

## THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SUBJECT AS ETHNOGRAPHER: A NEGLECTED DIMENSION OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH

*by George E. Marcus*

This paper is intended as an appreciation of Professor Edward Norbeck's long-standing interest in and contributions to culture theory and the study of sociocultural change, especially in Japan. Appropriately, I will be concerned with the adaptations of the inhabitants of the Polynesian Kingdom of Tonga to nearly two centuries of contact with Euro-American culture. Although there are considerable differences between Japan and Tonga in social scale, history, and cultural organization, they are alike in having continually monitored and assimilated changing aspects of Western institutions, while preserving a distinctive cultural identity. In the case of Tonga, the creative adaptations that these islanders have continuously made to different periods of Western contact, through the development of a sophisticated understanding of Euro-American cultural behavior, has been both their major achievement and the source of fundamental modifications in their social and cultural organization, especially since the late nineteenth century when the Western-modeled constitutional monarchy of the Tupou dynasty was established.

Anthropological scholarship on Tonga has either underestimated or largely failed to comprehend the nature and effects of the indigenous response to contact in defining a distinctive, but hybrid, sociocultural system for modern Tonga. This failure, in part, has been a result of predominant anthropological interest either in explicitly reconstructing a purer, pre-contact cultural system from contemporary survivals and early European accounts (a major concern, in particular, of Polynesian studies), or in focusing upon certain elements of contemporary Tongan life as more basic, traditional, and, in some sense, more meaningful as codes and categories that organize experience, than other assimilated

---

George Marcus is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Rice University.

institutions, ideas, and everyday practices, reflecting Western influence. These concerns, underlying ethnographic inquiry, have thus directed attention to certain important aspects of Tongan society while neglecting the broader, hybrid framework of Tongan social and cultural experience for over a century and a half.

During this period, the Euro-American world has been the source of new ideas, institutions, and practices, many of which Tongans assimilated as an indistinguishable part of their own ways (*anga fakaTonga*; "Tongan culture") in contrast to Euro-American ways (*anga fakaPapālangi*; "Euro-American culture"). To preserve a distinct sense of cultural identity and difference from the source of emulation, the management of cultural boundaries, distinguishing "things Tongan" from "things *Papālangi*," became a major, continuing task for Tongans throughout the society. I will argue that the maintenance of such boundaries has involved Tongans in a self-conscious inquiry and reflection upon the nature and values of Western culture as well as the characteristics of Euro-American social behavior, through direct observations and the accumulation and assessment of information from Tongan travelers and Western visitors during different periods of contact. This inquiry has generated the equivalent of an ethnography in reverse, which although different in purpose and form from Western ethnographic investigation, has provided both practical knowledge, which Tongans can use in their management of face-to-face relations with Euro-Americans, as well as continually up-dated versions of Western culture, which have served as the actual, mediating models from which Tongans can in turn borrow or contrast themselves, in their acceptance and use of Western-derived institutions, conventions, and ideologies, such as government, commercial exchange, and Christianity.

Furthermore, this inquiry at the boundaries of Tongan society has developed a code for classification, conceptualization, and description, based on the contrast between Tongan and Euro-American practices, which has become a framework for Tongans to talk about the considerable post-contact variation in styles of social behavior among themselves. The persistent Tongan attention, in terms of the code, to the underlying bases and motivations of individual behavior in their own social relations is not characteristic of the largely unself-conscious and unreflective manner in which persons have traditionally oriented themselves to social contexts in Tongan (and more broadly, Polynesian) culture. As such the consciously articulated Tongan concern with their own relationships through the social activity of typifying some indigenous behavior as "*Papālangi*-like" has perhaps led to subtle changes in the organization of shared, but tacit, personal orientations to social

situations, on which the fundamental integration of Tongan social life as a distinctive cultural system has depended.

Because of severe limitations on space, I must leave to another paper a more ambitious analysis of the importance of systematic Tongan thought about *Papālangi* for modifications in intracultural Tongan social relations. In the remainder of this paper, I will document the long-term existence and basic characteristics of Tongan ethnographic inquiry. In a concluding section, I will discuss the broader theoretical significance of direct investigation, where appropriate, of the intellectual response to Western contact among the subjects of contemporary ethnographic research in anthropology.

#### INSTANCES OF A TONGAN ETHNOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATION OF *PAPĀLANGI* CULTURE—THEN AND NOW

Twenty-nine years after Captain Cook's third and final visit to Tonga in 1777, an English privateer, the *Port-au-Prince*, was captured by Tongans in the Ha'apai Islands (one of the three major groups of the Tongan archipelago), and most of its crew were killed. One survivor, William Mariner, lived for four years in Tonga (1806-1810) as an adopted kinsman of the then important chief, Fīnau 'Ulukālala. Following his escape and return to England, Mariner, a gifted natural observer and linguist, provided an account of his experiences and the nature of Tongan society at that time, which was compiled by Dr. John Martin in two volumes (Martin 1827). Not only do these volumes remain the most complete inside view of Tongan society by a European during the early period of contact, but they also are among the most vivid and interesting of Pacific traveler accounts, as well as being self-consciously and systematically ethnographic long before the advent of the method of fieldwork investigation in academic anthropology. Like modern ethnographies, Mariner's account is directed primarily toward describing indigenous customs and institutions, and neglects any systematic noting of a reciprocal interest or curiosity about Europeans on the part of the Tongan chiefs among whom Mariner lived. It is clear from scattered references in the account, however, that such an interest in understanding European behavior and institutions existed among Tongans. In one place in the account, Martin included a long, striking passage that explicitly concerns the interest of Tongans in *Papālangi* culture, and, in particular, the sophistication of Tongan interpretations derived from their own cultural premises. Because of its importance, this passage is quoted here in full (Martin 1827: vol. I, 210-214).

Note: Mariner was at a kava party in the Ha'apai Islands, engaged in casual conversation with Fīnau and other chiefs. The preparation and drinking of kava, made by mixing water and the ground root of the kava plant, are the focus of activity on both ceremonial and casual social occasions, during which commensality is important. In the following passage, a chief describes the experiences of another Tongan chief and his wife during a stay of two years in Botany Bay.

. . . The account they gave of the English customs at this place, and the treatment they at first met with, it may be worth while to relate. The first thing that he and his wife had to do, when they arrived at the governor's house, where they went to reside, was to sweep out a large court yard, and clean down a great pair of stairs. In vain they endeavoured to explain, that in their own country they were chiefs, and, being accustomed to be waited on, were quite unused to such employments. Their expostulations were taken no notice of, and work they must. At first their life was so uncomfortable, that they wished to die; no one seemed to protect them; all the houses were shut against them; if they saw any body eating, they were not invited to partake. Nothing was to be got without money, of which they could not comprehend the value, nor how this same money was to be obtained in any quantity. If they asked for it, nobody would give them any, unless they worked for it; and then it was so small in quantity, that they could not get with it one-tenth part of what they wanted. One day, whilst sauntering about, the chief fixed his eyes upon a cook's shop, and seeing several people enter, and others again coming out with victuals, he made sure that they were sharing out food, according to the old Tonga fashion; and in he went, glad enough of the occasion. After waiting some time with anxiety to be helped to his share, the master of the shop asked him what he wanted; and, being answered in an unknown language, straightway kicked him out, taking him for a thief, that only wanted an opportunity to steal. Thus, he said, even being a chief did not prevent him being used ill, for, when he told them he was a chief, they gave him to understand, that *money* made a man a chief. After a time, however, he acknowledged that he got better used, in proportion as he became acquainted with the customs and language. He expressed his astonishment at the perseverance with which the white people worked from morning till night, to get money; nor could he conceive how they were able to endure so much labour.

After having heard this account, Finow asked several questions respecting the nature of money; what is it made of?—is it like iron? can it be fashioned like iron into various useful instruments? if not, why cannot people procure what they want in the way of barter?—But where is money to be got?—if it be made, then every man ought to spend his time in making money, that when he has got plenty, he may be able afterwards to obtain whatever else he wants. In answer to the last observation, Mr. Mariner replied, that the material of which money was made was very scarce and difficult to be got, and that only chiefs and great men could procure readily a large quantity of it; and this either by being inheritors of plantations or houses, which they allowed others to have, for paying them so much tribute in money every year; or by their public services; or by paying small sums of money for things when they were in plenty, and afterwards letting others have them for larger sums, when they were scarce; and as to the lower classes of people, they worked hard, and got paid by their employers in small quantities of money, as the

reward of their labour, etc. That the king was the only person that was allowed to make (to coin) money, and that he put his mark upon all he made, that it might be known to be true; that no person could readily procure the material of which it was made, without paying money for it; and if contrary to the *taboo* of the king, he turned this material into money, he would scarcely have made as much as he had given for it. Mr. Mariner was then going on to show the convenience of money as a medium of exchange, when Filimóéátoo [the chief who related the experiences of the Tongans in Botany Bay] interrupted him, saying to Finow, I understand how it is:—money is less cumbersome than goods, and it is very convenient for a man to exchange away his goods for money; which at any other time, he can exchange again for the same or any other goods that he may want; whereas the goods themselves may perhaps spoil by keeping, (particularly if provisions), but the money he supposes would not spoil; and although it was of no true value itself, yet being scarce and difficult to be got without giving something useful and really valuable for it, it was imagined to be of value; and if every body considered it so, and would readily give their goods for it, he did not see but what it was of a sort of real value to all who possessed it, as long as their neighbours chose to take it in the same way. Mr. Mariner found he could not give a better explanation, he therefore told Filimóéátoo that his notion of the nature of money was a just one. After a pause of some length, Finow replied that the explanation did not satisfy him; he still thought it a foolish thing that people should place a value on money, when they either could not or would not apply it to any useful (physical) purpose. "If," said he, "it were made of iron, and could be converted into knives, axes, and chisels, there would be some sense in placing a value on it; but as it is, I see none. If a man," he added, "has more yams than he wants, let him exchange some of them away for pork or *gnatoo*. Certainly money is much handier, and more convenient, but then, as it will not spoil by being kept, people will store it up, instead of sharing it out, as a chief ought to do, and thus become selfish; whereas, if provisions were the principal property of a man, and it ought to be, as being both the most useful and the most necessary, he could not store it up, for it would spoil, and so he would be obliged either to exchange it away for something else useful, or share it out to his neighbours, and inferior chiefs and dependents, for nothing." He concluded by saying, "I understand now very well what it is that makes the Papalangi so selfish—it is this money!"

Over a century and a half after Mariner's stay in Tonga, I attended numerous kava parties during my fieldwork in a village of the Ha'apai Islands, where discussions occurred about the experiences of Tongan migrant laborers in New Zealand. Most of those present at such parties were of non-chiefly status or had only weak kinship associations with holders of chiefly positions. Some had been to New Zealand to work for a few months as unskilled workers in various businesses, and most others contemplated going to New Zealand in order to earn a lump sum of money, which might be invested in a new European-style house (a contemporary status marker) or in some other project to improve their local economic condition. During the early 1970s, there was a constant flow of temporary migrant workers to New Zealand, involving the populations of most of the inhabited islands.

For reasons not pertinent here, this flow by the mid-1970s had become more controlled by governmental regulation, which greatly curtailed the numbers of Tongans migrating.

Aside from considerable attention to practical information during these discussions about coping strategies in New Zealand—how to look for housing and employment; how to remit earnings; how to manage contacts with immigration officials and those in authority; and in general, who's who among the permanent Tongan community in cities such as Auckland—there was much talk about the behavior and activities of contemporary New Zealanders, especially in comparison with other kinds of *Papālangis*, such as Americans, whom Tongans came to know during and after World War II. This talk was founded on long-established, widely shared presuppositions concerning basic differences between *Papālangis* and Tongans. In general, *Papālangis* are seen as time conscious; single-minded and insensitive to what is happening around them in social situations; nervous and uncomfortable in small groups, whether among other *Papālangis* or among Tongans; and unpredictable in their exchanges of material things, except in transactions involving money. Of particular current interest in the discussions I witnessed were the nature of complex machine technology; the ways in which *Papālangis* scheduled both the working and non-working parts of their lives; the dullness of *Papālangi* food; the patterns of sharing among friends and kin in New Zealand (mainly Auckland) society; and the forms of entertainment among *Papālangis*. Those present during these discussions clearly recognized that, as an American, I could not be a particularly helpful informant on the nature of *Papālangi* society in New Zealand. However, I was asked to provide explanations and information about Americans to compare with what Tongans had observed among New Zealanders. Like Mariner, I found that my listeners could incisively clarify my comments and incorporate them into the context of discussion.

I tended not to be particularly concerned with answering Tongan questions. An embedded assumption of Western ethnography is that inquiry for the ethnographer is one-way rather than reciprocal. Conducting my own research under this assumption, I tended to view reciprocal Tongan inquiry as "noise"—as a form of sociability elicited from me, necessary to establish rapport so that I could eventually get on with my own research concerns. Ironically, anthropologists often complain of the unformativeness of potential informants, as a function of their lack of interest in the anthropologist's questions or his/her purposes. In the context of Tongan inquiry, I, as an ethnographer oriented toward understanding Tongan culture, was a similarly disappointing informant for them.

One interesting topic of discussion, worthy of brief attention, was the changes that Tongans were noticing in the nature of *Papālangi* family



relationships, especially the control and supervision of adolescent children by adults. Tongans had thought that both male and female children among *Papālangis* were closely tied to small family units well into their adolescent years (this is in contrast to the Tongan pattern where adolescent boys, called *talavou*, live in peer groups until they marry, although they also remain obedient, affiliated members of their respective family/household units). Tongans who had been abroad were puzzled by contemporary urban youths and hippies, apparently very similar to the Tongan *talavou*, but who, unlike *talavou*, were unpredictable, unrestrained, and did not seem to fit into any community structure. It seemed to some Tongans as if *Papālangis* were at least superficially becoming more like Tongans, and I witnessed discussions that were attempts to distinguish how the roaming *Papālangi* youths were in fact different from Tongan youths. The lack of obedience and respect on the part of the *Papālangi* youths toward parents and authorities was a much discussed and agreed upon difference.

The following commentary compares the characteristics of the previously mentioned two historically separated instances of reciprocal Tongan inquiry concerning *Papālangi* culture, concurrent with attempts by resident Euro-Americans to investigate Tongan culture.

### 1. Sources of information

In both instances, Tongan interpretations were derived from two sources of information: the first- or second-hand reporting of Tongan experiences in Euro-American societies and the information elicited directly from Euro-Americans who lived among Tongans. A third, different kind of source from which Tongans have interpreted *Papālangi* culture is the social behavior and demeanor of Euro-Americans resident in Tonga, such as beachcombers, missionaries, traders, and anthropologists, which Tongans have observed and discussed among themselves, and from which they have drawn inferences that in turn they have related to their knowledge of *Papālangis* from the other two sources. Hospitality has defined the contexts in which Tongans, as hosts to their foreign guests, have developed this third source of information. Observations over a period of time of the orientations of *Papālangis* to exchange, sharing, and eating in public have been the source of understandings and expectations about *Papālangi* behavior in kinds of social activity that have been of special importance in Tongan life. Together, these three sources of information have served during the period of contact as the basis from which Tongans have fashioned and refashioned their shared knowledge of the nature of *Papālangi* culture, and in so doing, have maintained sharp boundaries of cultural difference between themselves and the Euro-American world on which they have been dependent for innovations and models to emulate.

One might expect that with the long-term Tongan inquiry into *Papālangi* culture, migrants would be familiar with Euro-American society and would thus face an easier adjustment to life abroad than migrants from other cultures. But it appears that Tongans have had in the short run difficulties adjusting to life in New Zealand or the United States similar to those other migrant groups have had (in the long run, Tongans may in fact adjust more successfully than some other groups, at least partly because of prior orientations toward analyzing and imitating *Papālangi* practices). After all, the Tongan understanding of *Papālangis* has been created in an indigenous context, serving indigenous purposes such as cultural boundary maintenance. There is no necessary positive correlation between achieving an understanding of another culture and being able to live and communicate with ease in that culture. Fine ethnographies are commonly produced at home by fieldworkers who found intercultural communication troublesome during their entire period of residence among their subjects.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Locus of inquiry

In both instances, informal kava-drinking sessions were the focused situations where Tongans related new information about *Papālangi* culture, compared and integrated it with existing knowledge, and debated alternative interpretations. At times, the talk was quite reflective, and even Socratic, as in the Mariner example; at times, it took the form of stories and anecdotes with a definite intent to judge, either in praise, in condemnation, or from puzzlement, certain events and phenomena in the *Papālangi* world. The kava party is largely a male recreational activity in Tonga, and I am uncertain about the degree to which women have an interest or engage in such inquiry either in casual association among themselves or in chatting within groups of both sexes.

Female activities are extremely important in generating performances, reflecting a self-consciously preserved body of objectified, traditional knowledge, originating in pre-contact times and emblematic of a distinctive Tongan cultural identity amidst the processes of interpreting and assimilating Western influences. For example, mats and tapa cloth, important exchange items in traditional ceremonies, are produced and accumulated at the household level by females. Also, my impression is that females are generally far more animated at traditional events, such as funerals and feasts, than males, and as spectators, act as supervisors who do not hesitate to criticize improper procedures. Very impressionistically, I would suggest that while female activities have been at the core of the self-conscious preservation of tradition in Tonga through the management of a surviving modified ritual and exchange system, male activities have largely been concerned with the management of the



simultaneous processes of assimilation and boundary maintenance in relation to the *Papālangi* world. While this distinction is certainly gross, the male activity of casual kava drinking sessions has continuously been the most important locus of systematic reflection and discussion about *Papālangi* culture.

### 3. Distribution of inquiry

Mariner's account deals largely with the affairs of chiefs, with whom he most closely associated. Although concern with ranking has always been an important theme in Tongan social relations, Mariner's account is unclear about how rigid or caste-like were patterns of association among differently ranked people, below the highest, leading chiefs. Although all Tongans certainly knew of *Papālangis* during the early period of contact, access to information and sophisticated discussion about *Papālangis* was apparently restricted to chiefs. By the time of my residence in Tonga, following a century of reform and borrowing during which pre-contact rank distinctions were considerably weakened in everyday life, interest in *Papālangi* culture was widespread in the islands. While I encountered broad variation in the intensity of interest in and sophistication of thinking about the Euro-American world, I found that ordinary, everyday discussions in outer island villages sometimes matched the style of systematic, objective analysis exhibited by Mariner's chiefs.

One major difference between village-level ethnographers and indigenous elite ethnographers (i.e., locally educated commoners with employment in church and state) is that the former have not characteristically been self-conscious and verbally articulate about their own social relations and practices, other than with regard to the preserved and widely shared emblematic codes of objective knowledge, signifying Tongan tradition, such as the funeral, the kava ceremony, and ranked kinship roles, while the latter have been reflective and articulate both about *Papālangis* and about the dynamics of contemporary Tongan society as a complex mix and clustering of compromises resulting from long-term contact. These local thinkers, understanding themselves to be a product of the historic indigenous response to contact, were well acquainted with anthropological perspectives and clearly understood in our discussions what sort of knowledge a field-worker might be seeking. This knowledge would focus on "traditions," that is, the emblematic codes or routines that have been self-consciously preserved and maintained over generations as a tangible, focal manifestation of *anga fakaTonga*, to which all Tongans can point as a representation of distinctive cultural identity without any further reflection on these codes.

### 4. Purposes of inquiry

In both instances, Tongan discussions of *Papālangis* have been

conducted in the context of the continuing historic task of maintaining distinct cultural boundaries between Tongan culture and Euro-American culture. Since the beginning of contact, Tongans have been interested in defining themselves self-reflectively only in contrast to an elaborate and continually developing body of knowledge about *Papālangi*, based on an outward-directed, conscious consideration of *Papālangi* behavior and institutions rather than their own. In Mariner's time, most *Papālangi* customs and institutions, such as money, were new to Tongans and had to be interpreted. The underlying nature of *Papālangi* social behavior had already been established in contrast to Tongan customs, however, and this knowledge served as the framework for explaining specific observed or reported *Papālangi* practices, as Finau's remarks show. By the time of my fieldwork, the use of money as well as other influences, such as Christianity, had long been integrated into Tongan social and cultural experience. Yet virtually the same set of presuppositions, e.g., that the *Papālangi* are fundamentally selfish in their interpersonal behavior, has continued to shape ongoing Tongan inquiry.

Tongans have successfully assimilated *Papālangi* practices and institutions while still considering such imports distinctively their own. With reference to much of the clearly Western-derived part of their culture, Tongans express the attitude that they make superior and separate use of what they have borrowed. The Tongan ability to make such distinctions has been dependent on the continual outward-focused monitoring of the *Papālangi* world. In fact, the integration of *Papālangi* imports has brought considerable and profound internal change and intracultural variation in Tongan society. However, while most Tongans have been involved in processes of boundary maintenance, on one hand, and in participation in the traditional activities, signifying cultural continuity, on the other, they have not been self-reflective about these internal changes and the considerable diversity in outlook among themselves. The presupposition of a homogeneous, shared culture, as a background orientation in terms of which Tongans approach social interactions among themselves, is possible as long as *Papālangi* behavior patterns are observed, discussed, and typified in contrast to Tongan culture, the nature of which is not likewise subject to conscious consideration by Tongans.

In this regard, Tongan ethnographers share a perspective with Western ethnographers who focus their analytical attention outwardly, and methodologically assume a homogeneous, vaguely defined "Western" model with which to contrast interpretations of a culture, subject to elaborate analytical attention. Like Tongans, Western ethnographers are involved in a kind of cultural boundary maintenance. However, Western ethnographers engage in this task beyond their own societies and for

different cultural and historical reasons than do Tongans, who have conducted their ethnographic inquiry at home as *Papālangi* influences became an increasingly important part of their social and cultural environment during the nineteenth century.

While maintaining a set of presuppositions about the nature of *Papālangis* since the beginning of contact through the transmission of an oral tradition or folk history concerning post-contact events, Tongans in each succeeding generation have nonetheless been sensitive to differences and changes within the *Papālangi* world. Once Tongans were committed to assimilating *Papālangi* things, while not becoming like *Papālangis* as persons, it became important to understand changes among *Papālangis* as a constant probing and testing to revalidate notions about the underlying nature of *Papālangi* culture, thus establishing continuity in the important task of boundary maintenance.

This updating has made such presuppositions realistic and practical, having provided a basis for categorizing the different kinds of *Papālangis* Tongans have encountered. I was impressed by the ease with which Tongans could manage intercultural communication with visiting *Papālangis* once they could place them in a scheme of categories, relevant for different periods of contact, which typify *Papālangis* according to their origin and purpose in Tonga, e.g., in the contemporary period—American, New Zealander, Peace Corps, researcher, or tourist. In retrospect, Tongans have been more conscious and interested learners of *Papālangi* culture than *Papālangis* have been of Tongan culture. This more determined effort at cross-cultural understanding could only have worked to the comparative advantage of Tongans in their long experience of intercultural encounters with *Papālangis* at home and abroad, and in their success at preservation of control over processes of political and cultural change in their own society.

#### CONCLUSION

It is worth attempting to outline the broader implications of the underestimation or neglect in contemporary ethnographic investigations of the profound effects of indigenous responses to contact on cultural patterns and codes. Major theoretical frameworks in terms of which field data are analyzed and ethnographies written have been developed initially from the consideration of cases that were still isolated from Western contact and cultural influence (e.g., Levi-Strauss's structuralism) or of cases for which substantial Western influence had been systematically ignored in analysis (e.g., the well-known criticism of classic functionalist ethnographies in colonial Africa). Such general frameworks have directed inquiry to concerns with

cultures and societies as holistic, closed systems of ideas, symbols, and actions, homogeneously shared and, in underlying patterns and structures, distinct from Western cultural experience. In a recent, ambitious critique of the ethnographic enterprise, Sahlins (1976) has convincingly demonstrated that even classic frameworks informing ethnography have failed to capture deep-level structures or patterns in other cultures because of the distinctly Western pragmatic and utilitarian concerns embedded in previous inquiry, both in the questions asked about ethnographic subjects and in the manner of analyzing the resulting data. Far more definitively than earlier writers, Sahlins has argued that the job of anthropology is to see other cultures as whole systems, without appropriating their distinctive patterns by subtle or flagrant forms of ethnocentrism, underlying ethnographic analysis.

This is a unique, valuable, and long accepted goal for anthropology as a discipline, but one serious shortcoming of such a program is that it induces the neglect or underestimation of change through contact with the Euro-American world, when such contact, after all, has been a major event in most societies in which ethnographers have worked in the past, and continues to be even more important in the lives of people whom ethnographers continue to study.<sup>3</sup> Now it is understandable that a sharp contrast between their own world and that of their subjects is a useful, if not vital, methodological assumption for Euro-American ethnographers to accept, in order to establish clearly systematic cultural differences (just as, similarly, Tongan ethnography in the task of maintaining a distinct cultural identity has been founded on assuming a sharp contrast between Euro-Americans and Tongans).

With such presuppositions as an important aspect of frameworks underlying ethnographic inquiry, it is difficult for ethnographers to assess or even address the nature and degree of Western influence as a subject of direct investigation in many research situations. In much ethnography, instead of the direct and systematic investigation of the impact of Western influence, there is an assumption that, on the level of deep structure and organizing codes, such influences are superficial and have little intrinsic interest or meaning for those influenced. Thus, it is common for ethnography either to ignore possible profound effects of Western contact (often by the ethnographer explicitly seeking out the most isolated and thus traditional field site); to recognize the significance of contact without knowing precisely how to assess it at the level of codes and structures, for lack of a well-developed perspective concerning how hybrid cultural codes are created by indigenous thought and self-awareness; or most commonly, to minimize the effects of contact by the assumption that the more things apparently change the more they are essentially the same, in the interest of focusing on certain "traditional," and thus prior and more basic, phenomena.

In many cultures, or particular locations within cultures selected as field sites, these assumptions may be appropriate. But in cases where direct attention to indigenous responses to contact would reveal complex processes of adaptation and assimilation, then ethnography, guided by such assumptions, would likely be insensitive to the deep impact of contact and thus could not provide balanced, truly holistic accounts of the contemporary states of cultural and social systems long in contact with the Euro-American world.

Tonga is one rather special case where to minimize the significance of contact by not investigating the indigenous self-conscious intellectual response to Western models can clearly skew ethnographic accounts. Yet Tonga's experience of Euro-American expansion is not all that different from other cultures, and there are undoubtedly many other cases where, to varying degrees, Western contact has had a more significant deep-level influence than is generally recognized in ethnographic reporting. It is not that modern Tongans have become more like Euro-Americans and that anthropologists have missed this fact. Rather, I argue merely that major frameworks guiding ethnography have not focused the attention of investigators on complex indigenous processes of adaptation to contact and the associated hybridization of cultural codes and structures. The limited aim of this paper has been to suggest that attention to indigenous thinking about Euro-Americans and Euro-American things, where it has been rich in content as well as systematic, may be one way of incorporating the effects of contact in contemporary theoretical emphases, centered on modes of thought, indigenous cognition, and world views as a main concern in the construction of models of culture from ethnographic fieldwork.

## NOTES

1. *Papālangi* (which might be glossed "edge of the sky," suggesting the appearance of white men on the horizon) has been the category term for white people, commonly used in Tonga and other Polynesian societies. In this paper, I use the terms *Papālangi* and Euro-American interchangeably.

2. There is by now a large confessional literature on fieldwork by distinguished ethnographers, who have described in detail their problems of interaction. Also, specialists in the study of intercultural communication have often noted that anthropologists are among the least trained for prolonged residence and everyday communication in other cultures (see Brislin and Pederson 1976:154-158).

3. The study of acculturation was a strong theoretical interest in American anthropology, but was displaced by functionalist and structuralist paradigms, which, although providing a more coherent program for conducting ethnographic investigation, pushed interest in theories of change and the issue of culture contact to the margins of theoretical

discussions within anthropology. Bee (1974) provides an excellent account of past issues in the anthropological study of change as well as the importance and shortcomings of previous acculturation approaches.

#### REFERENCES CITED

Bee, Robert L.

1974 *Patterns and Processes*. New York: The Free Press.

Brislin, Richard W. and Paul Pedersen

1976 *Cross-Cultural Orientation Programs*. New York: Gardner Press.

Martin, John

1827 *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands in the South Pacific Ocean. With an Original Grammar and Vocabulary of Their Language. Compiled and Arranged from the Extensive Communications of Mr. William Mariner, Several Years Resident in Those Islands*. 2 vols. Third Edition. London: Hurst, Chance and Company.

Sahlins, Marshall

1976 *Culture and Practical Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.