CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

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PROBLEM 1 *How does anthropology contribute to our understanding of both the similarity and the diversity in people's ways of life?*

INTRODUCTION
Why Can't They Be More Like Us?

All human beings depend on what anthropologists call **culture**. Culture is the way people collectively organize their lives, think about the way in which they live, and act out their lives with others. Like language, culture is an essential attribute of humanness.

Anthropology is about similarity and difference—and how we need to understand and act on both. A fundamental idea in modern anthropology is that all cultures are different and that this difference is the cause of the wonderful variety of human ways of life. But we also recognize that a fundamental similarity underlies the differences. We are all part of the same species, and we all face similar challenges as we make our way in the world.

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In anthropology, the description of specific human cultures is called **ethnography**. Ethnography logically comes before **ethnology**, which is the comparison of diverse human ways of life in search of explanations for how people both differ and are the same. The chapters in this book are examples of ethnography. As readers think about them and start to compare and come to conclusions about them, they are beginning to generate their own ethnologies.

Today, as in the past, people live in different kinds of environments; obtain food, shelter, and companionship in different ways; speak different languages; and use different systems for recording and transmitting what they have learned. They also make different rules for ensuring fairness and righting wrongs, and they perceive beauty and ugliness, as well as courtesy and rudeness, in sometimes dramatically different ways. Diversity is something all human beings have in common.

Sometimes it seems that diversity is a barrier to cooperation, understanding, and harmony among different people. But one thing anthropologists have learned from past research is that people who may seem different, strange, or distant can be similar, familiar, and interconnected in interesting if sometimes hidden ways, and that people who seem the same may have quite a range of differing practices.

We have also come to understand that diversity and familiarity are often related to power. What feels familiar and is called normal are the ideas of people who have power. The concept of ethnocentrism points to exactly this issue. **Ethnocentrism** refers to the very common notion that what is normal within one's own society should be normal in all human societies.

Anthropologists teach that where human beings are concerned, there really is no such thing as normal, just current and local ideas of what is acceptable and appropriate here and now. For example, community elders have been revered and given great precedence in such societies as the Native American First Nations, Japan, and Tonga, while aging is devalued and youthfulness is esteemed in much of Canada and the United States. Likewise, there are and have been societies where status is based on amassing wealth, such as the United States and Canada, and others where status comes from giving away as much as possible, such as the Northwest Coast First Nations of Canada and the Mt. Hagen area of Papua New Guinea.

It might seem that human separateness comes from geographical and linguistic differences, but anthropological research has shown that these differences are not the barriers they may seem. Peoples speaking the same language may become bitter enemies, while peoples on the different sides of a mountain or an ocean may become closely and amicably associated.

This chapter uses ethnography to examine the questions of difference and similarity, as well as of distance and interconnectedness, and the power relations that affect both. By examining the lives of people from a small, seemingly distant community we call Fusipala, in the island-based Kingdom of Tonga, we can learn something about what it is to be a human being. The descriptions in this chapter also help demonstrate how anthropology identifies and describes differences with an eye to similarity, connection, power, and the humanity that links the peoples of the world, both past and present.

QUESTIONS

1.1. What do anthropologists do?

1.2. Where does an anthropologist find culture?

1.3. What is the relationship between culture and the individuals and groups who share it? Who has culture?

1.4. When things change, do they also remain the same?

1.5. When things stay the same, do they also change?

QUESTION 1.1
What Do Anthropologists Do?

Anthropologists work where there are or have been people. Some, who are called archaeologists, generally look at the evidence people from the past have left in order to understand human life in previous times. Physical or biological anthropologists may work on material from past or contemporary people, but always from the perspective of the human body's interaction with the environment. Linguistic anthropologists focus on language, meaning systems, and the human use of symbols in order to explain humanity past and present. Social and cultural anthropologists work with living people, and this book focuses on their work.

Historically, many anthropologists studied human life in the parts of the world that Europeans encountered during the colonial expansion that began in the late 16th century. The very early anthropologists were ethnologists who emphasized the universality of human culture, which they conceptualized as a single entity. They theorized that differences between peoples were a result of differences in levels of cultural evolution. Human culture was manifested in different ways because of variations in the development of technology or systems of thought. In other words, these anthropologists believed that some societies had achieved more culture than others. They studied the process of cultural evolution by comparing societies in terms of how they fit into a kind of culture-attainment scale.

Other anthropologists began to apply these ideas in systematic ways, and more and better information about other peoples was collected. Ultimately, this so-called unilineal evolutionary approach was abandoned. Anthropological research showed that the tremendous variety of human ways of life did not fit neatly on a scale. In fact, it became obvious that the construction of a scale was as much a process of promoting European achievements as of analyzing human evolution. What remained was an appreciation of variety in human cultures and the desire to develop new and better ways to describe and understand each specific culture (ethnography) and compare different ways of living (ethnology).

Anthropologists generally select small societies or social groups encapsulated within larger societies to study. By studying a small group, we can better understand what it is like to be a member of the group. We seek to provide contextually rich descriptions and analyses of the small groups to add to

the overall picture of human beings and human life. The diversity of anthropological research reflects the variety of cultural and social formations of which human beings are capable.

Anthropologists have learned that the more time we spend learning the languages, customs, practices, and histories of other people, and the more we invest in the community and make it part of our own personal community, the more likely we are to learn something that is true and valuable not only to anthropologists, but to everyone. Generally, then, an anthropologist spends at least a year learning to live as a member of a host community. Many return to the community for years afterward, albeit for shorter visits. An ethnographer who learns to live as a member of the community is engaging in **participant observation**.

Doing ethnography is not easy. In many ways it is like being an immigrant, especially when the researcher must learn a new language as well as different social practices. Returning home is like being an immigrant all over again, and it can be just as stressful to relearn living in one's own society. But one of the most important rewards of ethnographic research is perspective, the ability to view one's own society and home culture with fresh eyes. Anthropologists tend to use their perspective to make constructive critiques of their own societies and cultural practices.

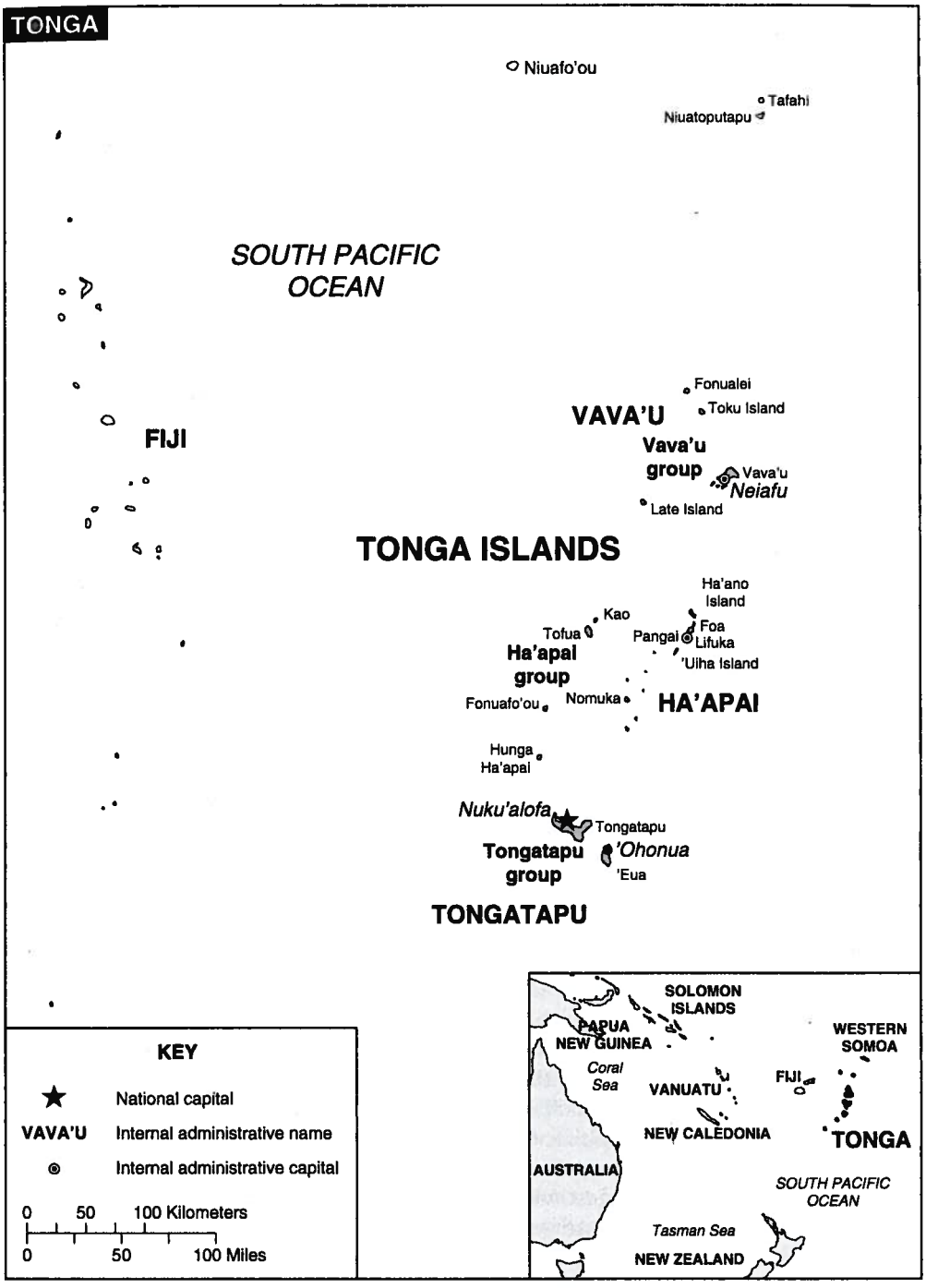
QUESTION 1.2
Where Does an Anthropologist Find Culture?

Culture provides all people with the capacity to live in the world, reproduce society over generations, and adapt to changing circumstances. Culture is thus universal and part of what we share. But particular peoples practice specific cultures, so one basis of our similarity as human beings is manifest in our differences. We also share this world and its global ecosystem.

Although anthropology has traditionally studied small groups of people, we are increasingly aware that these groups are connected to one another. While intercultural contact has always been a fact of human existence, people have been profoundly interrelated through political and economic structures arising from European exploration and colonization over the last 400 years, and these connections have given rise to new similarities and new differences.

Our ethnographic example starts, as it should, with people in a particular place. The place is an island called Kauvai.[1] It is located in the Kingdom of Tonga.[2] In 1991 we went there with our small daughter, who was then a year and a half old, to do ethnographic research. Tonga is a nation of Polynesian people whose resident population in the last decade of the 20th century hovered at approximately 100,000. In the Kingdom of Tonga, people make use of 170 or more small islands and about 750,000 square kilometers of deep Pacific ocean for farming, fishing, and the manufacture of traditional medicines,

[1]Kauvai, the names of its villages, and the names of the people of Kauvai are pseudonyms.
[2]The following references to Tonga are largely framed in the "ethnographic present" of 1991–1993. Our contact with people living in Tonga has been regular, and we returned for brief visits in 1999 and 2000. While we attempt to provide current information, some things may have changed, and the descriptions may not necessarily reflect such changes. This is part of writing about a place and a time; the place and time on which the ethnography is based must be specified. To do otherwise is to suggest that some societies are "timeless," which is not true.



woven mats, bark cloth, and other items. While the land base is quite small, approximately 739 square kilometers, the ocean area is large and productive.

The islands are grouped into four clusters: the Tongatapu group in the south; the far-flung atolls of Ha'apai in the center; the larger islands and deep harbors of the Vava'u[3] Islands in the north; and the tiny northernmost islands

[3]The apostrope in some Tongan words indicates a glottal stop. Most of us make a glottal stop when saying "Oh oh" quickly.

of Niuatoputapu and Niuafo'ou, which are geographically close to Tonga's northern neighbor, Samoa. The largest piece of land is the main island of Tongatapu, where two-thirds of the population lives. The national capital of Nuku'alofa is on Tongatapu and is the political and economic center of the kingdom. Parliament, major government offices, the highest law courts, the main hospital, schools, businesses, banks, and social elites are most likely to be found in or near Nuku'alofa. Most Tongans who do not live by subsistence farming and fishing are employed in the civil service, tourism, and small businesses located on Tongatapu.

Tonga is not a rich country. In 1989, the gross domestic product (GDP) was just under $160 million for a population of 90,485, or $176.82 per person. Tonga has few natural resources: no mines, no fossil fuels, and no great stands of timber. The main exports are agricultural and marine products and people. With its low GDP and dependence on migration, remittances, and foreign aid, Tonga is sometimes described as having a Third World economy.

As a nation, Tonga labors to mitigate the kinds of economic, educational, medical, and personnel resource disparities that result when regional populations are separated by distance, an ocean, and poor infrastructural links and when a lack of natural resources limits state-based spending. These same problems are faced by much larger nations, such as Canada and Russia, where people live relatively far away from each other and yet expect to have equal access to government resources.

The tiny island of Kauvai, where we lived for 19 months, is situated in the Ha'apai region. Despite being centrally located, Ha'apai is at the economic periphery, far from the jobs and business opportunities in Nuku'alofa. Although Ha'apai occupies an economically peripheral position, it is idealized and mythologized as a cultural center, the place where old-style traditional Tonga persists; as one government official said, "Ha'apai is where the *real* Tongan customs are practiced." Culture change is believed to be less prevalent in small fishing villages like those on Kauvai, and the people of Kauvai refer to Nuku'alofa as *muli,* meaning overseas or a foreign land.

Only 4 square kilometers large and a mere 30 meters above sea level, Kauvai is always at the mercy of the elements, including hurricanes and droughts. The communities on Kauvai prospered historically because of the superb fish resources nearby in the ocean. Three of Kauvai's four small villages form the official estate of Havea, a hereditary chief holding one of the 33 titles established under the Tongan Constitution of 1875. These nobles are part of a colonial-era codification of Polynesian chiefly systems of authority based on European political models, specifically the British monarchy and peerage system.

Fusipala, the largest village in Havea's estate and Havea's hereditary home, is the seat of power for most of the island. Its population varies between 135 and 150 people. The population fluctuates severely and frequently as a result of out-migration for school or jobs. The number of voters registered to Fusipala, and to Kauvai as a whole, is greater than the number of residents because the Tongan system of registration is based on the village of parents' birth, rather than on location of residence. In 1991 roughly 600 people were registered to vote in Fusipala. Many of Kauvai's registered voters live near Nuku'alofa or in Pangai, the regional center for Ha'apai, and a great many more live even farther away.

The fourth village on Kauvai is a government-administered estate, not part of Havea's or any other noble's holdings. Technically, the people living there owe no fealty to any noble. However, all four villages are inhabited by people who have cooperated and interacted on a daily basis for generations.

Kauvai is a tiny island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, but it is not isolated. Its residents depend on fishing, animal husbandry, agriculture, copra (dried coconut) sales, and textile production for their livelihoods. Textiles, copra, fish, and crops from Kauvai end up in New Zealand, the United States, and Japan. Commodities, fuels, and ideas from overseas also make their way to Kauvai. People make and think about cash expenditures daily, but the monetary amounts are very small, and infrastructural links are too poor to allow greater participation in the **market economy**.

Most people live in two-room wooden houses with corrugated tin roofing that are perched on cement stilts. Behind the typical house is a kitchen house where meals are cooked over coconut-husk fires and eaten sitting on the floor or on benches at a table. A small number of households also have a second dwelling, a coconut palm–thatched house called a *fale tonga* that is used as a spare or boys' house; at puberty, brothers and sisters begin to be physically and socially separated. The tin-roofed houses were subsidized as part of a British relief effort after Hurricane Isaac destroyed all the homes in 1982. More than a decade old now, these hurricane houses, as they are called, still look temporary, a stark contrast to the building boom in the capital, Nuku'alofa.

As is the case for much of Tonga, water is a treasured resource. Groundwater is nonexistent on coral atolls like Kauvai, so inhabitants depend on rainwater. Freshwater may be tapped from seeps on the larger atolls, and a thin layer of rainwater filters through the soil to collect and float on the underlying seawater.

Earlier Tongans dug wells, sometimes puncturing the floor of the atoll to create small, highly prized pools, which frequently figured in stories of chiefly people's adventures. Before the Christian missionaries arrived in the 18th century, rain was considered a major gift from the gods, especially Tangaloa 'Eitumatupu'a, who lived in the sky and who was the divine father of the Tu'i Tonga, the first of the sacred high-ranking chiefs. One of the fears expressed during the missionary era was that the gods would be angry with the Christians and stop the rains.

Today, each village on Kauvai has one or two public reservoirs with corrugated tin roofs and eave troughs for rainwater storage. This was part of a national initiative that began in 1909. Most churches also have water reservoirs, a pragmatic use of the largest roofs in the village, although there were initial qualms about using rainwater from the roof of God's house because it might be taboo.[4] There are no water catchment facilities in the bush where the gardens are. Irrigation is rare and done by hand.

The southern half of the island has brackish wells; the northern half has no wells at all. Numerous attempts have been made to find a well in Fusipala, but the water tapped has always been saline. Most families depend on their roofs and cement storage tanks for drinking and washing water. Generally, one half of the roof has guttering. Reservoirs often leak. Old, cracked water

[4]It is interesting to note that our word *taboo* is an Anglicization of the Polynesian *tapu*, which refers to something set aside from normal use because it is sacred.

reservoirs that serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes and holding tanks for refuse are sentinels to past development projects, memoirs of home sites now abandoned to weeds and pigs, and distant reminders of the people's dependence on forces not human.

There are few modern mechanical conveniences on Kauvai. Four or five families have gas-powered generators that they use on special occasions, such as feasts. No one, not even the government nurse, has refrigeration or other electric utilities that can be used on a daily basis. In 1993 the small generator we brought from Canada was the only generator in Fusipala; since then about five households in the village have obtained generators, and a committee has been formed to consider a diesel-powered electricity system for the island.

Families with insulated coolers can get blocks of ice for a few cents from the Ministry of Fisheries office in Pangai. The half-day trip to Pangai precludes regular use of ice, but it is especially popular at Christmas and New Year's Day for cooling fish, mutton, and such other feast treats such as ice cream. A couple of families have received televisions and VCRs as gifts from overseas relatives. These are popular sources of entertainment at Christmas time.

Many women yearn for "modern" wringer washing machines to replace their tubs and washboard. There are a few propane stoves, which are also reserved for special occasions. Most baking is done in earth ovens.

The most common means of transport is walking, followed by horse and cart and bicycle. The only motorized vehicle on the island is the nurse's small 100-cc motorcycle. Some farmers would like tractors, but it would be difficult to carry these heavy vehicles on 14-foot wooden boats in potentially rough seas and to unload them onto an island with no wharf. From time to time over the last 20 years, people have had short-term access to tractors, but such opportunities have been rare. In 2000, the Governor of Ha'apai arranged for tractors to be driven across the reef at a very low tide. On its return, a tractor was swamped, an expensive lesson in the problems of island development.

There are two solar-powered radiotelephones on Kauvai. Residents of villages without one of these phones who want to make or receive calls must walk to the next village, a trip of 20 or 30 minutes (depending on the weather). The exchange is a simple pick-up-and-wait-for-the-operator-to-answer type. Both halves of the island have designated time slots for making and receiving calls. A schedule of incoming calls is regularly announced on the radio. A resident who hears that a call is coming in goes to the phone and waits. We found the interminable waits excruciating. Local residents don't like them either.

Kauvai is usually reached by an open fishing boat from a neighboring island. Prior to 1980, much of the fishing and travel from Fusipala was done by sail and paddle. Most fishermen now use outboard engines of 15 to 30 horsepower. The boat trip takes about 40 minutes when the sea is calm. A reef causeway allows people to walk from the neighboring island to Lifuka, the main island of the Ha'apai group, or to ride there on a motor vehicle, such as a bus or a passing truck. The causeway is relatively recent (1990), and it occasionally floods.

People who take this trip are generally heading for Pangai, the regional center of Ha'apai, on the island of Lifuka. Pangai has stores, several church-run high schools, a hospital, a police station, a courthouse and jail, a bank, some government ministry offices, fairgrounds, and a royal residence.

From Pangai, travel connections can be made to other islands. While we were there, Pangai was served by Twin Otter airplanes and two ferry boats. The ferries are imported river boats that have been refitted and converted to open sea vessels. The trip to the capital of Nuku'alofa can take 50 minutes or 18 hours, depending on the mode of travel. It takes another 25 minutes by air or 8 hours by sea to reach Neiafu, the regional center for Vava'u in the north and a popular tourist destination.

When we made our way to Kauvai and set up a household in the village of Fusipala in 1991, it took us about three days to get there from southern Ontario, Canada, where we attended graduate school. We arrived in August with one small child, two laptop computers, a small generator, and miscellaneous domestic items. We had assumed that we needed to bring most of what we would be using. With the exception of the computers, we need not have brought any of the purchases. Everything was available in Tonga, and many things were much less expensive than in Canada. At that time there were strong diplomatic ties between Tonga and Taiwan, which meant, for instance, the mosquito netting purchased in Toronto for approximately $80 cost $15 in Nuku'alofa. This was our first lesson about how well connected Tonga is to the rest of the world.

As mentioned earlier, the primary method of ethnographic research is participant observation. This method requires an anthropologist to integrate into the community. The basic idea is that by living with and like everyone else in the village, we can learn what is most important to people, rather than assume that the aspects of life that are important to us are also important to villagers. Integration requires linguistic and cultural competence—knowing how to behave and understanding the meanings behind expected behaviors. Being a participant observer means that nothing can be taken for granted. The switches in mental orientation—in perception of self and normalcy—that result from this immersion process can be radical.

Thanks to the patience and kindness of our neighbors and friends, we gradually learned how, in Tongan terms, a person should *be*. Knowledge of Tongan language and Tongan culture goes hand in hand with integration, and in fact the two happen at the same time. This was the necessary knowledge that preceded our more detailed work on maternal–child relationships (Young Leslie) and the village economy (Evans).

It is important to note that, with the exception of our daughter Ceilidh, we did not "become Tongan." We did learn how to treat people respectfully and properly, and we became adept at acting and thinking like our neighbors. There is a difference between learning a culture as a child and as an anthropologist. Adults maintain at least some distance; they know that they have a home and way of being elsewhere. After spending a year in Fusipala, our daughter had no idea that she was anything other than a Tongan, the same as every other child in the village. Perhaps the most telling evidence of this occurred one afternoon. Speaking Tongan, her language of everyday use, Ceilidh called to us from the doorway, "Heather, Mike, come look, Europeans!" She had noticed two tourists strolling down the road, an unusual event, and her reaction was the same as any other village child: excitement and fear. We, on the other hand, had and continue to have a kind of expanded, bifurcated sense of identity and culture, which recognizes both the social practices and expectations that come from our culture and those we learned

from ethnographic fieldwork. This enhanced perspective is not unique to anthropologists, of course, but anthropology has made this kind of experience a central feature of how we come to know what we know.

In the first few months, we also learned about our neighbors and began to form friendships that we maintain to this day. Ethnographic fieldwork requires the cooperation of the people with whom one works, and such cooperation is dependent on the same goodwill as is human cooperation in any other context. Integration into Fusipala was a gift people gave us, and it made possible everything that followed. All the best ethnographic fieldwork is based on the willingness of people to share the problems and solutions of being a human being on a day-to-day basis. The problems are universal, the solutions particular, and ultimately they are the basis of anthropological knowledge and practice.

QUESTION 1.3
What Is the Relationship Between Culture and the Individuals and Groups Who Share It? Who Has Culture?

Culture is in our minds; it seems manifest in the world that we inhabit, and it shapes the way we live and thus re-create culture over time. All of us have a set of flexible and interrelated notions that we use to interpret the world and guide our actions. Culture is something we practice, but the ideas of how to behave, how to do things, and what kinds of practices are to be done are also our culture.

In spite of the fact that we have culture individually, we never really practice it alone. Our lives are dialogues with others, interactive processes in which we act individually and collectively to reproduce, shape, and change culture, which we then use to act again. Both cultural continuity and culture change are products of this repetitive human activity.

When anthropologists talk about culture, we are generally talking about some version of a collective, shared set of ideas and activities that characterize human social life. Within any society with a shared culture, however, there is variation. Children do not know what elders know. Women and men often do and think different things and act in different ways with different motivations. Young men, for example, have different desires, rights, and responsibilities than older women. Even within a group of senior adults, there is individual variation in knowledge, prestige, skills, preferences, and so on that stems from personal experience.

People whose access to wealth, resources, specialized knowledge, or privileged status gives them influence often have a better chance to shape and define expectations, behaviors, and priorities. **Power** is a part of all societies. The lines of access to influence and what is deemed worthy of being influential vary from one society to the next depending on cultural parameters. For example, in North America, wealth, resources, and fame are accepted forms of influence and power. In Tonga, age and genealogical relationships, especially the relationship of a sister to a brother, are sources of influence and power.

Sālotē and Tupou are respected elderly women. As mothers, sisters, and accomplished weavers of ceremonial textiles, they have power. That is, they

influence community decisions; they direct their children and grandchildren; they guide their church congregations; and they create and provide access to privileges and resources. The power of older and respected women is not unlimited or uncontested, but it is not negligible either. However, even the powerful are shaped by their culture and social position. Sālotē's and Tupou's lives, indeed their very bodies, are shaped by practices and values that they think of as Tongan culture. They are both the creations and creators of this culture, at once products and producers of the men and women stretching from the far distant past to the foreseeable future.

Sālotē's hands are old, fleshy, and strong. Her fingers, like those of many older women, are as gnarled and crooked as the roots of the banyan tree. The end of each finger is permanently hooked. These hands proclaim Sālotē's profession even when they are lying limply in her lap or when she is fanning herself at church. Tupou's hands were the same, if a little leaner, more sinewy. "Look at the hands of a weaver," Losalina said softly to the circle of women as we washed and perfumed Tupou's body for burial. Losalina laid Tupou's slack hand across her own younger, firmer palm and curled her still straight and flexible fingers through Tupou's. There was at least 30 years difference in age between them.

Like several other women of their generation, Tupou and Sālotē are mothers who have lived all their lives, some 60 to 90 years, on the island of Kauvai. These women are easily spotted making their way to church, torsos bent forward at the hips, hands linked at the base of the spine. Twirling a coconut leaf fan as ballast and puffing like old steamships, they waddle slowly, painfully, to prayer.

Sālotē is the oldest woman on the southern half of Fusipala, where she lives on her widow's land allotment. She presides over a network of kin and

Lotoa Fifita holding a kapa *(tin blade) while making a mat.* (Photograph by Heather Young Leslie.)

affines (people related through marriage) that extends to three households in the village and at least two more in other parts of Tonga. One son-in-law affectionately (but quietly) calls her *Pule* (boss), but her granddaughter calls her by a diminutive, *Lote*.

By Kauvai standards, Sālotē is in many ways an unremarkable woman. Her long hair is gray and soft, with wispy ends and white roots. She usually twists it up into a knot on top of her head. On Sundays, a daughter or granddaughter combs her hair and grooms her, and she looks beautiful despite her sagging body and melancholy eyes. Those eyes are formidable; they are sometimes disapproving, often tired, and bright with tears when she is happy, proud, or sad. Sālotē's tongue is just as formidable, and her sharp commands and retorts are alarming to the uninitiated. Chuckling and shushing as she squeezes juice from a bundle of leaves with one hand, dripping it down her thumb into the open, wailing mouth of the child she holds with the other, Sālotē transforms herself from matriarch to Madonna.

All of Sālotē's nine children are alive, and only two have never married. Three daughters live on Kauvai, and another lives just outside of Pangai, but Sālotē is too afraid to make the boat trip to visit her. Sālotē is more blessed than Tupou, who had no children from either of her two marriages, but fostered two children. She is also more fortunate than Kalistina, whose children have all moved away, some to Tongatapu and others to Auckland.

Kalistina's faded beauty is evident, and her smile is more frequent and radiant than Sālotē's. But she too has tired eyes, and like Sālotē, Tupou, and most of the other women of their generation, Kalistina's lower back is permanently bent, and her hands have hooked metacarpals. These women walk the same walk, leaning forward at the hips with their chins waist high. When Kalistina is walking, she swivels her head sideways to look up. To stand even close to upright, she bends her knees, swings her shoulders up, and sticks her chin out.

Two of Sālotē's daughters, Malia and Lupe, work with Kalistina on a regular basis. There are many cooperative weaving groups on Kauvai, and at least four in Fusipala alone. The group Tupou worked with disbanded for the year after her death as a sign of mourning. In this group, Lupe generally does the starting edge, Malia the closing edge, and Kalistina the middle. Membership in a weaving group is flexible, and sometimes one or two other women join the *toulālanga* on a short-term basis. Sālotē recently retired from this group because she found the pace too exhausting. These days she plaits at home, alone or in the company of Fo'ou, her unmarried daughter.

Pandanus, also known as screw pine, is a plant indigenous to the Pacific. It grows well on windy and rocky shorelines and is thus well-suited to coral atolls. When properly processed, the long and treacherously barbed leaves can be sliced into widths ranging from two centimeters to only a few millimeters. Tongans have cultivated pandanus for centuries; it was the original material for the sails that powered the first voyagers across the Pacific Ocean. Today on Kauvai, women know and cultivate several varieties.

When properly processed, pandanus provides textures ranging from that of firm leather to something more akin to starched satin. Colors of processed pandanus naturally range from khaki to pearly gold, and Tongan women will also use natural or commercial dyes to create even more colors. Processed fibers may be hand woven into large mats suitable as floor coverings and

sleeping mats, or into a variety of fancier mats intended to be wrapped around the waist and hips.

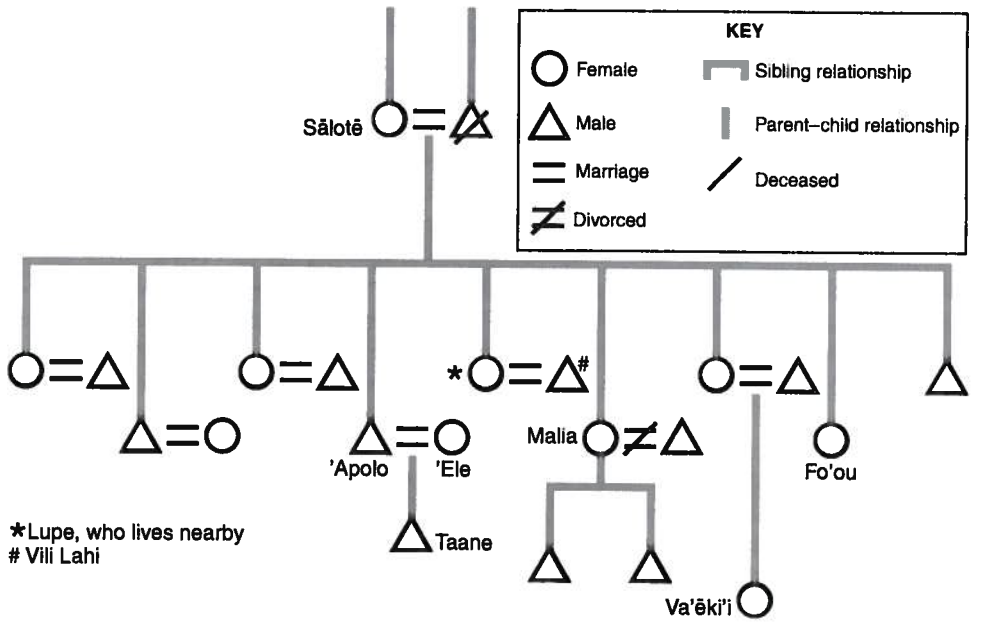
Historically, the finest, softest pandanus textiles were decorated with red feathers and worn by chiefly daughters and sons. Some of the best of these garments have the texture of silk and are hundreds of years old. Such special pieces are given names and handed down through generations in the same way that sacred or familial heirlooms of silver, jewelry, or land may be passed on in other societies. These treasures are guarded fiercely, and they must be worn at major ceremonial events. For example, one particular fine mat, as such garments are called, must be worn by a member of the royal family when being crowned; an heir to the throne cannot be crowned king or queen without that mat. In this way, certain mats are equivalent to the crown jewels of Great Britain.

The skills for making and knowing how and when to use particular ceremonial textiles and the responsibility for keeping and safeguarding them lie with women. In fact, these textiles, along with the cloth beaten from mulberry bark, are referred to as "women's wealth." But along with the prestige and privilege come disadvantages resulting from the labor of hand weaving without a loom. Making Pandanus textiles is time-consuming and physically uncomfortable. Women must sit on the floor for hours each day, bent over the multiple strands that they hand weave. A lifetime of such work, which is the major economic and social activity of women on Kauvai, produces bent backs and crooked hands. The weaver's bent back is probably caused by arthritis and/or postmenopausal osteoporosis exacerbated by years of sitting hunched over while hand weaving textiles, as well as by the cultural pressure on women and chiefs to demonstrate proper behavior by remaining seated and unmoving whenever possible. The permanent crook of the index finger seems to develop from picking up the fibers during weaving, and as women get older, arthritis may cause their other fingers to hook.

Malia and Lupe are women in their early forties who have yet to acquire the weaver's bent back, but each does show an early sign of the weaver's

Loutoa Kepueli, Pauline Ngalu, and Mele Finau bring gifts of fine mats and food for the formal leave-taking ceremony of a Methodist minister and his family. Note the prominence of the fine mats in the presentation and the bent walking position of the women. (Photograph by Heather Young Leslie and Mike Evans.)

FIGURE 1.1. Sālotē's Household



Note: Only persons who live in the village are identified by name.

hand. Malia and Lupe are of the same generation as Losalina, who came to help prepare Tupou for her funeral. Like Losalina, Kalistina, and most adult women on Kauvai, Lupe and Malia spend their days plaiting their textiles, generally working from dawn to late afternoon. When a deadline looms, they work late into the night by the light of a kerosene lamp.

Losalina and Malia live at opposite ends of Fusipala. They are unrelated and attend different churches, but they have much in common. Their households and domestic situations provide fairly typical examples of the lives of many people on Kauvai.

Malia has two sons and has divorced her husband (see Figure 1.1). She lives with her mother, Sālotē, who is the head of the household, her sister Fo'ou, and Va'eki'i, the daughter of Malia's brother, who now lives on Tongatapu and whom the family has fostered. Fostering of children is a common practice in Polynesian societies and is seen as a demonstration of love rather than a sign of inadequate parenting. Malia's sons live in Pangai with a relative of their father. Malia's brother 'Apolo, his wife, 'Ele, and their young son live in Sālotē's household. Sālotē's husband died a few years before, and now she holds title to the house and bush allotment. Since inheritance is legally passed to males according to rules of primogeniture, Sālotē holds the property in trust for her firstborn son, who lives in New Zealand.

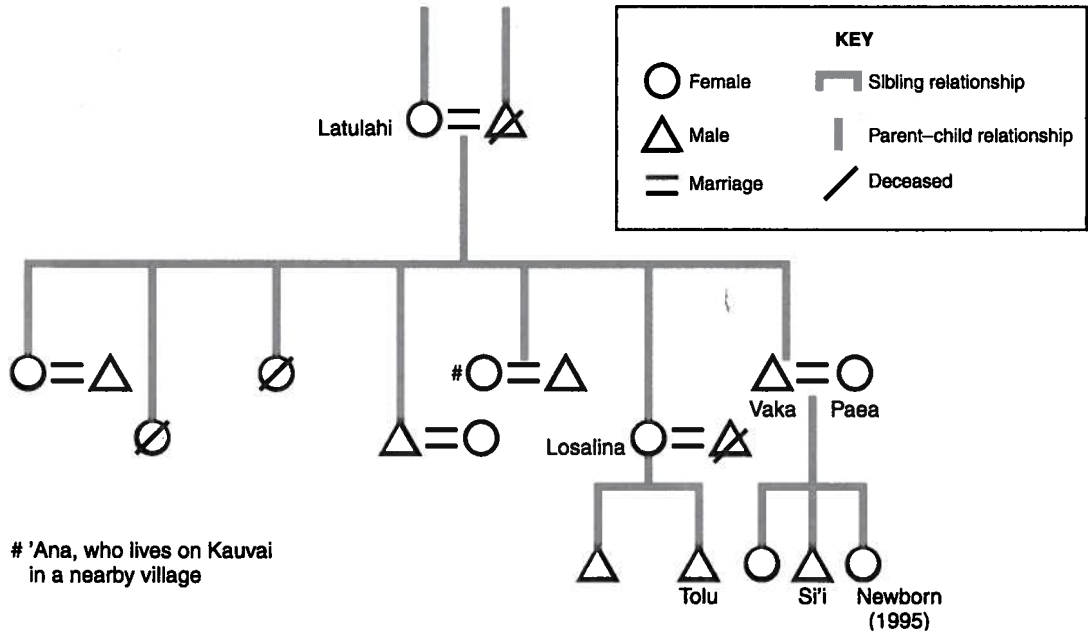
Sālotē's entire household, including 'Apolo, 'Ele, and their baby, eat from the same gardens, use the same cookhouse, and share household duties and resources. 'Apolo has become the main food producer for the family since his father died because his two brothers live off Kauvai. 'Apolo does not enjoy fishing, so Sālotē's household depended on her son-in-law Vili Lahi for fresh fish until about 1995, when his boat was no longer seaworthy. Earlier Vili Lahi was an avid fisher, but now age and arthritic knees also keep him on land.

He and Lupe live on a separate property a short walk away and form a separate household, but they eat a lot of their meals with Sālotē. After Tupou's death, her widower, 'Ofa Lelei, was also a frequent guest at meals.

Losalina lives at the other end of the village in the household of her mother, Latulahi (see Figure 1.2). Losalina is close to Malia in age, is widowed, and has two sons who are younger than Malia's sons. Losalina's brother Vaka and his wife, Paea, their young son Si'i, and a toddler daughter share two rooms in the three-bedroom house with Losalina, Latulahi, and Losalina's young son Tolu. The property will eventually be inherited by Vaka. Until Latulahi dies, however, Vaka and Paea are like guests, while Latulahi and Losalina live in the main part of the house. The quarters are cramped, and Losalina and Paea sometimes quarrel, but Losalina's son Tolu is a good brother to Paea's son, Si'i. When Losalina's eldest son attended high school, he lived with her brother near Nuku'alofa, coming home on holidays. Now, he stays with other young, unmarried men in a separate house in the village. Like Malia's brother, Losalina's brother is the main food producer for the household. As governmental agricultural officer for the island, he also draws a small (and rare) salary while living on Kauvai. When Vaka wants to go fishing, he goes with a brother, Maake, who lives nearby.

Both Sālotē's and Latulahi's households are multigenerational, with an extended family ranging in age from over 60 to 6 or younger. Both are headed by women, with some secondary-school-aged children of the house living elsewhere and at least one primary-school-aged grandchild in the household. Both households depend on gardens for their staple and ceremonial foods and on kin-based relations for access to fish. Like all residents of Kauvai, the families have pigs and chickens that they allow to run free. These animals pro-

FIGURE 1.2. Latulahi's Household



Note: Only persons who live in the village are identified by name.

vide occasional and ceremonial sources of meat. Pigs are also sources of wealth. Along with kava and certain types of root vegetables (especially yams), pigs are the masculine equivalent of women's textiles.

While it is not the cultural norm for women to be heads of households, neither is it abnormal. Sālotē and Latulahi preside over their households like queens. They spend most of their days weaving pandanus at home, and leave only to attend church. Sālotē, like Kalistina and Tupou (before her death), can walk unassisted, but Latulahi must use a cane to negotiate the route to her church. Her back is so bent that her hands and a fan can no longer serve as a counterbalance. She crawls on hands and knees inside her house, and depends on one of her grandchildren to run errands.

The pattern of life is predictable, but not dull. The residents of Fusipala expect the days and weeks to follow a regular pattern. From Monday to Friday, families wake before the sun and say a morning prayer of thanks to God. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the Methodists attend a dawn prayer service (there are three Methodist congregations, one Mormon congregation, and one Seventh Day Adventist congregation in Fusipala, and similar congregations in the other villages). After prayers, sleeping mats and blankets are bundled away, water is drawn, faces are washed, teeth are brushed, and pigs are fed. Men prepare to go fishing or hoe the gardens; young mothers tend to babies and young children; and older women or men begin to prepare the day's main meal. Women slice pandanus strips for the day's weaving, braid daughters' hair, or iron school uniforms. Schoolchildren run errands, visit neighbors, fetch water, or linger at the small village shop hoping for free sweets. Younger siblings tag along or play at home. If children want to eat breakfast, they have cabin crackers, leftovers like taro or cassava, or germinated coconut. Most adults wait until mid-morning, usually around 10 A.M., to eat the main meal of the day.

Most adults are well into their weaving, tilling, or fishing by the time the schoolchildren circle around the flagpole in front of school to recite the morning prayer at half-past eight. When the sun is high and the ground too hot even for feet hardened and callused by years of going barefoot, men sometimes join their wives or nieces in the shade of the weaving house. There they chat and eat the main meal.

Food preparation is often men's work. European practices introduced by Christian missionaries prescribed everyday cooking as women's domestic labor, but this was not the case historically on Kauvai, and both men and women still cook. Because men manage the gardens, tend to livestock, and go fishing, they control food production and are responsible for determining what the family will eat on a day-to-day basis.

On days when they are working at their weaving, women rarely rest for longer than it takes to eat their taro and fish, but the men's company is usually a welcome distraction. Later, as the sun becomes infinitesimally less intense, the men, singly or in pairs, return to their gardens, head out to the reef, or go home for a nap. Schoolchildren straggle home by 3 P.M. and are often sent out to the gardens or on some other errand.

Saturday is called *Tokonaki,* preparation day. On Saturdays, households wash laundry, sweep the grass around the house, burn the week's collection of animal dung and other refuse, fish, gather foodstuffs from coral reefs, dig up extra root crops, bring home extra coconuts, iron dress clothes, read required Bible passages, and, in general, prepare for Sunday, the day of rest.

Finau Sitani, his daughter Lesieli, Heather Young Leslie, and her daughter, Ceilidh Evans, at a small feast given by Finau and his wife, Mele, for their oldest child, Sitani. (Photograph by Mike Evans.)

Sunday is devoted to church attendance, eating the Sunday meal, studying the Bible, and sleeping. Women teach Sunday school or visit relatives and invalids. Men participate in the kava-drinking circle. Kava, a mildly relaxing herbal concoction made from the roots of *piper methysicum,* is the national drink of Tonga. Although it is consumed casually by men, kava is strongly associated with sacred and ceremonial activities, and Sunday in Fusipala village is certainly a sacred day. Work and such distracting activities as reading novels, writing letters, picking fruit, mending clothes, washing hair, and swimming are forbidden. Sunday is for devotion to and contemplation of God. Usually there are two church services on Sunday, and sometimes there are as many as four.

The regularity of these days and weeks are punctuated by predictable events like Christmas, New Year's Day, special church meetings, the annual agricultural and industrial fair, and large cooperative work projects like building a village fence. And daily life can also be interrupted by unexpected events—like Tupou's death.

QUESTION 1.4
When Things Change, Do They Also Remain the Same?

One of the most challenging events in the life of a group of people is death. Death is change; death is renewal; death is inevitable. In many cultures, and certainly in Tonga, the death of an older person triggers a particularly intense period of social activity.

When they realized that Tupou was dead, Malia and Lupe cried, wailed, and called to her, then dried their eyes and set about organizing her house for the funeral despite the fact that it was about 9 P.M. and pitch dark on a cloudy, moonless night. "Go tell Tevita we need the lamps from the church," ordered Lupe, referring to Tupou's minister. Word of Tupou's death spread quickly, and a party of men and women soon congregated.

With a death, the inside of the house is the women's domain. Tupou's iron bed was dismantled, and all of her and her husband's possessions were removed from the house. Young Leslie helped the women sweep the floor, dust the walls, and line the walls of the back room with white bedsheets. Other women, young and old, arrived, some from other villages on the island. They filled the front room of the house, lending a hand wherever needed—chewing candlenuts to make a sweet-scented emollient, hanging curtains, sweeping away rubbish, crying and singing hymns. In the back room, we prepared scented water and carefully, decorously, bathed Tupou, preserving her dignity and dressing her in a clean, white gown. Outside the front door, men built a shelter of poles and coconut fronds and packed the household's contents away into the cookhouse. It began to rain. The only unoccupied person was 'Ofa Lelei, Tupou's widower, who stood silently in the rain.

As highly charged events scripted by traditional ideals, funerals fuse social and structural obligations with traditional ideals of kinship and appropriate behavior. They are events at which one may observe individual influence and power being enacted and tradition being perpetuated and also modified. To understand people's actions at Tupou's funeral, one must understand Tongan kinship and how personal identity and social status are related.

Tongans trace their kin **bilaterally** (through both mother and father) as far back as memories and record books permit. This kin group is called the *kāinga*. The term is usually translated as extended kin, but it really describes people who are native to a place, blood relatives, and/or social compatriots. The term is used, for instance, to refer to the relationship of persons who live on a chief's estate and to describe the relationship between them and the chief, regardless of whether there are genealogical relationships. Similarly, all the members of the same Christian denomination are known as *kāinga lotu* (family in prayer). The social interactions of *kāinga* are like those of kin and involve displays of affection and mutual obligation. Kinship systems are systems of behavior, not determined by biology. In Tonga, one must behave like kin in order to be kin.

Kinship terminology and the definition of the family are changing. The term *fāmili,* from the English word, is used to refer to the nuclear family and genealogically close relatives. In general usage, *fāmili* is a subset of *kāinga. Kāinga* is generally used to refer to distant kin—the relatives one sees only at such major life events as birthdays, weddings, or funerals or those who are emotionally aloof. *Fāmili* is used to mean close kin with whom one is in frequent or comfortable contact, even if they are genealogically distant, and those descended from grandparents' siblings.

A father and his brothers are called *tamai* (father), and mother and her sisters are called *fa'ē* (mother). Persons of the same generation who trace their descent from common grandparents or earlier ancestors consider themselves siblings. As in all of Polynesia, the brother–sister relationship is marked

by strong bonds of affection and equally strong avoidance taboos. Brothers demonstrate their affection for their sisters through respect, generosity, and avoidance, while sisters demonstrate it through an acceptance of the authority of their symbolic position and expressions of solidarity with the social and political actions of their brothers.

The people whom English speakers call cousins are considered by Tongans to be brothers and sisters. Those whom we call nieces and nephews are thought of, treated, and expected to behave as daughters and sons. The relations of nieces and nephews to their aunts and uncles, however, is different from anything in North American and European kinship. In Tonga, a father's sister and a mother's brother are especially significant relatives. The father's sister is highly ranked, and her position is imbued with the authority of the father's side of the *kāinga*. She is revered and treated with respect, especially at events like funerals, weddings, and first birthdays. A mother's brother can always be counted on to be supportive, loving, and generous, the epitome of the maternal side of the *kāinga*. For example, Sālotē's brother 'Ofa Lelei was a favorite maternal uncle, or *fa'ē tangata*—a "male mother"—to her children, and the children's relationship to him was "easy." If he had been their father's brother, the relationship would have been marked by respectful obedience.

The brother–sister relational pair (or dyad) also underlies rank in Tongan kinship. First gender, then age are the key factors in determining personal rank. Sisters rank higher than their brothers, and this asymmetry is passed down through the generations so that descendants of a sister rank higher than those descended from her brother. Descendants of an elder sibling carry higher personal rank than descendants of a junior sibling. This rank-based skewing and the responsibilities and privileges that go with it mean that sisters and their children are considered *fabu* (above the law). Husbands are superior in rank to their wives and also to their wife's brothers. The correlative is also true, as when wives are subject to the authority of their husband's sisters.

Sālotē's daughters treated Tupou with the same kind of easy affection that marks the *fa'ē tangata* relationship. This is because Tupou was the wife of their *fa'ē tangata* as well as their mother's contemporary. Their distress at Tupou's death was no less striking than the distress of Tupou's own sisters, the son and daughter Tupou and 'Ofa Lelei had fostered, and the children of Tupou's and 'Ofa Lelei's own siblings, for whom Tupou was a mother.

In practice, rank means that one should be ready to give without reservation to a father's sister and to take what one desires from a mother's brother.[5] These principles apply to all descendants. A high-ranking and well-respected Tongan woman described the privileges and burdens of the *fabu* system thus: "Mother's side pushes you up, and your father's side pushes you down." This redistribution of wealth according to rank applies to giving at funerals and weddings and also to the movement of the valuables of everyday life: food, textiles, children, money, tools, equipment, and so on.

While the sister–brother dyad underlies Tongan kinship, the model for ranking practices is the chiefly–commoner relationship in which the *'eiki*

[5]It should be noted that principles governing behavior sometimes are in conflict. In this instance, the principles of rank sometimes conflict with the principle of independence, and disputes occasionally occur, especially between children's mothers and husband's sisters.

(chief) is high in personal rank relative to other people. Sisters, for instance, are described as being chiefly to their brothers, and the elder sibling is chiefly to the younger. The opposite of being chiefly is *tu'a,* and the *tu'a* are supposed to be supportive and obedient to those who are chiefly. *Tu'a* also refers more broadly to the category of people normally called commoners in English. Kinship aside, the *'eiki–tu'a* relationship characterizes all interactions. Guests are treated as *'eiki* by their hosts; the doctor is *'eiki* to the patient; the deceased become *'eiki* to the living; the King is *'eiki* to the populace; and all Tongans including the King are *tu'a* to God. Rank requires displays of respect, submission, and obedience to those who are of higher rank, and it obligates returns of love and generosity to those who are of lower rank. Ultimately, the behavioral expectations of obedience and generosity embedded in the *'eiki–tu'a* relationship also characterize the historical interactions of government (*'eiki*) and the populace (*tu'a*).

In everyday practice, then, kinship behavior is relative to the situation and the persons present. It is also predominantly affective, expressed through demonstrations of sharing—*'ofa,* or love, generosity, and empathy—and recognition of duty and obligation. Both are demonstrated through the reciprocal flow of acts of kindness, surpluses of food, ceremonial wealth (pigs, textiles, kava, yams), and oratory.

The marking of real or fictive kinship through affection is typical of Polynesian societies. When someone is ill, *kāinga* express their support. When someone dies, their *kāinga* and those of their spouse offer labor, food, hymns, or textiles. Actions are motivated by affection and duty and by the desire to publicly demonstrate both. Funeral gifts are prescribed not only by kinship category (mother's or father's side), but also by personal relationship to the deceased and/or the bereaved. As Cowling says about funerals in Tonga:

> The contemporary elaborate funerary rites and the post-funerary rituals which are maintained by commoners in Tonga can be seen as ways of assuring the dead person that they are honoured and encouraging them to rest quietly and not harbour malevolence towards the living. Generosity in funeral prestations is multi-purpose—it re-affirms relationships, stressing the value of kinship ties, demonstrates respect both to living and dead kin, comforts and assists relatives and friends, and impresses others with the strength of feelings. [1990:83]

Sālotē's role in Tupou's funeral and funeral redistributions demonstrates the importance of emotional bonds in kinship relations. As a sister, Sālotē was superior in rank to both 'Ofa Lelei and Tupou. She therefore had no obligation to give at Tupou's funeral. However, as the person with whom 'Ofa Lelei had the strongest affective bond (despite the formal brother–sister respect), and because her children loved their maternal and now-widowed uncle, Sālotē became a conduit for many of the resources that went into Tupou's funeral.

For example, in order to include horse meat as part of the food and wealth items regularly distributed to guests at a funeral, Sālotē's son 'Apolo traded his lively young horse for an older horse that belonged to Sifa, his neighbor. This trade provides a clear example of the value of kinship connections and of how resources are mobilized through interpersonal connections. Sifa is brother to Vili Lahi, who is husband to 'Apolo's sister Lupe. Since Vili Lahi is the son of Sifa's paternal aunt, he is higher in rank than Sifa and

can take anything he wants from Sifa. As brother to Vili Lahi's wife, 'Apolo is Vili Lahi's brother-in-law, and Vili Lahi is obligated to help 'Apolo. So even though 'Apolo gave away his strong young stallion, he did not lose the use of the horse; anytime he needed it, he could ask his brother-in-law to get it for him. But the example also demonstrates the significance of social relations that prioritize love and kindness. Sifa knew the rules of kinship as well as 'Apolo and anyone else. He could have refused to trade the horse, in which case 'Apolo would have probably killed the young stallion. But Sifa agreed to the trade out of empathy for the suffering caused by Tupou's death.

The network mobilized through Sālotē was evident in numerous ways. In addition to trading his horse, 'Apolo also gave pigs. His brother Sione arrived from Tongatapu with a very large sack of flour and another of sugar. Sālotē's daughters Malia and Lupe gave cotton sheets, bark cloth (tapa), food, and labor. Sālotē's son-in-law Vili Lahi contributed pigs, fish, and labor. Tupou's sisters' husbands and their agnates provided pigs, goats, flour, lard, sugar, jam, textile wealth items, labor, and hymns. The distant relatives who had pitied 'Ofa Lelei's and Tupou's childless status and had given them babies to foster also contributed. Throughout the day after Tupou's death, long trains of women from all over Kauvai brought carefully folded bark cloth and purchased fabrics draped over branches of blossoms.

Life on Kauvai is an intertwining of numerous lives in which people fulfill multiple roles. Sālotē, whose hands are old and arthritic, works mostly with the pandanus fiber called *kie* these days because, she says, *kie* is soft and flexible. "My hands are weak now," she told Young Leslie. She handles the slippery *kie* fibers with a confidence born of years of practice. Her textiles are so smooth that it is hard to distinguish the individual fibers. Tupou, too, was working on a textile made from *kie* fiber when she died.

According to Kauvai standards, Sālotē is a typical Tongan woman: a devoted sister and mother, an ardent Christian, and a traditionalist. She can call on a wide net of family and friends to help. She attends church regularly and donates handsomely. Her children are good, dutiful people, and some have well-paying jobs. She can offer access to important social and material resources when necessary. Her family eats well, and she has made many, many pandanus fiber textiles that are laid aside for redistribution at her own funeral. Through her life's practices, Sālotē has created, perpetuated, and maintained the social relations that she was taught to think of as the keys to living well, and in the process she has recreated Tongan culture itself. Although Sālotē's hands are now weak, her reach is still strong.

Tupou's funeral and mourning period lasted seven days. She was laid out for visitors on the first day and buried on the second. For the next five days, visitors stayed with 'Ofa Lelei, and groups of women visited Tupou's grave each evening to comfort her and keep her from becoming lonely. During this time, neighbors, kin, and visitors were fed every morning and night. Women in sooty cookhouses boiled *keke,* the Tongan version of the doughnut (no hole), in lard. In the morning and afternoon, younger girls and boys delivered plates of *keke* with jam and mugs of sweet tea to the mourners and the households of the village. Men slaughtered animals, dug huge pits, and kindled great fires for the earth ovens. Other men, holders of ceremonial titles and church elders, came to drink kava. The ritual of the kava circle helps glorify

or elevate an occasion and consequently the person at the center of the event, in this instance, Tupou. One of the workers at the funeral was Lupe's husband, Vili Lahi. He provided taro and other root vegetables from his gardens, prepared pigs for the daily feast, and fished each night. He dressed in a short, ragged woven waist mat, the sign of mourning for someone not too close to the deceased.

This use of textiles is one example of how bodies exist as **signs** of social relations for Tongans. Appearance, silhouette, skin, hair, coloring, size, posture, adornment, and gestures are signs that indicate personal genealogy and the quality of contemporary networks. At a funeral, the pandanus waist mats called *ta'ovala* publicly signify one's relationship or relative rank to the deceased. Since the mats must be bound to the body to be worn, wearing one is seen as binding the person into a ritual status that is unique for each person, since each person is a unique focal point of kinship relations. The persons wearing the longest, oldest, and crudest mats are the mourners closest and lowest in rank to the deceased. They demonstrate their unraveled world with unbound, wildly ruffled hair and heart-wrenching wails. In the pre-Christian past, self-induced lacerations of the skin, finger amputations, and other mutilations were also part of their mourning. Officially, the *ta'ovala* signifies respect for the deceased. It also acts as a sort of protective shield by binding the wearer, whose social world is rent, into temporary wholeness and by making it unnecessary for the deceased person to reach out and touch the wearer because of anger at disrespect (a touch from a spirit is believed to cause a spirit illness).

On Kauvai, *ta'ovala* are worn by nuclear family members and *kāinga* for weeks or months. A widow wears one for a year, until the hair her husband's sister has shorn from her head has grown back, her ritual state of being unconnected is rectified, her social world is reconfigured, and her deceased spouse has settled in the afterworld. This process begins in the feasting, kava circle, ministerial eulogies, cloth wealth gifts, and redistributions of the funeral.

The living are not the only ones whose bodies are signs of social relations. The deceased is also ritually marked. Tupou was laid in state on special and prestigious textiles she herself had woven. The textile wealth demonstrated her capabilities as a woman and marked her as one entering the rank of ancestor. As the saying goes, *Oku 'eiki 'ae taha he'ene mate* (at death, one becomes a chief).

As occasions requiring the demonstration of genealogical relationships, deaths are essentially family affairs in which everyone's actions are prescribed by status and rank. On Kauvai, at least, funerals involve more than family. A funeral encapsulates social and emotional relations into an intensely personal, emotionally laden time and place. Just as death demands reconfirmation of social ties (for the sake of the children if for no other reason), it also creates the need to give or receive emotional support, in the process giving content to kinship roles.

Vili Lahi explained his own rationale for wearing the *ta'ovala* and providing pigs and other food for the funeral despite the fact that he and Tupou were affines rather than blood relatives. He did it for his wife, Lupe, who wanted to be able to comfort her favorite uncle, 'Ofa Lelei, and his wife, Tupou. Anthropologist Shulamit Decktor-Korn (1974) noted that funeral par-

ticipation among Tongan commoners reflects a relationship to the bereaved. The ritual days of mourning, the mobilization of labor, the prolonged wearing of the *ta'ovala,* the funeral bier of ceremonial textiles, and the disbursements of textiles and foods to kin and neighbors all serve to mark the importance of social relationships that surpass genealogy and extend laterally to as many members of society as possible.

The people connected to Tupou and 'Ofa Lelei gave of their time and resources because they had sympathy and love for 'Ofa Lelei and because they loved Tupou and wanted her to be comforted in her transition from living person to spirit. They gave for honor, duty, and love as extended family and members of the community. Others gave because they knew that 'Ofa Lelei's grief was his sister Sālotē's, too. They included Sālotē's children, who gave because they felt love and empathy and wanted to help their mother and their favorite uncle get through the initial shock of Tupou's death. People from across the island offered hymns, food, labor, and textiles to spread the pain of Tupou's passing as far and as thinly as possible. To bear such a burden alone is too terrible, Malia told one of us; grief and emotional traumas have been known to precipitate illness and suicide. With Tupou's death, people felt the threat of becoming unraveled, the jeopardy presented by the loss of a community member who was a sister, wife, mother, partner in a weaving group, member of the parish, and neighbor. Now, people commented, there was one less person left to help *fua kavenga,* that is, to carry the burden of life on Kauvai.

Because a funeral requires the display, use, and gifting of textiles and foods, and because death is not always anticipated, each death serves to remind people of the importance of having sufficient supplies of women's and men's wealth on hand at all times and of the necessity of good social relations. Like other life crisis events, funerals in Tonga are occasions at which individual influence—the strong and extensive social relations based in years of fulfilling familial and community obligations—becomes the source of and the means for social power. Each funeral provides for and in some ways demands the rebuilding of interpersonal relationships and of the very ideas on which these relationships are built. Each funeral is a product of Tongan tradition and in turn reproduces Tongan culture. From a funeral we learn that people must make culture in both life and death.

QUESTION 1.5
When Things Stay the Same, Do They Also Change?

Contemporary Tongans are descendants of the first explorers of the Pacific and of the originators of Polynesian culture that spread as far as Hawaii, New Zealand, and Easter Island. Historically, Ha'apai people voyaged throughout Tonga, to Fiji and Samoa, and possibly as far as Anuta, and many of the old stories revolve around the theme of heroic voyages. During the 17th century, Tongans adopted catamaran-style ocean going canoes called ***kalia*** that were capable of carrying 200 or 300 people and that extended and improved their ability to travel and trade. Some scholars speculate that the ***kalia,*** with its smaller size and new style of sail and rigging, was adapted from

boats used by traders in the western Pacific and southeast Asia. The traders never made it to Tonga, but their sailing technology did, replacing the huge voyaging vessels Tongans, Fijians, and others had used in the earlier migrations. Voyaging continued in the 18th century, with Tongans traveling as whalers or missionaries. According to Tongan scholar 'Epeli Hau'ofa (1994), himself the son of Tongan missionaries to Papua New Guinea, the notion of the Pacific as a sea of islands connected by the flow of people between them is both old and contemporary.

Today, there are a few people on Kauvai who have never traveled farther than Pangai or Tongatapu, and many who periodically travel to Tongatapu, but only a few who have been to the other islands in Ha'apai, or as far as Vava'u. While there is probably less intraregional travel than in the past, many women and most men have journeyed out of the country. In the 1970s, many took freighters to Auckland or Sidney by way of Fiji (the cheapest method) to visit relatives or work for a few months and return with cash and any other material wealth they could bring home.

At the beginning of the 21st century, no one uses *kalia* for travel, although the craft appears in the name of the Tongan Internet provider kalianet.to, giving access to a new ocean that young Tongans are surfing with great aplomb. People continue to move in a vast network that stretches from Tonga to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Hawaii in the Pacific; Alberta, Alaska, British Columbia, California, and Utah in North America; and as far as Norway in Europe. Not only people, but also material wealth flows through the links formed between Tonga and the Tongans living elsewhere. Bulky shipments of traditional woven pandanus or bark-cloth textiles and traditional foods are sent by container ship to overseas relatives. In return, they send money and bring foreign commodities when they visit.

It is this production and flow of people and wealth, which Tongans refer to as *'ofa*, love, that knits Kauvai people together wherever they are and allows villagers in Kauvai to retain ties with overseas kin. Although the island is not easy to get to, it is not isolated from the rest of the world. The basis for continuing global connections between Tonga and overseas communities is the same network of affection and obligation that creates and maintains life in Fusipala.

Labor emigration is more difficult now than it was in the 1970s because New Zealand, Australia, and, to a lesser extent, the United States and Canada experienced severe recessions, high unemployment, and burgeoning illegal alien problems in the 1990s and have reduced or withdrawn offers of migrant worker's visas. Most of the men who left and returned to Kauvai are currently between 40 and 60 years old, members of the generation after Sālotē's. Today young adults may go overseas for school, sports, musical competitions, or church-based gatherings or to serve as missionaries. Some return; many do not. Kauvai people of both Sālotē's and Losalina's generations have siblings, spouses, children, and grandchildren living temporarily or permanently and legally or illegally overseas. Tonga, Tongans, and Tongan culture are no longer restricted to the islands of the Kingdom; today the globe itself is a sea of islands. While things have changed, they have also stayed the same. One senior woman from Kauvai said: "Tongans can be Tongan anywhere." In fact, she claimed, the opportunities for amassing wealth that exist in Auckland

mean that it is easier to be Tongan there than on Kauvai. What holds Tongans together is not so much geography or nationality as a common commitment to life and death framed by Tongan culture.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has used an extended example drawn from the Kingdom of Tonga to examine how anthropologists work to understand the diversity and the similarity of human ways of life through time and space. The five questions investigated in the chapter all approach the problem of understanding by asking how human cultures are best examined given the diversity and variety between and within them.

We started by asking what anthropologists do. The various branches of anthropology examine human cultures from antiquity to the present and across the globe. Cultural anthropology is based on participant observation, a method that is particularly well-suited to intensively studying small groups of people. Ethnography, the study of specific cultures using participant observation, allows anthropologists to learn about how people see themselves and think about their lives. Specific ethnographies form the basis of ethnology, the systematic comparison of different cultures to determine the ways cultures are similar and different.

For an anthropologist, culture is more than a particular ritual or art form. Such things are a small subset of the behaviors and beliefs that anthropologists identify as culture. We find culture everywhere. When doing ethnographic work, we focus closely on one place and one culture, while at the same time remembering that peoples and cultures are connected to the global system. Much of what anthropologists find interesting is everyday, unmarked, and in some ways unremarkable behavior and beliefs. Through participant observation, immersion in a place, and establishing cooperative human relationships with members of that locale, we learn by doing. This is much like learning a natal culture, but it differs in that the practice of anthropology always involves the comparison of cultures.

Cultures can be conceived of as systems for living in the world. Though we often talk about a culture as if it were a single thing, individuals learn, carry, and teach culture throughout their lives. Individual variation is to be expected within a culture. The practice of culture brings people into a dialogue that maintains some continuity as well. The answer to the question "Who has culture?" is that individuals do, but that the practice of culture is collective and interactive. It is problematic to talk about some individuals having more culture than others, but it is vital to recognize that there are differences in people's power, prestige, knowledge, and opinions. All of us make and remake culture in the course of everyday existence, but some people have more power to suggest change or demand continuity.

Nowhere is the continuity of social life more at risk than at death: a piece is suddenly missing from the social fabric, connections are sundered, and a void forms. The practice of culture must change when a death occurs, if only because the participants in the dialogue have changed. On Kauvai death is a particularly intense period of re-formation. In the face of death, through cul-

turally prescribed funeral rites and practices, the people of Kauvai actively seek continuity even as they know that change is inevitable.

The use of traditional wealth items and traditional exchange practices in managing death speaks to the profound continuities of contemporary Tongan culture with the culture of the past. There have been vast changes as well. Tonga was once part of a regional system in the western Pacific; today it is part of a vast network of economic and political forces that encompasses the entire globe. Within this network, Tongans residing in Tonga actively use traditional methods of exchange and traditional relationships to extend their connections to communities in New Zealand, Australia, and beyond. In change there is continuity, and in continuity there is change. This is the conundrum but also the wonder of culture and the essence of humans dealing with each other within and between particular cultures as they make and remake the contexts of their lives.

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ETHNOGRAPHIC ESSAYS IN CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

A PROBLEM-BASED APPROACH

Editors

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To the memory of James A. Clifton,
distinguished scholar, applied anthropologist, mentor, and friend

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ABOUT THE BOOK

This collection of ten mini-ethnographies takes a problem-based learning (PBL) approach, focusing on contextual and cumulative learning to enhance student understanding of the fundamental concepts of cultural anthropology. The problems covered in the text range from how anthropology contributes to an understanding of human similarities and differences and why people believe different things to inequality, violence, poverty, and death. Each problem is explored in the context of a particular society, including Canada, Ecuador, Indonesia, Kohistan, Tibet, Tonga, the United States, and the Sudan. Along the way, forty-six basic concepts from agricultural society to witchcraft are presented.

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