membership is big especially when compared with the past, non-Tongan membership would be at least just as numerous. Our middle class, therefore, is largely an *imported* one. The usual economic benefits from this class should not be overlooked. It is also possible for other powerful classes in a society to make scapegoats of an imported middle class for schemings of their own.

3. The Weakening of the 'Universal' Church

Traditionally the Wesleyan Church has been by far the most powerful religious (or non-religious for that matter) group in Tonga. The position stemmed originally from an early "marriage" between this church and our Royal Family.

When the first missionaries came to the islands at the beginning of the nineteenth century the then king and highest chiefs of the land were openly hostile to them. But one chiefly line which was not of the highest rank or authority was well-disposed to the new teachings and welcomed the new religion. This was the Tu'i Kanokupolu clan. One of their members—Taufa'ahau of Ha'apai—was particularly drawn to the new faith, and he happened to be the bravest as well as the wisest warrior of Tonga at this moment of our history. A "union" between this chief and the missionaries was bound to take place. This resulted in great benefits for both parties. The missionaries received the protection they desperately needed in order to propagate their teachings in safety, and the petty chief obtained invaluable guidance from the missionaries and was able to upgrade his social standing until he became king of Tonga after conducting a fierce civil war in which he vanquished the most powerful kings of Tonga and created a new social and political order with him as supreme head.

Except for a relatively short period toward, and after, the turn of the century, the Wesleyan Church has dominated Tongan affairs and government policy to an extent at times (in the 30s and early 40s) that was not very unlike that of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe in the Middle Ages. By the end of the 40s it became clear that other churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, were beginning to assert themselves politically, though still quite inconsequentially. And they have remained our "political parties."

A great change came over this whole system in the early 70s. Because of some lack of foresight, the Wesleyans committed a series of serious blunders in her internal affairs, and this, combined with the appearance of some charismatic leaders within the Wesleyan clergy itself, caused large groups of members to splinter off and formed themselves as semi-denominational groups. This was aggravated by the mere stance of two external forces. The first was the Roman Catholic Church consolidating her position through a series of careful and wise moves. She joined the Tonga Council of Churches (N.B. the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the World Council of Churches) gaining very useful links with the Wesleyan Church. She then embarked on a much-needed rural development program that really begins at the grassroots. The other force is the Mormon Church. This group had come to Tonga in the 1920s but did not bestir itself noticeably until the 50s when Salt Lake City started pouring money into its Tonga mission. This church is now our fastest growing denomination. Their drawcard is really

the prospect of going to Salt Lake City to live and work. They are converting and baptising people by the hundreds every year. Most of their converts are ex-Wesleyans.

The real strength of the Mormons, of course, is their economic power as a two thousand years experience is that of the Roman Catholics. In fact Salt Lake City has determined that about 15 million pa'anga be spent in Tonga this financial year. This represents a tremendous capital outlay for our size and in such a short period. These two churches will certainly fight it out as to who is going to be the most powerful church of the 1990s. It is going to be a duel between experience and money. If the economic horizon continues to deteriorate, as I believe it will, the battle will be won by Salt Lake City. Otherwise, Rome shall prevail.

The Decline of the Traditional Aristocracy

As implied above, the Wesleyan Church has always been the power base of our Royal Family so that if the former declines in political clout, the latter will move in sympathy. And vice versa. Both the King and the Wesleyan Church have supported an anti-Mormon campaign that is now in its third year. This plainly is playing into the hands of the Roman Catholics who have not yet outwardly moved a finger against Mormonism in Tonga and seems contented to leave things, at least at this stage, in the hands of the Wesleyan Church and the King.

We noted above that new social groupings have multiplied in recent years and though the traditional ones remain their relative powers are not the same. Some scholars, notably Marcus, see a positive decline in the sociopolitical status of traditional chiefs and a marked increase in that of civil servants. Thus, in effect, he is proclaiming the advent of new "chiefly" classes, higher in popular esteem—at least this is the case with Ministers of the Crown—than nobles of the Realm. There are still finer details. For example, those traditional chiefs who are able to maintain genetic or functional proximity with our Royal Family are able to retain high social standing. Those who have not done so have depreciated in social status quite visibly.

The economic development program also has played its part in this whole process. Because of foreign aid, policy will increasingly tend to be, in an important sense of the word, made in Wellington and Canberra, London and Bonn. The influence of chiefs in this area will, more and more, count for less. Further, they are in a mood to exchange their most valuable possession (and mainstay of their power), i.e. land, for a commodity which they obviously take to be more important: money.

This breakup of aristocratic power and the weakening of the most numerous and powerful church group have gone hand in hand with the corresponding rise of capitalistic attitudes and individualism. This is reflected in the day-to-day dealings between relatives and friends and in the decline of symbolic forms of activities. Realism will certainly spread in all departments of social intercourse, but a beautiful dimension of the traditional ethos will surely disappear.

Interest in the Classics

The feature of the situation is represented by a single group but one which is growing in influence. I am referring to the institution of which I am the Director—'Atenisi Institute. Contrary to all educational aims in the South Pacific islands, we emphasise classical studies not only in the narrower and specific sense of concentrating in the classical tongues but also emphasising in all departments of culture objectivity as against subjectivism, the issue versus purpose, and truth versus satisfaction.

So far we have been teaching, apart from the traditional sciences, philosophy and mathematics, classical Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, German, Italian and Russian. This reveals a leaning towards Indo-European languages. The position, however, is that languages, being the repository of what is best and beautiful in cultures, cannot fail to give students a sense of form and order which is usually lacking in other disciplines. Moreover, the Greeks and Latins of antiquity were most clear-headed peoples, especially the former, and the study of the languages they spoke is a valuable lesson in objectivity as well as a marvellous discipline.

Our classical program at first seemed ludicrous and out of place in our society but is now beginning to gain some standing. Not only shall we refuse to take a subordinate place in the scheme of things, but we shall try to propagate our view beyond the boundaries of our society.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion seems to show that, at least for Tonga, "development" cannot be shortcircuited but must pass through the same points and therefore arrive at the same end.

I am aware that this survey may be something of a caricature. For one thing it is too general to be of real value and for another I have left out too many things equally important and absorbingly interesting not from an academic point of view only but also

from a real practical perspective. Perhaps the most conspicuous omissions are Defence and Foreign Policy, but these are large issues that need separate treatment.

Let me set down the following propositions as ones entailed by the facts contained in the foregoing discussion:

1. At the economic level, Tonga in the 1990s will sink deeper into dependency because of the many constraints, material, cultural and technological. Tonga might opt for a low-level form of singaporisation—i.e. an emphasis on the services-catering industries. This can make Tonga wealthier, but her wealth will be consumer and not capital wealth.
2. Because of very possible economic hardships, social problems will tend to proliferate with keener confrontation between commoner and chiefly classes. Given this situation, the increasing strength of an educated elite could make, to put it mildly, political enthusiasms inevitable.
3. In the 1990s the Wesleyan Church will have lost its primacy in Tongan society and we will, *ceteris paribus*, witness the Mormons being the most powerful church group with the Roman Catholic Church taking second place. The weakening of the Wesleyan Church will also bring about a lowering of the social status and power of both Royalty and the traditional chiefs.
4. Because of an increasing demand for external defence and economic interdependence, a South Seas awareness can develop which will effect a greater bonding of Tonga, Fiji, Samoa and New Zealand and also a greater tendency to go into orbit around Australia and/or Japan.