

CHAPTER 6

Motivations for Contemporary Tongan Migration

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Migration can be seen as a process in which large numbers of individuals and families begin to write a new history for themselves. The initial act of leaving one's parents, family, neighbourhood, society and culture, and adopting a new life- and work-style is a crucial one. Only a small proportion of people who enter a migration process, or who have participated in major migration movements in the past, have had a clear perception of what they were going to encounter, or the extent to which their lives were going to change. While it is very likely that a large proportion of the individual migrants are the forerunners in a migration which will ultimately involve other members of their kin network, they are not usually able to foresee this at the time.

Leaving aside the effect of wars in creating large numbers of refugees, it must be recognised that throughout the world most large-scale migratory moves during the past twenty-five years have primarily been the movement of labour. In the 1960s internal migration in many of the then less developed countries in Latin America and in Asia and Africa was seen as a necessary function in the development process.¹ Little of this rural-urban migration was organised or controlled by governments. Most rural-urban migration was precipitated by rural poverty, landlessness, and to some extent was influenced by development decisions and aid or funding decisions made by developed countries and international organisations, for the new industrial development tended to be located in cities.

International migration has tended to be much more controlled, particularly by developed economies in Europe and by countries such as Australia and New Zealand. In the period immediately following the Second World War, both Australia and New Zealand found they needed

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more people to fill the gap left by the low birth rate prevailing during the economically depressed 1930s. Much of this labour was needed to undertake work in development projects and in the expansion of industries and manufacturing. Most of the people in the initial stages of the post-war migration programme were recruited and sponsored from Great Britain, and from the large numbers of northern European "Displaced Persons."² Considerable numbers of southern Europeans entered Australia unassisted by the Government, having been sponsored by family members resident in Australia.³ The "family reunion" immigration programme has continued as an important contribution to the total annual migrant intake in Australia, although it is subject to changes in government policy, and in recent years has been severely curtailed in favour of a more selective migration programme.

During the four decades since the end of the Second World War, emigration by Pacific Island people has been one of the major factors and influences in determining the economic, social, and political situation of the region.⁴ Bertram and Watters have identified a number of island states in Western Polynesia as "Mirab economies or societies" meaning that a society and its economy are shaped and affected by out-migration, by funding from the remittances of their overseas migrants, by aid from a variety of government and non-government agencies, and by the model of bureaucratic administration which has been developed, influenced by a British-derived colonial model. Income from external sources, that is, from remittances from expatriates and from aid donors, far exceeds that earned from internal sources, including exports.⁵ Bertram and Watters' work covers the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Kiribati, and Tuvalu, but their theory and model can also be applied to Western Samoa and to Tonga.

In Tonga, village-based subsistence agriculture is still an important contributor to the sustenance of much of the population. However, there are problems in relation to access to and availability of land suitable for subsistence agriculture, with a paradoxical situation of under-utilisation of land due to uncertainty about ownership and use rights, or loss of much of a village's younger male labour force due to internal or external migration.

Each island group in the South Pacific has a different migration story. As will be seen the Australian connection with Tonga is of long standing, but what is most relevant is the on-going effects of the New Zealand negotiation of short-term contractual agreements for labour power with Tonga and Samoa in the early 1970s. The contract terms were not long enough for workers any longer, so many Tongans and Samoans over-

stayed, consequently coming into conflict with the New Zealand immigration laws. In 1975 this led to dramatic confrontations between police and overstayers.⁶ This history encouraged some Tongans resident in New Zealand to move on to Australia, which became an increasingly desired destination for people seeking out-migration opportunities.

New Zealand offered a classic demonstration of the use of migrant labour as a secondary, or replacement force.⁷ Where industrial enterprises are somewhat moribund, without capital for re-structuring or the purchase of new technology, there is a tendency to employ migrant labour to replace local workers who have gone elsewhere seeking higher wages and better conditions. Conversely, an increase in some industries has led to the de-skilling of much of their workforce. Again, local workers may move elsewhere to be replaced by unskilled migrant workers.

The pattern in New Zealand and Australian industry has been similar. In Australia manufacturers of goods such as food items and cars, the demand for which is subject to seasonal or market fluctuations, tend to utilise casual and part-time labour, in preference to full-time permanent workers, and the workforce usually includes a large number of migrants and women, migrant and Australian-born. Enterprises in the service sector, characterised by low wages and difficult working hours or conditions, for example transport services, hospitals, hotels and restaurants, also utilise migrant labour. World-wide, clothing manufacturers and manufacturers of small items utilise the system of out-work whereby piece workers are paid very low rates for their sewing, or the assemblage or packaging of goods. In Australia large numbers of migrant women have been recruited for this work, including recent arrivals such as the Tongans and Cook Islanders.

TONGANS IN AUSTRALIA

The Tongan migrant presence up until 1985 tended to be almost invisible to the majority of the Australian population. They have not experienced much overt racism and hostility such as that offered to groups like the Indo-Chinese. This is due, in part, to the fact that they were not seen as permanent migrants and in part to the romantic view of the Pacific held by many Australians. In addition, most Tongans are committed to goals which encourage assent to a work ethic, making them valuable employees. Wages in Australia are much higher than in Tonga, so people accept the problems and sacrifices inherent in shift work, uncongenial factory or work environments, and even exploitation, as the working period is often considered or intended to be short. They may, during the early period of

their stay in Australia, accept below-average wages. Networking by Tongan migrants through church, family, or friendship contacts frequently enables the placement of workers and the communication of information about work availability, "better" jobs, opportunities for temporary work, and more acceptable wage levels.

From the 1950s to 1970, only a small number of Tongans had permanent residence in Australia. Most of these were women who had married Australians, following nursing or teacher training in Australia, or who had met and married Australians or other Europeans in Tonga. There were also a small number of wholly Tongan families resident in Australia, but they were scattered, and often had little contact with each other. During this period there was always a small group of Tongan students, royal, noble, and elite, attending school in Methodist church schools, particularly in Melbourne and Sydney.

There were strong sentimental links between Tongans and Australia because of the Australian Methodist Church's relationship with the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. Contact between missionary families from Australia and Tongan families was often maintained on the return of the missionaries to Australia. In the 1950s, the Australian Methodist Church sponsored Tongan women to train as nurses at a Church-operated hospital in Sydney, where they also maintained a hostel for Tongan students. Hence, during this period, many of those Tongans who sought permanent residence in Australia had church connections and support. The Methodist links were often an influential factor in choosing Australia as a place of residence, whether temporary or permanent, as the rate of Tongan migration increased from 1970.

The year 1970 can be counted as the beginning point of a steadier flow of Tongan immigrants, many of whom entered Australia following residence in Fiji or in New Zealand. In the early 1970s a small community of Pacific Islanders began a regular combined Methodist church service in central Sydney. In 1974 the Methodist Board of Missions in Australia and the Pacific Islander Methodist community, comprised mainly of Tongans, Samoans, Rotumans, and Fijians, sent a request to the Pacific Island churches for a Pacific Islander minister. This congregation continued to function as a united body until 1986, when ministers began to be appointed to work with congregations comprised solely of Tongans, or Samoans, or Fijians or Rotumans. The funds for the support of these ministers were raised by their respective communities. There are also a number of Tongan church congregations in cities on the eastern seaboard linked with Methodist-derived churches in Tonga and New Zealand, the Congregationalists, the Assemblies of God, the Mormons, and the Seventh Day Adventists, also have Pacific Islander congregations.

By 1975 the number of Tongan residents in Australia had grown considerably, and it has continued to increase from that year. This was largely due to the cessation of the contract worker scheme agreement between New Zealand and Tonga and Samoa, when Australia came to be seen as a possible source of employment. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, tourist visas were relatively easy to obtain for people from the Pacific, and the permanent Tongan population included legal residents and an increasing number of overstayers. The status of some of the latter was eventually legalised during Australian government amnesties in 1974, 1976, and 1980. In 1981 a small "permanent population" of Tongans (almost 1,500) was recorded in the Australian national census as resident in Sydney. This was the first time the Tongan community was counted separately from a category of residents originating in "Oceania." The figure is not an accurate record as numbers would have been recorded as being New Zealander in origin, and many overstayers encouraged their hosts not to include them in household enumeration. By 1985 the Tongans were classed by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs as an "emergent population." A small amount of welfare assistance was directed by this Department to the Tongan community to fund a part-time Tongan welfare worker in Sydney.

By the end of 1986 there were approximately 8,000 Tongans in Australia, with an estimated 6,000 resident in the Sydney metropolitan area.⁸ The major portion of the population is concentrated in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, with small communities in Canberra-Queanbeyan, Newcastle, and Wollongong. At least one third of this population is comprised of children and elderly relatives, including parents of non-working age. The Tongan communities in these cities, particularly those connected with major denominational church congregations, comprise large family networks. Members of these churches and kin networks also maintain additional formal and informal connections based on their village of origin, school attended in Tonga, *kava*-drinking groups, workplace, and, to a lesser extent, their residential location in Australia.

MIGRATION AND CONCEPTS OF THE FAMILY

In the past the aspect of love (*'ofa*) which encompassed the notion of love as "caring" (*'ofa*) underpinned the Tongan custom known as *fetokoni'aki*, the sharing of things, particularly of food, not just among family members but with those who requested it.⁹ This value is still incorporated in the ideology of the family in Tonga.¹⁰

The prevailing ideology of the family (*fāmilī*) is that it should function as a supportive self-improvement group. The family is the provider of

everything for the individual, both physically and emotionally. Members of a family are said to "belong to each other." They should operate in a spirit of mutual love, caring for each other. This is known as *fe'ofa'ofani* in Tongan. The Kingdom of Tonga, in the ideal, is the *fāmili* writ large. The word *kāinga* is now used less frequently for the kin group related to the individual through his or her maternal and paternal grandparents. *Fāmili* has come into more common use. Tongans frequently use terms such as "the nuclear family" and "the extended family," acquired from Social Studies classes in school and from the media, to differentiate between the two types of relations. Although disputes may occur among *kāinga* members over land, resources, inheritance, or marriage choices, or some members of one generation in a family may compete for the affection and loyalties of nieces and nephews, a united front is presented to the stranger: "In our *kāinga* we regard and treat everyone as the same."

One of the crucial factors in the acceptance by Tongans of overseas migration is the historical fact of the internal migration which has taken place for several generations, influenced by the Tongan commitment to the education of children. In the past, as in the present, people moved from Ha'apai, Vava'u, 'Eua, and from Tongatapu villages distant from Nuku'alofa, to enable their children to attend church or government high schools in the capital.¹¹ Husbands and wives accepted long periods of separation from each other, or from their homes, in order to give their children what they considered was the best start in life. There is now a high Tongan literacy rate, but there is very little waged work available for school leavers annually entering the employment market. A contributing factor is that the education system has not necessarily given the children skills which would make them employable in the context of a developing economy. There is a limited amount of formal training offered in trades such as mechanics and carpentry or in business skills. The tight job market, and a very competitive tertiary scholarship system, has influenced many families with young children to consider emigrating in order to give the children a better knowledge of English and a "head start" in the Tongan education system on their hypothetical return.

Tongans enjoy children and the notion of large families. Informal adoption of children by close relatives is common. The view that emigration is a likely option for some young family members and the fact that remittances from relatives living abroad help with the costs of a child's support and education have weakened any commitment by many Tongans to family planning. In discussions of family life and the responsibilities of parents and children, many respondents, particularly members of the churches based on Methodism, such as the Free Wesleyan Church, the Free Church of Tonga,

the Church of Tonga, and the Tokaikolo Fellowship, invariably linked their ideas on family to ideas of religious duty as did members of the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints (the Mormons). Replies from respondents frequently matched almost word for word, suggesting that religious teaching on the concepts of the family have been well absorbed. Justifying values and notions on the concept of the family have been abstracted from the Bible and from Christian teaching. Children are said to be "a demonstration of the love of God," and are "a burden for the parents to carry in love." In turn, the children are expected to demonstrate their love and care for their parents.

A few young respondents expressed mild resentment at the expectations of their family and of society in relation to their role and responsibilities within the family network, particularly the economic contributions they were expected to make. They were frequently resentful about the assumption made by their parents of their obligations to institutions outside the family, particularly the major financial contributions elicited from adult church members through the annual Misinale collections in the Free Wesleyan Church, Free Church of Tonga, and Church of Tonga, and the annual collection of the Roman Catholic Church. Major contributions to these collections are also given by church members resident overseas, to supplement family giving at the local level.¹² Overseas Tongan churches also make their own annual collection, which is sent back to Tonga to support the home church. However, the majority of informants considered that parents had a dual responsibility to the church and to the family, and that the prosperity of the latter depended on the keeping of the former.

Both Walsh and Marcus¹³ have documented the importance of the family and of kin networks in Tongan life. In a discussion of internal migration in Tonga in the 1960s Walsh emphasised that the individual "belongs more to his family than to a place."¹⁴ Family and traditional values (often one and the same) motivate and direct much of an individual's life, whether the person is a resident in town or village. This process of kin support of an internal migrant still continues, and is perhaps one of the reasons that crime against property has not dramatically increased in spite of the high rate of urbanisation, for few individuals resident in urban areas in Tonga live outside a household arrangement.

The links of a descendant of an internal migrant with the village of his or her parents' or grandparents' origin are often still quite emotionally strong. Many Tongans, although one or two generations distant from residence in a village located outside Nuku'alofa, will still identify themselves by the island group or the district of Tongatapu from which their families originated. For many internal migrants Nuku'alofa was the residence of

convenience, where an individual or a number of members of a family had lived in order to undertake waged work or schooling. Availability of town allotments was also a factor in attracting migrants,¹⁵ and the very limited amount of infrastructure improvement due to a lack of development funding being expended on island regions other than Tongatapu motivated people from these groups to move to the capital.¹⁶ The devastation of homes and farmlands caused by cyclones in 1975 and 1982 have precipitated much of the migration from Ha'apai during the past decade.

In the papers published in 1975 and 1981, Marcus concentrated his discussion on the functioning of élite and middle-class family networks which had links between Tonga, New Zealand, and the U.S.A.¹⁷ The use by this group of overseas educational opportunities and overseas links in order to broaden the life and earning opportunities for members of the younger generation has been increasingly emulated during the past decade by families in the prosperous farmer class, and the commoner élite, whose members are well-placed in the bureaucracy, in the Free Wesleyan Church, or as business entrepreneurs. From observation, the functioning of these "estates" and "networks" appears to be informal rather than formal.

MOTIVATIONS FOR TONGAN EMIGRATION

The reason most commonly given by family members remaining in Tonga or offered by those who have emigrated to Sydney was that the move overseas was motivated by the desire to "help the family." The majority of household members interviewed in Tonga in 1986 had at least two members of their immediate family overseas (the largest number for a household was six). These family members were resident in Australia, the United States of America (mainly in Hawai'i, Utah, California, Arizona) and in New Zealand.

While Tongans living in Sydney stressed that they had moved because they needed work, or were landless, or had felt oppressed by the operation of the social system in Tonga, including the sharp class differentiation between nobles and commoners, their relatives in Tonga spoke of the migration of family members as motivated by the desire to "help the family," "improve the standard of living of the family," "contribute to family pride," "upgrade the status of the family," "to gain more respect for the family," "to enable the family to increase its giving to church and village projects," "to demonstrate the love of the children for their parents," or "to assist the development of the Kingdom." The emigration of Tongans, while frequently motivated by notions of assisting the family materially, is also influenced by another important principle of Tonga life, that of the individual choosing a course of action as an independent person: "to please oneself" (a Tongan expression).

In 1987, almost eighty-six percent of a sample of seventy-five respondents interviewed in Tonga stated that family members such as sisters, brothers, husbands, daughters and sons, had emigrated in order "to help the family." They had obtained insufficient income in Tonga to enable them to do this to their satisfaction. The remaining people in this sample group stated that relatives had left because of their desire "to see the world," or for education, or for holidays. This group gave no economic reason for the departure of family members; that is, they considered their household to be self-sufficient. Nevertheless, a number of these respondents received remittances, particularly for special occasions.

Many men in Tonga today have reached sixty years of age without experiencing any regular or long term paid employment, while others have had no paid employment of any kind.¹⁸ It is not unusual to find that a job overseas is the first waged labour a man or a woman has performed since leaving school. A number of those who had left Tonga seeking "better paid work" had been employed in the Tongan Public Service, and included people who were formerly clerks, teachers, policemen, nurses, soldiers, technicians, and tradesmen.

There are paradoxes in the Tongan commitment to "tradition." The desire and pressure to conform to traditional values appears to be strong, particularly on occasions such as the celebrations and funerals of nobility. At these times people resident in the villages and hamlets on the noble's estate will provide food, mats, painted lengths of bark cloth (*ngatu*), and other tributes in their role as the symbolic family of the noble (*kāinga*). However, what sometimes seems to be a great devotion by commoners to their traditional obligations may conceal a considerable amount of self-interest. A client known and seen to be dedicated to serving a noble estate-holder might hope to be rewarded with a sympathetic response when he wants land or assistance in some other matter. I found many Tongans in Australia expressed an unprompted resentment of the domination of society and resources by the nobility and the élite. There was less discussion of class issues in Tonga itself by respondents, but this is not surprising, in that the Sydney residents felt freer to express their opinion on this issue. In addition, many of the household heads whom I interviewed in Tonga were middle-aged and somewhat conservative in their views.

The perception of many Tongan commoners is that there are three ways they can circumvent the domination of the nobility and non-noble élite in Tongan society. One way has been by the encouragement and support of family members to obtain post-secondary education to enable them to become upwardly mobile and penetrate the perceived hold by the noble and non-noble élite on jobs in the bureaucracy. Government

jobs provide secure incomes, and some power, through access to decision-making. Some higher echelon public servants are able to utilise their guaranteed income as a basis for expansion of business interests, including the production of cash crops for export. Not only do members of the élite employed in government have financial resources, enabling them to obtain substantial loan funding from the Tongan Development Bank, they also have a network of contacts to enable them to confidently deal with applications for business and export licences, etc. They may also have a spouse engaged in business enterprises or waged work and thus earning an income which enables risk-taking in projects requiring loans.

Out-migration for post-secondary training or to widen job opportunities was available in the period 1950–1975, but for only a relatively small group of people. Favoured occupations for men were the practice of medicine, teaching, administration, trades, and the Christian ministry, with nursing and teaching favoured for women. The number of scholarships sponsored by the Government, the churches, and through aid agreements with foreign governments, has increased, as has the possible range of occupations. Qualifications gained by nurses and teachers in Tonga are not accepted as sufficient for employment in these occupations in Australia, but would enable the holders to gain entry into up-grading or other educational programmes.

The second way for commoners to circumvent domination by the financial and political élite of Tonga is through the temporary migration of some members of a family in order to amass resources which can be used to improve or develop family enterprises in Tonga. If the migrant is married and able (and willing) to shift his whole family, the move is usually justified by a belief that the children will be advantaged by attendance at an English language school. Single men and women (employed and unemployed in Tonga) and deserted wives have also taken up opportunities for short-term wage earning overseas. They are usually funded and sponsored by relatives already resident overseas, who give them accommodations and may help them get work. Women who are qualified teachers or nurses are taking unskilled factory work or work as nurses' aides, cleaners, or fruitpickers, in order to fulfill short-term earning goals. In Australia only a small number of Tongan men and women have obtained white collar work or are in professional occupations as yet. The possibility of extending their opportunities to meet potential marriage partners, whether Tongan or European, has also become an increasingly important motivator for the migration of single women. Short-term stays may be from three months to two years, depending on a person's success in negotiating and extending a visitor's visa, or on their deciding to remain as an illegal overstayer.

The third way to overcome domination by the Tongan élite is to make a permanent migratory move, accepting the possibility that there may be no permanent return to Tonga. Many of the people who see themselves as sojourners will in fact not return, particularly if they can obtain residence rights in their new country. They may revise their future plans, deciding to remain in Australia until a child finishes secondary or tertiary education, or until they themselves amass sufficient savings to begin a small business in Tonga. They may return to Tonga for holidays on a regular basis, and work to recruit other members of their immediate and extended families to join them in Australia.

THE CUSTODIAN/BROKER AND THE FAMILY NETWORKS

What is now in place is an invisible trapezoid-shaped movement across the Pacific. People, money, goods, ideas, and influences, are in motion virtually all the time. The lines run to and from Tonga, with the main connection points located at Apia (Western Samoa), Pago Pago (American Samoa), Honolulu (Hawai'i), Los Angeles and San Diego (California), and Salt Lake City (Utah). There are also considerable numbers of Tongans in cities and towns in Texas and Arizona. In the southern Pacific the connection points are located in New Zealand, at Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, with populations in most of the provincial cities, and in Australia in the capital cities and provincial towns on the eastern seaboard.

Key individual members of these family networks can be found in Tonga, and in Tongan communities abroad. These individuals are important in the family decision-making process which can affect the movements of some family members.

The facilitator, or clearing-house as it were, for decisions and money movements is frequently located in Tonga, resident in Nuku'alofa. This person is likely to have had a higher education, and may have business expertise, with a sound knowledge of how arrangements can be made for travel, for banking, for importing and exporting goods. Overseas, help is often sought from Tongan travel agents, church ministers, or people with some experience of the host society and in handling transactions, to assist in moving money or people. Many of the arrangements are *ad hoc* because the movement of people to other countries depends on visa allocation, and on the financial resources of a family at the time a decision needs to be made.

These key members often have custodianship of family property and land in Tonga. They may be compensated for this custodianship, or for the

care of aged parents remaining in Tonga, by substantial gifts from the members living abroad. However, on the whole, the duty is usually more burdensome than profitable. The intermediary's role may involve difficult negotiations or involve time spent in dealing with remittances on behalf of other family members. For example, money may not be sent to a wife by a husband living abroad, but through the agency of the husband's brother or sister, in order that they might ensure the money is spent as the husband wishes.

The work of the custodian/broker in a migrant community can be quite onerous. Some of these people have developed their family helping role into financially rewarding work as a full-time broker for members of the Tongan community, and operate as tax or travel agents. Others have utilised their experience as intermediary between Tongans and the host community to enter the host country's bureaucracy. Others have moved from informal leadership roles to formal ones, such as becoming full-time, unordained church ministers, giving their brokerage role an extra dimension. The notion of a cultural arbiter or broker is well accepted by Tongans. However, the broker is vulnerable to criticisms such as "getting above themselves," "conceited," "showing off," "flying high," or even to accusations of dishonesty and of obtaining too many advantages from their role.

Many "family estates" have been formalised as business enterprises in Tonga in which a number of members of one family, usually siblings or parents and children, are involved and employed. These enterprises may have branches in overseas countries, usually located in a neighbourhood in which numbers of Tongans reside. They usually operate businesses which supply goods and services, such as travel agents, purveyors of vegetables such as yams and taro, and other food lines sought by immigrant Pacific Islanders. Alternatively, a relative in an overseas country will be the chief contact to ensure that the owners of a business in Tonga regularly receive supplies of parts, equipment, second-hand clothing, etc. Tongan businessmen with enterprises in overseas countries will usually keep a network operating whereby they will place relatives or fellow villagers in the business when the newcomers arrive from Tonga. People in managerial or supervisory positions will also act as "gatekeepers" for the placement of new migrants. It is quite likely that in any year a number of family estates will be created by sections of Tongan family networks when a business enterprise is formally established which draws on capital and skills from among members of an extended family.

Children tend to be dealt with somewhat arbitrarily (to European eyes) in the family networks. Small children may be sent as companions to elderly grandparents living abroad, or are returned to grandparents, or

aunts, or other relatives in Tonga for long-term care. Nieces and nephews are sent abroad to their parents' siblings, to enable them to attend school. These movements often seem to occur on impulse; for example, someone is returning to Tonga or to the migrant's host country and it is decided that a child should accompany them.

One important area of decision-making may involve the need for an increased investment in the education of younger family members. The number of scholarships available in Tonga for tertiary education abroad is limited, and they may be tied to specific degrees and government departments. While investment in overseas tertiary education may be considered as likely to contribute to the increased prestige and eventual affluence of at least a section of the family, this is not the sole motivation. The personality of the individual and of the individual's parents are important. There will be more cooperation and help given if the young relative is particularly well-regarded and is clearly hardworking. Members of the *kāinga* of both the parents may be called on to contribute towards assisting a young man or woman to study overseas, without any assurance of an immediate return. As the young people of one household, or section of a kin network, complete their education, it is not unusual to find that their parents have assumed responsibility for younger nieces, nephews, and cousins, and that the educated, employed senior cousin will be expected to contribute to their education, or to other projects which will benefit members of the kin set. This expectation of some sort of repayment can place an undue burden on educated and employed young people, for they are frequently expected to contribute financially, physically, and emotionally to maintain at least some of their close kin, particularly parents and brothers and sisters. It is considered shameful not to assist, or offer to assist, close relatives when this help is requested or appears necessary.

The obverse of helping the "good" young members of a family is the view that residence overseas can be an educational and reforming experience. "Difficult" young men—unemployed, bored with village life, perhaps falling in love unsuitably, or getting into trouble occasionally with the police over drunkenness, fights, or for making illegal home-brewed "beer"—will be offered the opportunity to leave Tonga. While they may be sponsored by relatives at home and in the destination abroad, many of these young men keep well away from the activities of the Tongan community. Some of them reform, settle down, perhaps get married, and regularly send remittances home. Others who get into trouble in their new place of residence may find themselves reported to the immigration authorities as overstayers and deported.

WHO GOES? WHO STAYS?

The prevailing ideology of the family in Tonga as a supportive, self-improvement group, in which members are motivated by notions of filial piety and filial duty, while useful as a means of social and political control, is now being utilised by working and middle class commoners as a rationalisation for out-migration, whether temporary or permanent. It is simplistic to say that the motivation for a great deal of Tongan out-migration is the desire for higher incomes and the acquisition of goods, although this is how it is regarded by many members of the Tongan élite. They often have an equally simplistic solution. Ignoring facts such as landlessness, or mal-distribution of land resources, and the large numbers of young people who annually reach the age of fifteen without the prospect of future paid employment, they are likely to state: "All Tonga needs to prosper is for the farmers to work harder."

Many of the people who are electing to remain in Tonga are élite bureaucrats (often with business or farming interests), small-scale and large-scale entrepreneurs and manufacturers, prosperous farmers, and members of noble families. In discussions with senior bureaucrats and with members of the Tongan élite, some have stated that commentators such as myself take too gloomy a view of Tongan out-migration. They point out that it is a voluntary act, one which aims for self- and family improvement. Many of this group claim that people do not *have* to go, that industrious farmers would prosper in time, and that young people with no prospect of paid employment should return to the farm, or to fishing, in order to support themselves. This argument ignores the vagaries of climate and the uncertainties of the internal and export agricultural markets. It also ignores the fact that Tonga is a cash economy in which exchanges in kind for self-maintenance and the economic support of members of an extended family are now virtually non-existent. These exchanges of food and other items among family members have, to some extent, been replaced by the sending of remittances and goods from overseas, some of which are repaid with gifts of Tongan foods and with artifacts, such as mats and painted bark-cloth.

The proponents of the argument that people migrate solely from personal preference, or because they are motivated by acquisitiveness and a desire for self-improvement, tend to ignore the benefits of migration to the Tongan economy through the receipt of remittances. These ensure healthy monetary reserves in Tonga, offsetting imbalances in the area of exports and imports. Remittances enable a considerable number of people to stay in place, to continue to enjoy living in the Kingdom. Remittances are the supplement to the incomes of fishermen and farmers,

the surety of the payment of school fees, providing much of the finance for church building programmes. They also supply the means to improve family homes and village amenities. They function as a social welfare system supporting the aged. Many families who are actively farming depend on sizeable contributions from absent members to improve plants and to increase their cropping capacities. Many families in Tonga have electricity, a telephone, and even a video recorder, thanks to the generosity and hard work of sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and cousins living abroad.

It is true that migration can be seen as a pragmatic response by households and extended families to the need to obtain something more than survival income utilising family labour resources. But for many families and households migration has exacted a great cost in terms of emotional and cultural loss. According to family members remaining in Tonga and resident in the sample of seventy-five households surveyed in 1986, only about 20 percent of the emigrants from those households and families are likely to return to live permanently in Tonga. About 15 percent had returned for holidays since first leaving Tonga. About 10 percent of family members still resident in Tonga, particularly parents of emigrant children, had visited their children or close relatives overseas.

The chain migration process in kin networks is particularly noticeable in the case of the Tongan-American families, some of who emigrated a generation ago. The cost of returning to Tonga for holidays for a family group is very high. In addition, if family members do return to Tonga for a visit, they are expected to bring with them a substantial cash gift and goods. Those family members who had emigrated to America were less likely to return permanently to live in Tonga, but were more likely to encourage the remaining members of the family to emigrate and join them. Familial ties are therefore becoming a major dislodging force. Direct moves from a village residence to an American city are becoming common, causing a noticeable abandonment of family homes and of land in villages. Brothers and sisters of the emigrants and their children are encouraged to make the move in order to ensure their future care and the proper performance of funeral and post-death customs. The death and burial overseas of family members, particularly parents, spouses, and children, more or less ensures that there will be a group of kin permanently residing abroad. The attractive pull of the home community may lessen over time, but not the emotional power of the family, or the emotive power of Tongan identity and loyalties.

Family needs and loyalties are being used as a justification for out-migration by Tongans, while the very act and effect of this out-migration is causing hardship for many nuclear family and extended family units in

Tonga. As in all migratory movements of labour world-wide, undue hardship is being experienced by those who remain at home: women, children, and, to some extent, elderly parents. In many families the wife and children who remain in Tonga have experienced long periods of separation from the husband and father; separation periods of seven to ten years are not uncommon. Desertion of wives and children in favour of beginning a new family unit in the host country is also not uncommon, particularly if the male migrant has not succeeded in obtaining a residence visa. In such cases, if the migrant leaves the host country he will not be able to return. Marriage to a citizen of the host country will enable the migrant to obtain residence rights, but this may mean, at the least, cutting the ties with his former wife. These situations have precipitated emigration by deserted wives who may have few resources on which to draw in Tonga to support themselves and their children. Many of these women say they feel ashamed to ask brothers or parents for long-term support. Many children are then separated from both parents, left in Tonga in the care of the mother's or father's relatives, or because they have been returned to Tonga, or have been left in Tonga to be cared for by relatives. Their return to Tonga may have been due to the disappointment of the parents with the children's non-achievement in a new school system, or concern over the loss of language and cultural identity, or concern over pressure on the children to conform to the behaviour of the peer group in the new society. There have also been clashes with host-country government social welfare agencies over the perceived mistreatment of children by parents. The parents arraigned for beating their children resent what they consider is outside interference in their "right" to discipline their offspring.

The majority of respondents in Tonga stressed how much they missed the companionship of family members living abroad, but it was felt that this sacrifice was worthwhile for both the migrant and their family. It was considered that the people living abroad could "help the family so much more than they could previously." While some family members in Tonga were aware of the fact that increased family prosperity was bought at some cost to the migrant, and to the social fabric in Tonga, they saw little alternative to the continuation of migration. Many of the migrants in Sydney are aware of the total price which they are paying for their improved standard of living and their increased ability to assist their families; others are not. Most philosophically accept their exile from Tonga, work at maintaining their cultural identity, and are generous donors to village, school, church, and national causes in Tonga. They talk of return "perhaps in a few years." Some use this belief in the short duration of their stay to explain why they are not worried too greatly about the possible loss of cultural

identity or language among their Australian-born children. They feel this lack will be remedied on their return home to Tonga, not visualising the possible conflicts when adolescents are returned to a different society without a good knowledge of the language, and possibly without a desire to identify with the home culture and mores.

Others are consciously attempting to adjust their child-rearing patterns in order to minimise clashes with their children and with members of the host society due to cultural differences. There is now an increase in the number of Tongan-Tongan marriages in the Australian migrant community, in preference to Tongan-Australian marriages. This is partly due to the increase in the number of kin networks now resident in Australia, with management of the affairs of younger people being more closely supervised or undertaken by their familial elders. However, there is a high proportion of single men in the Australian Tongan community. Some of this group have contracted *de facto* marriages with Australian women in order to obtain residence rights.

I believe there is a greater possibility of permanent return by members of the Tongan communities living in New Zealand and in Australia than by those living in mainland U.S.A. Many migrants would like to exercise options of split residency between Tonga and Australia, or New Zealand, enabling them to reside in Tonga, but visit Australia or New Zealand to earn capital from time to time. This option is probably only available to those already in the migration process, and who have obtained permanent resident visas in their host countries. A significant number of Tongan men with residence rights in New Zealand are now living and working in Australia with the short term goal of earning enough to assist in the purchase of a house in New Zealand. The Australian government's immigration policy has become more restrictive in recent years, and there is little indication of an intention to ease entry and residence requirements. The Australian government has also resolutely avoided commitment to ideas of "guest worker" contracts. The New Zealand government reviewed its options in early 1987, having been surprised by the large response to the temporary innovation of visa-free entry by Tongans, Samoans, and Fijians.

It has to be recognised that those leaving Tonga are not just seeking personal and family economic goals, but are expressing the belief that they cannot achieve even relatively modest aims in Tonga, such as improved housing or even a clean water supply, without seeking to obtain money from outside the local economy. The Tongan Five Year Development Plans have given only passing attention to the pressing problems of low wage levels, unemployment, and the need for an equitable reorganisation of land distribution. Wage levels in Tonga are very

low and appear to be based on an assumption that the worker has family support and access to land on which to grow subsistence crops. This assumption is not correct, particularly in view of the fact that most of the employed members of the population are concentrated in Nuku'alofa, although they may have rights to use land located elsewhere in other island groups. The Tongan government has not tacitly acknowledged the importance of the migrants' remittances to the Tongan economy, nor has it publicly undertaken any serious negotiation with governments in New Zealand and Australia regarding the status of their emigrés.

The Tongan government's decision-making process has moved slowly in response to what are actually very modest desires on the part of Tongans for life improvement, particularly in the island groups away from Tongatapu. Many of the large-scale development choices which are being made seem to be favouring noble and élite developers who hope to profit from a hypothetically increasing tourist trade.¹⁹ There are jobs being generated by the encouragement of local and foreign investment in industrial enterprises, but the wage levels are often exploitative. Few Tongans want wholesale modernisation and it is ironic that the government's slowness of response has precipitated the migration of families to cope with life in cities in advanced capitalist societies such as the United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand.

The Tongan commoners' commitment to the family as a source and motivator of quality of life improvement is exacting an unacknowledged cost economically, socially, and culturally. The values of church and state, which united "tradition" with a Protestant work ethic, emphasising the individual's duty to the family and to the Kingdom, have been well absorbed. However, social relations are inevitably altering. Traditional values implicit in *fetokoni'aki*, which primarily involved the sharing of food within the *kāinga*, are being transmuted into beliefs that love and duty are primarily expressed by the giving of cash. Emigration is seen by many as the only way to attempt to amass large amounts of capital. There is still great deference offered to "tradition" in Tonga and among Tongans overseas. It seems unlikely that the invocation and enactment of tradition as a formula to contain change in social relationships and in social roles and behaviour will be effective against the inexorable influence of the cash nexus.

NOTES

¹ See Todaro 1976, 1.

² Between 1947 and 1961, 811,000 males and 661,000 females migrated to Australia, a total of 1,472,000. This includes 171,000 "displaced persons" who entered Australia between 1949 and 1951. See Borrie and Spencer 1965, 16-17.

³ Collins 1988, 20–24; see also Birrell and Birrell 1987, 51–58.

⁴ Cf. Watters 1987, 35.

⁵ Bertram and Watters 1985.

⁶ See de Bres and Campbell 1975.

⁷ Cf. Gibson 1982.

⁸ This figure is a “guesstimate” based on estimates by church leaders in Sydney given during interviews with the author in 1985. The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, which established a Sydney Parish in January 1986 with a full-time Tongan minister and thirteen congregations, had at that time approximately 2,000 members and adherents. There were an estimated 500–700 members and adherents of the Roman Catholic Church, and 1,000 people connected with the Tokaikolo Fellowship, the Free Church of Tonga, and the Church of Tonga. Other Tongan congregations exist in the Assemblies of God and Seventh Day Adventist churches. There were also a considerable number of people not maintaining church connections for various reasons or not identifying themselves with the Tongan population.

⁹ Cf. Kavaliku 1977.

¹⁰ See Kaeppler 1971 and Marcus 1975 for a full discussion of kinship categories and ranking within them.

¹¹ Cf. Dillon 1983, 51, 52.

¹² The Misinale collection has had an extraordinary history. See Bollard 1975 for a discussion of how and why it began.

¹³ Walsh 1969; Marcus 1975, 1980, 1981.

¹⁴ Walsh 1969, 97.

¹⁵ See Dillon 1983.

¹⁶ Cf. Sevele 1973.

¹⁷ Marcus 1975, 1981.

¹⁸ Some older men interviewed who gave their occupation as “farmer” had worked for wages during World War II, or had worked during a long stay in town during the education of their children. One or two, while resident in Nuku’alofa, had taken up occupations in the informal sector, making artifacts for tourists and resuming full time farming on the completion of their children’s secondary education.

¹⁹ The Tongan Development Bank encourages development and the improvement of small-scale farming and fishing and other enterprises by a well-administered programme. Larger loans for similar purposes, but on a larger scale, say for boat building, may be funded by foreign aid, the administration of which is handled by the Central Planning Department.