

Dialogue

In Whose Face? An Essay on the Work of Alan Duff

CHRISTINA A. THOMPSON

*Thy Kingdom Come: The Democratization
of Aristocratic Tonga*

EPELI HAU'OFA

Thy Kingdom Come: The Democratization of Aristocratic Tonga

Epeli Hau'ofa

First I would like to draw attention to the title of this paper. The first part, *Thy Kingdom Come*, is not merely a pun on the only existing monarchy in our part of the world, nor is it just part of a publicity stunt. It refers to recent developments in Tonga that exemplify a historical tendency for oppressed or threatened populations to look to religion for liberation or salvation. A powerless community that confronts seemingly entrenched or immovable forces may resort to the supernatural and religiously sanctioned moral codes for the advancement of its cause. Examples abound but the mention of a few recent ones may suffice to make the point: Poland and the Catholic Church under Communism; Iran and the Ayatollah under the Shah; and the ongoing struggle in Algeria.

In Tonga the agitation for political change not only has the support of the major churches, but church leaders themselves are in the forefront of the movement. The aim of these clergy, and the majority of the movement supporters, is to firmly establish the New Testament codes as the guiding principles of public and political behavior. Significantly, however, the movement is strongly interdenominational and is therefore ideologically pluralistic, which may act as a check against the kinds of religious political fanaticism that has been seen in Iran, Pakistan, and closer to home in Fiji as exemplified by a powerful section of the Methodist Church. In Tonga also, one of the prominent leading personalities of the movement is a strong atheist critic of religious establishments, who has nevertheless been working closely with religious leaders on matters of national interest. Among the movement supporters are members of the non-Christian Baha'i faith. Although the movement is Christian in its orientation, reflecting the strength of that religion in Tonga, and indeed in our islands

THIS ARTICLE first appeared in serial form in The Weekender (Suva: Media Resources) in 1993. It is reprinted here with the permission of the author.

region, it is pluralistic in its inclusiveness of religious and sectarian doctrinal diversity and of purely secular humanistic viewpoints. This accommodation of even seemingly irreconcilable ideological differences is a hallmark of the democratic culture. I return to this point later.

Before proceeding, I shall make one general observation. When the control of social and economic forces in a society shifts from one section of the community that had traditionally monopolized it to another section, it is inevitable that the newly empowered unit will begin to assert itself by demanding a share of institutionalized authority commensurate with its strength. Conversely, when the ruling section of a community loses control of the productive and other social forces in the society, its ability to govern effectively for the well-being of the community weakens accordingly. In such a situation the ruling section generally acts and reacts in ways that intensify the challenge to its political legitimacy. In the end it will have to adapt to the changed and changing environment, either by agreeing to a new reallocation of rights to govern or by stiffening its resistance using whatever means it can still command. This, however, is resistance from an already shaken position.

The realignment of forces within Tongan society today closely reflects the pattern of political development I have just sketched. As I shall shortly try to demonstrate, the ruling aristocratic section of the community has declined. On the other hand, the commoner section is gaining power, from which position of strength it is demanding a commensurate share of the rights to decide matters that concern its interests and welfare—that is, the interests and welfare of ninety-nine percent of the population. Beneath the calls that have resounded over the past few years, for accountability in public affairs and for more ethical behavior on the part of Tonga's national leaders, are demands by the newly empowered for a restructuring of the institutional arrangements of the society.

The process of democratization of Tonga's political culture, of which the decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the commoner class is part, can be traced to the period around the middle of the nineteenth century and events that culminated in the establishment of a centralized monarchy at the expense of a hitherto multicentered aristocracy. Centralized kingdoms were generally built on the ashes of independently powerful aristocracies, and nineteenth-century Tonga was no exception. The modern state of Tonga was built on conquest warfare in which one warlord, the first of the present line of monarchs, managed through battlefield victories

and judiciously forged alliances to overcome all armed opposition and to bring all territorial chiefs of the archipelago under his authority. He devised a new order that centralized in his hands all powers of political control, and he exercised those powers through a newly established bureaucracy. This process was akin to the establishment of the centralized kingdoms that contributed in large part to the ultimate demise of feudalism in Europe. An excellent example is the reign of Louis XIV, who emasculated the French nobility by bringing them into direct dependence on his court. Britain under the Tudor monarchs, the nineteenth century rise of the Prussian kingdom, and the unification of Germany, in their different ways, exemplify the process.

The centralization of authority in the hands of the Tongan monarch was achieved by the emasculation and dispossession of the hitherto largely autonomous and multicentered aristocracy, depriving it of any real independent power, in contrast with the other two remaining functioning aristocracies in the Pacific Islands, namely Fiji and Samoa.

It is to the advantage of any monarchy, in its relations with the aristocracy, to play them off against the rest of the population, and vice versa. Two examples illustrate this point, although the outcomes might not have been intended. Tonga's equivalent of National Day or Independence Day is Emancipation Day, the most important annual secular holiday in the national calendar. Emancipation Day, celebrated for many decades—perhaps more than a century now—commemorates the occasion in 1862 when commoners were liberated by their first king—not from the shackles of any alien colonial regime, but from alleged enslavement by their very own aristocracy. They were liberated from themselves. Little did people know then, or consciously know even today, that they were released from one form of bondage only to be subjected to another, relatively benign, form of subordination. But the ploy worked, for the propagation of the belief in the royally decreed liberation, through annual celebrations, music, and poetry, and through the schools, has ensconced the monarchy firmly and centrally in the national psyche, and in the national affection.

A second example has been the use of the aristocratic representation in parliament to support the government. As is generally known, the thirty or so nobles of the realm elect among themselves a number of representatives equal to the number of representatives of the rest of the population, who constitute more than ninety-nine percent of the total. The nobles' representatives almost always vote solidly with government ministers,

against the people's representatives, outnumbering them on every occasion. As is also generally known, ministers of the crown are appointed from outside the parliament by the monarch, hold their tenure at his pleasure, and are therefore directly responsible only to him. Moreover, while they hold office cabinet ministers are legally nobles or aristocrats, even though they may be of commoner rank by birth. The result has been that until very recently, people have directed their disaffection and frustration with this lopsided form of representation against the aristocracy and cabinet ministers rather than against the monarchical system that has spawned and sustained it. The two examples I have used indicate the extent to which the aristocracy has been weakened—it has been transformed from knighthood into pawnhood on the political chessboard.

The specific measures that weakened the aristocracy and led to its decline in terms of its independent power and relative autonomy, its social utility and political legitimacy, were instituted by the Code of 1862, the Constitution of 1875 and certain laws based on it (Latukeyu 1975), which by the way is one of the oldest written constitutions in the world. These same measures formed the firm basis for the later emergence of a democratic culture in the country, and hence the growing demand for political restructuring in the 1990s. They included: the drastic reduction in the number of land-controlling territorial chiefs; the introduction of primogeniture for both succession to title and inheritance of landed property; the abolition of traditional compulsory tributes to chiefs; and the individualization of the land tenure system. I shall take each of these in turn to show their impact on both the aristocracy and the commoner class.

The first relevant aspect of the new order was the drastic reduction of the number of land-controlling titled chiefs from at least a hundred to around thirty. This was a reduction by at least two-thirds; it might even have been by three quarters.¹ Traditionally in Polynesia, as elsewhere, the material basis of chiefly power was the control of lands and the people living on them. Chiefly lines that lost territorial control slipped into insignificance, and most eventually disappeared. The reduction of the number of estate-holding Tongan chiefs led to the fall or disappearance of most titles and the numerical weakening of the aristocratic rank. Since the middle of the twentieth century, when the population began to increase rapidly, the aristocratic proportion of the total population has been falling behind. Numbers alone do not necessarily indicate strength, but when numbers are combined with social and economic powers they become significant

indeed. In any human group there is always an optimum number below which the group cannot function effectively in relation to other groups, even when the dice are loaded in its favor.

From the late 1960s especially, with the rapid expansion in the public and private sectors, the numerical and other related disadvantages of the aristocracy began to tell. Apart from positions that could be filled through political appointments that favored the aristocracy, most strategic posts in the public sector went to commoners—the only ones with the talent and training to occupy them. The same was and is true of the private sector.

Second, the constitutional provision relating to primogenital succession has deprived the aristocracy of the great qualities of field leadership that were historically associated with them. In the past, chiefs, especially high chiefs, were selected from among eligible contenders by their peers. Because they were expected to be the managers of production within their territories, to actually rule their people, and to defend them against external aggression, only the fit and able could succeed to titles and hold them. The first king personified those qualities in his long struggle to accede to power and to mold a new nation. He did not become monarch by virtue of birth alone; he had to overcome his rivals by demonstrating to them that he was far stronger, more skillful, and wiser than they were. The primogenital succession initiated by him and enshrined in the constitution was designed to prevent the kinds of competition and rivalry for succession that had led to much violence in the past. He should have known, for he himself had gone through the gruelling process of the overthrown system. Ironically, however, the measure he instituted removed all tests of fitness for office. Competition is very important in that it weeds out the weak and the unsuitable and brings forth and enhances strength of character. It enlivens a group, keeping its members fit, experienced, and mentally alert.

Apart from birth order, the only other criterion for Tongan succession is a negative one, disqualification on the ground of imbecility. But as we all know, one can be a certified idiot in more than a thousand non-medically proven ways. The exclusive criteria of birth order and imbecility weaken any kind of succession for they foreclose the selection of the most able. The removal of the competitive factor from accession to power within a ruling group makes people take things for granted and saps much of its verve and life, rendering it ill suited to effective command of any social field wherein competition reigns supreme. One of the strengths of the Samoan and Fijian aristocracies is that their leaders are selected from

eligible contenders to titles, perhaps explaining in part why their chiefs have shown greater willingness than Tongan chiefs to submit themselves to the general electorate in their bid for parliamentary seats.

Third, the abolition of compulsory tribute to chiefs, in the forms of labor and produce, has further eroded the strength of the aristocracy. Since 1862, chiefs have been forbidden to demand labor or produce from the people living on their estates. The implications of this prohibition go far beyond the loss to them of their main sources of wealth and therefore much of their power. It effectively ended one of the most pivotal roles chiefs played in society: the management of economic production within their territories. This measure, together with the individualization of land rights, removed chiefs from direct participation in the wider economy.

The development of the monetized sector of the national economy from the late nineteenth century and through the first half of the present century was an alien development controlled by a relatively small number of European planters and traders. However, most Tongans remained in the semi-subsistence peasant sector, producing for their own consumption and selling their surpluses to traders for target income. Significantly, people went to foreigners for their economic needs, not to their chiefs. The aristocracy benefited from this arrangement, not through active participation in the management of production and distribution on their estates, but in receiving rents from leases on their lands and traditional tributes that Tongans still paid voluntarily as part of their felt traditional obligations and, with the passage of time, on a diminishing scale. With the increasing marginalization of the peasant sector of the economy, the significance of traditional tributes declined markedly. A class of people who were once economic managers, and who controlled the society-wide redistribution system, has been transformed by circumstances into a class of recipients who expect privileges without obligations as a matter of birthright. Such transformation makes the people concerned ill prepared to act effectively in the hugely competitive world of an open free-market economy.

When the commercial sector of the economy was thrown open to native Tongans after the Second World War, in part because of the emigration of most Europeans and part-Europeans who had controlled it, and when that sector expanded from the late 1960s on, the commoners, seasoned with toil, education, and skills training, were the ones equipped to move into that sector to establish themselves. Fortunes varied; many fell by the wayside, but some have succeeded to become wealthier than most of the

aristocracy. With a few exceptions, the wealthiest and most economically powerful Tongans today are commoners. The same dominance obtains in the fields of education, the trades, and the professions. The two most notable exceptions from the aristocratic economic inertia have been the present monarch and his brother, the former prime minister, who had for decades been running commercial production on their estates. Their example has not been emulated by the rest of the aristocracy, and their operations have not been spectacularly successful.

The new land tenure system that came with the new order simultaneously empowered a small group of high chiefs and rendered them impotent. Under the constitution all land in the kingdom belongs to the monarch. The entire country is then divided first into estates, some of which belong to the monarch, some to his government, and the rest to the thirty-three or so noble titles. Estate-holding chiefs, now called nobles to distinguish them from other and lesser chiefs, are required by law to divide their domains into parcels allotted to their people as individual holdings. Those who have their holdings registered in their names with the appropriate ministry are assured of their tenure by the state, which also guarantees the transmission of their property to their eldest sons. By 1975, sixty percent of the land allotted had been so registered, and more parcels are being registered every year (Tonga 1975, 38). Of the remaining allotted land, individuals can claim long occupancy rights, and the state is known to have upheld some of these claims. Finally, primogenital inheritance forecloses the rights of chiefs to play any real and meaningful role in the transmission of land rights on their territories from one generation to the next. All this has contributed to the weakening of the power of the aristocracy over their own estates. The system has, on the other hand, strengthened the commoner class by offering them security of tenure in perpetuity. They work on their holdings for their own exclusive benefit, free from extortion by the aristocracy and free from the kinds of land disputes common to most other parts of the island world.

Another explanation for aristocratic aloofness from the wider field of economic production is now evident: they have not only lost their traditional rights to command and mobilize labor and resources, but the ultimate control of the disposition of land parcels on their estates lies not in their hands but in those of the state. In compensation for their loss of independent powers and of their traditional sources of wealth, the nobles receive monthly stipends from the state, binding them even more to the

patron–client relationship with the monarch. Given that honor and prestige are bestowed at the monarch's prerogative, the dependence of the aristocracy on royal favor and patronage is further intensified.

Tonga is unique among the indigenous societies of the Pacific Islands in that all land rights are held by individuals and not by kinship groups such as clans or lineages. This system has spawned a strong sense of individual private ownership of property and a degree of individualism and individual freedom greater than obtains among those who live in more communally oriented societies whose group solidarity is materially rooted in joint holding of land rights and landed property.

But Tonga's primogenital inheritance means that younger sons and all women have no inheritance rights to their fathers' lands, unless their fathers control more than one land allotment. Today this means that most Tongans have no inherited legal land rights or holdings, which further means that the growing number of landless Tongans constitute the largest rural and urban proletarian class among the indigenous populations of our region. Except for those who work in the public sector, and most do not, these members of the new proletariat generally owe little or nothing to the aristocracy and royalty, and are therefore generally free of most traditional obligations beyond those to their immediate family circles. They and many of the others depend to varying degrees on financial and other forms of material remittances from their relatives overseas, further enhancing their independence from local and traditional constraints. They are independent and generally poor, and I believe they rank among the strongest supporters of the prodemocracy movement. They stand to gain from any change that would give their class more power.

Before the establishment of the monarchy there existed titled chiefs of various grades above the level of the heads of the minimal kinship units. There were minor chiefly titles, and grades of higher territorial chiefs, who formed a chain of command from the top of the social pyramid down to the commoners. This closely graded hierarchy constituted intricately interwoven networks of kinship ties that helped unite the entire society. The dispossession of most chiefly titles and their subsequent fall or disappearance from the political and important social arenas severed most of these links, further isolating the high chiefs from the population at large. In short, the strength of the kinship bonds that had traditionally united Tongan society from the top strata to the bottom has been weakening with each passing generation. Here again is another contrast between the

Tongan aristocracy and those of Fiji and Samoa, where there are as many traditional leaders as there are landholding and other territorial units. In these societies, graded titles still connect the grass roots to the paramount chieftainships through blood as well as other ties.

In the past, the aristocracy monopolized the entire field of cultural and technical knowledge then available in the country. Commoners were referred to, as they still are sometimes, as *me'a vale* 'the ignorant'. This was literally true; the rank and file of the lowest class were kept in the dark because knowledge was power and those who had it and strictly guarded it wielded power over others. Then came the Christian missionaries whose aim was to save everyone's soul. The new education system they introduced was made available to everyone for their own individual salvation. The new knowledge and training in new skills were sought after more than eagerly by Tongan commoners, leaving the aristocracy to nurse the kinds of knowledge that were becoming increasingly irrelevant for the conduct of everyday affairs in the changing socioeconomic environment. This voracious appetite for knowledge remains today and has earned Tongans a reputation among their fellow Islanders. The universalization of knowledge and learning broke one of the main strangleholds that the aristocracy had over the people. In the past three decades in particular, ordinary Tongans in rapidly increasing numbers have received higher level educations and have acquired a greater awareness of the world and their potential to excel, as well as a growing confidence in their ability and their new place in an evolving society.

Most of them have received their education overseas, where they have formed important links with individuals and institutions that may be activated for their advantage or that of the causes they espouse. Many of them are now residents of the democratic societies of the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, and an increasing number are resident in other Pacific islands, employed by regional and international agencies or by transnational firms. From their bases abroad they are exerting significant influences on their homeland. For example, weekly or monthly publications by expatriate Tongans based in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States frequently discuss and editorialize upon national issues such as the prodemocracy movement. Every edition is airfreighted for distribution in the home country, supplementing a multiplicity of lively and fearless weeklies and monthlies published within Tonga and distributed

widely internally and externally to the migrant communities. Furthermore, the use of sophisticated communications systems makes for instant international flows of information, connecting Tongans wherever they are located. National issues are internationalized through transnational networks of a highly mobile population, making it difficult for the powers that be to keep track of, let alone contain, any social movement with tentacles spread across the globe.

Within the country itself is a unique tertiary educational institution, the Atenisi Institute, that has processed generations of young Tongans in the ancient Greek philosophical traditions of dialogue and analysis. Its founder and director is a former student of the great libertarian philosopher, the late John Anderson, professor of philosophy at the University of Sydney. Atenisi, an autonomous grassroots institution run on shoestring budgets, has succeeded, where those who have tried to establish the Marxist discourse elsewhere in our region have failed, in continuing to submit an entire society and its institutions to constant microscopic intellectual scrutiny. The effects on established social, political, and religious pretensions have been devastating. Atenisi has contributed immeasurably to the process of the democratization of Tongan society.

Forcing people with backgrounds such as I have just outlined to remain in the ascribed subordinate place into which they were born, as some people have tried to do, is indulging in self-delusion, because that is another place, another time.

The relationship between commoner Tongans and their churches goes far beyond the field of education. The patron–client relationship between the monarchy and the aristocracy made it necessary for the high chiefs to move away from their communities into the capital to be close to the monarch, the source of power and patronage. In their absence, the leadership vacuum created was filled by the only organizations that had intimate contact with the people—the churches, through their priests and pastors.

Although access to the political and administrative hierarchies of the state was confined to royalty and their client aristocracy, the churches, through their hierarchies of clergy, schools, and other organizations, provided the initial opportunities for trained and ambitious commoners to rise and improve their status. More recently the state has been compelled to open up to commoners, but the earlier relationships between the churches and talented people remain strong. At the grassroots level, the

churches have long replaced the aristocracy as the significant influences on the daily life of the people. As the people become increasingly better educated and more democratic minded, so have the leaders of their churches.

The central authorities are fully aware of the special bond between the two groups. In late 1992, in preparation for the early February 1993 general elections, the monarch summoned the church leaders for an audience during which he requested their active cooperation in the formation of a political party to counter the prodemocracy movement. It is indicative of the standing of the aristocracy that the monarch did not try to recruit their assistance. Their efforts would have been futile. However, church leaders made no move to comply with their monarch's request. At the general elections, the prodemocracy candidates for the main island, which makes up two-thirds of the national population, swept all the seats with large majorities, scoring their biggest polling-station victories in those villages most closely associated with the royal family and the biggest of the big chiefs. They captured all the villages of Tongatapu except one or two.

These events show that the deliberate emasculation of the aristocracy, and its manipulation to bolster the monarchical authority, have in the long run rendered the monarchy vulnerable by exposing it directly to the grassroots. In the ideal situation an absolute monarchy should have a relatively strong aristocracy to act as a buffer against the general population. But the weakened Tongan aristocracy is unable to offer such a buffer now that it is needed. There is therefore a rising and direct popular demand for the monarch to relinquish his political powers and accept the status of the British and Scandinavian monarchs—to reign but not to rule. Such a demand was inconceivable only five years ago, but events have moved faster than most observers would have anticipated.

In the three remaining truly aristocratic societies of the South Pacific (Tonga, Fiji, and Samoa), Tongan chiefs have the least control of and influence on the daily life of their people. The only area where the aristocracy exerts any meaningful control at all is at the apex of the state structure: in Parliament, the Cabinet, the Privy Council, and to a diminishing degree, the bureaucracy, through royal patronage. This is their last remaining bastion of power. Their resistance against democracy is thus explained, and is entirely human: no one relinquishes their main sources of livelihood and power willingly.

Most of the factors that have contributed to the structural weakening of the aristocracy have also contributed to the growing independence,

democratization, and empowerment of the commoner class. Tonga's progressive absorption into the world economic and cultural system has supplied the means for the rise of the ordinary people. These means are rooted in the international system, and no tiny, local, endogamous group anywhere can command them by the mere fiat of constitutionally sanctioned right of birth. They can only be mastered by talent, training, and performance in the open, competitive marketplace. Here, the commoner class of Tonga has its greatest advantage. Constituting ninety-nine percent of the population, this class, by virtue of sheer numerical supremacy, commands the pool of talents needed for a modernizing society to develop and operate within an extremely complex international system. From this pool has come the call for a renewed national covenant. The call has come from the ranks of those on whom the country depends for its social, economic, and spiritual advancement, from the ranks of those who actually hold the strength of the nation.

Tongan society today has a vibrant, democratic culture, whose characteristics include an educated and increasingly informed population that exercises individual freedom of expression and association; a predominance of private and individual ownership of property used in a free market economy; an increasingly open system that allows for social mobility based on individual achievement; a mobile internationalized middle class that provides among other things intellectual and ideological leadership to social movements; a grassroots leadership that is no longer fettered by ancient constraints; a population of a traditional lower class that is now re-formed into a new, open class structure economically independent of the traditional system of patronage; a lively free press through which national and other issues are debated openly, and even heatedly, and through which alleged misconduct in high places is exposed fearlessly; a rapidly growing belief in the necessity for a popular and responsible form of government; and an established ruling order that has so far reacted in restrained ways to the rising challenge to its authority, and has made hesitant and tentative moves to engage in a kind of dialogue alien to its nature.

Although Tonga has an absolute monarchical form of government, its population has developed a democratic culture to the extent that commensurate changes in the political institutions are but a matter of time, because the walls of Jericho are already shaken.

In making these statements, I do not wish to write the aristocracy off—far from it. Like other indigenous institutions in the Pacific that have sur-

vived the trauma of drastic changes wrought by imperialism and neocolonialism over the last two hundred years, the Tongan aristocracy has shown a remarkable resilience. Despite its emasculation at the establishment of a new order in the nineteenth century, it still performs essential functions that have been associated with it for hundreds of years.

Like everything else, the aristocracy is changing, and there are signs of reinvigoration in its ranks. In general the current heirs to noble titles, together with their siblings, like other young people of their generation, are far better educated than their parental and grandparental generations. Like their peers in the commoner ranks, an increasing number of them are securing university qualifications and are earning their postings in the public sector through merit. A number of the younger generation are entering the private sector, sometimes in partnership with their commoner peers. With others in their generation, they have gone through the same rigor of training in the open marketplace of learning, and have emerged tried and tested. They seem to be more egalitarian in their attitudes than their forebears and may even be more favorably disposed toward an open and democratic system than their elders have understandably been.

In closing, I would like to quote the concluding part of a speech I gave in Tonga in 1992 on the same topic. This extract expresses a sentiment that perhaps most Tongans feel about their society. Despite our differences and confrontations, and we are a disputatious people like everyone else, we have a profound loyalty to our common heritage and to our identity as a single people who have traveled together for perhaps two thousand years or more, if New Zealand and American archaeologists are to be believed. We are all conscious that ours is a tiny community (of largish people nevertheless), and that we are at one of the crossroads of our history. At the present crossroad we have to find a route along which we will be able to continue seeding traces of memory for those who will come after us. We owe this to those who have gone before us, for the memory they have bequeathed.

What follows may find echoes in some other communities in our region. I use the first personal pronouns because I am now talking to myself.

Although the aristocracy will always be few in number, Tonga will continue to need from them far more than their social and economic contributions to our progress. Like their ancestors, they serve the nation in ways that no one

else can; and therein I believe lies their great and continuing importance. They are the foci of our culture and our identity as a single people, as well as being the signposts of our historical continuity as a nation. Our remembered past is inextricably bound up with the rising and falling fortunes of our leading lineages. And so has been the case with our documented history from the turn of the nineteenth century. We have traveled together with our aristocracy for over a thousand years, and their leadership has given us reasons to be proud of our history, our heritage, and of ourselves as a nation. We will still travel together with them, albeit along new and uncharted routes toward the end of this century and into the next millennium.

We still expect to see in our aristocracy, as in no other group in our society, the ideal qualities of our collective personality. In our hurly-burly, free-for-all, dog-eat-dog modern society, we look to them for such qualities in social interaction as civility, graciousness, kindness, and that calming aura of a unifying presence in our midst. This may explain why we get very disappointed whenever they behave as mere mortals, exhibiting the follies and foibles that are the lot of humanity in general. Perhaps we have been expecting too much from them. Nevertheless, they are part of us as we are part of them, and have always been so. And although developments in the past decades have brought us into confrontation with some of them, we as Tongans have maintained a sense of profound respect and an abiding affection for them. They also feel the same for us, despite our differences. We have an expression *'oku ou pahia 'ia koe* 'I am fed up with you', which we utter when we get exasperated with members of our own families. We never really mean it. That is why I have a certain degree of confidence that in the near future we will get together with our leaders and work out a new national consensus that will take us into the next century as a revitalized community, and a stronger, even more united people.

* * *

THIS PAPER is a very slightly revised version of a *Distinguished Lecture to the Association of Social Anthropologists in Oceania, at Kona, Hawai'i, in March 1993, and a 25th Anniversary Public Lecture at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, in April 1993.*

Note

1 Gifford provides a partial list of 75 chiefly titles (1929, 132–144). Other titles are mentioned elsewhere in the book, but others are not mentioned at all.

References

Gifford, A. W.

1929 *Tongan Society*. Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 61. Honolulu.
Bishop Museum.

Tonga, Kingdom of

1975 *Statistical Abstract*. Nuku'alofa.

Latukefu, S.

1975 *The Tongan Constitution: A Brief History to Celebrate Its Centenary*.
Nuku'alofa: Tonga Traditions Committee.