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Article abstract

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The Kindness of Strangers: Transformations of Kinship in Precapitalist Class and State Formation

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Structural tensions in kinship relations have led only rarely to class stratification. Using the case of Tongan society in precolonial Polynesia, this paper analyzes some of the reasons for the long-term reproduction of kin-based authority, labor and property relations. Pivotal aspects of kinship relations that must change for classes to emerge are examined. Connections are proposed between class and state formation as processes, and the transformation of autonomous kin societies into ethnicities.

Des tensions de structure au sein de relations familiales n'ont que rarement donné lieu à une stratification de classe. À partir du cas de la société tongan de la Polynésie précoloniale, le présent texte analyse quelques-unes des raisons qui fondent cette reproduction constante d'un modèle de l'autorité basé sur la parenté, le travail et les relations de propriété. Nous examinons les aspects déterminants des relations familiales qui doivent précisément changer pour permettre l'émergence de classes et proposons une hypothèse sur le lieu entre le processus de la formation de classes et d'un d'État, et la transformation de sociétés familiales autonomes en groupes ethniques.

Lewis Henry Morgan held that the dissolution of the gens signalled the origins of exploitation (Morgan, 1964; cf. Leacock, 1972: 46-47).¹ For both Morgan and Frederick Engels (1972), the develop-

ment of class relations dissolved the connections characteristic of "gentile" societies. Kin and quasi-kin relations² do not, in fact, disappear where classes emerge, but they no longer determine the range of relations of production, distribution, and continuity. In precapitalist state formation, class structures and institutions of surplus generation and extraction develop out of, and fundamentally in opposition to, the kin relations that order the communal holding of property, and that organize work, the allocation of products, and the continuous creation of cultural meanings.

In class and state formation as related processes, kinship is transformed. The content of being kin, resting on a supposition of sharing, persists in various degrees: even in English the connotation of "kindness" is being kin-like, or as kin are supposed to act.³ Yet, even as kinship persists, being kin is increasingly politicized. On the one hand, kinship within the emerging ruling class becomes "kinship"—the absorption of effective sharing and prior authority into the person(s) of the ruler(s). On the other hand, local kin communities become districts of producers, at least with regard to tribute extraction. An idiom of kin connection between rulers and producers is asserted in many state ideologies. But even so, the content of that supposed kin connection is an institutionalized negative reciprocity, in the form of tribute or labour provided to

the politically dominant class(es). The producing classes are metaphorically treated as strangers, whatever the manner in which the relationship is symbolically couched.

To facilitate the denial of sharing and security, non-kin may become strategic as buffers between members of the emerging ruling class and their own lower ranking kin. To rely on the kindness of strangers becomes an attempt to assure predictable succession to office. Where kin communities are especially resistant to surplus extraction, categorical strangers may become the major source of labour and products provided to the dominant class(es). In such cases, war captives (foreign or unsuccessful rebels) may become a slave class. Slavery—the institutionalization of the stranger as an exploitable person, as a laborer devoid of expectations of reciprocity — would indicate a weak state structure. Slavery, where it exists in precapitalist societies also indicates formidable resistance by kin communities, to the extent that surplus generation and extraction must be focused primarily on an alien group. The concern here is with some of the ways kinship connections can become the ties that bind kin who come to act as strangers, and, at the same time, the ways that foreigners may come to replace kin in sensitive political positions or supplement kin in reproducing class relations.

The analysis here will focus first on the range of tensions characteristic of relations in stratified kin societies. The example of the Tongan Islands in Polynesia will illustrate some of these dynamics. From there, the discussion will consider some of the transformations of kinship inherent in class formation. The final section will point to some of the range of changes in kin communities during precapitalist state formation. The discussion is intended to offer a framework for further research, a way of investigating forms of resistance to class and state formation.

Stratified Kinship and Kin-Based Authority

To ground the discussion of transitions from kinship to class, and of the institutions of state that emerge to help reproduce class relations, we should establish a working understanding of the political dynamics of so-called ranked kinship. The concept of chieftainship⁴ can serve as a means of analyzing the potentialities of class formation within a kinship mode of production. Through understanding the tensions within this form of institutional, but kin-associated authority, we can contrast the situation of producing people in stratified kinship

societies with that in precapitalist class societies. These differences highlight the violation of kinship that is inherent in the process of class formation.

Stratification within kinship relations contrasts most vividly with class stratification if one focuses on production, rather than on consumption patterns or the circulation of goods. The significant issue in kinship versus class relations is the relative control over how labour and productive capacity are allocated, and the return over time that can be expected for providing labour or products. The relative wealth of individuals or groups is somewhat epiphenomenal in this analysis.⁵ The presence of one group substantially supported by another—as chiefly people were in much of Polynesia—can be considered to indicate class *only where the existence of the producers is overtly or implicitly threatened if they do not supply the labour or goods* (cf. Gailey 1981: 307-313). In some kin settings, for example, one is expected to give to a chief. If a chiefly group can demand goods or labour and receive them systematically, class relations are indicated. On the other hand, if chiefly people say they demand goods, but they remain partially engaged in direct productive activities and need to compensate donors for their prestations on a regular basis, class relations do not exist. In many chieftainships, the chiefs claim omnipotence, but frequently must harangue, cajole or expound on the miserly nature of nonchiefly people, and then provide return gifts if the donations are received.⁶

Chieftainships, then, do not necessarily belie class relations within a kinship mode of production. In chieftainships, systematic status hierarchies exist, but the lower stratum/order retains fundamental control over the determination of work and products. The continuation of claims to labour and products by the higher stratum—to the extent that these claims are consistent—involves prodigious ideological manipulation of the meanings of being kin, of sharing, and so on.

If the recurrent interchiefly contention for succession to title is an indication, chieftainships of the sort found in precolonial Polynesia frequently were unstable, a symptom of class formative tensions. The tensions of kin-based authority, coupled with the potential for power to become disengaged from kin-associated constraints,⁷ are embodied in the titled position(s), in the relations within the chiefly stratum among the various ranks, and in the relations between the chiefly and nonchiefly orders. Class relations and the state institutions that assure the continuity of class relations could emerge out of these tensions, but they need not and did not in precolonial Polynesia. Yet this instability could continue indefinitely,

contrary to Fried's assumption that chieftainships either develop into class forms of political power or "devolve" into less stratified kinship authority (see Fried, 1967).⁸ Whether class relations do develop is a matter of relative organization (at times, literally, the organization of relatives) and historical contingencies; in the case of Polynesia, these "historical contingencies" included capital penetration in some instances and capitalist colonization in others (cf. Gailey, 1985). The character of class relations in each instance depended upon the configuration of ranking in the precolonial society and the type of capital penetration.⁹ Let us consider one case in Polynesia where class relations did not emerge prior to contact. The Tongan Islands show the major political dynamics of stratified kinship, including the structural constraints on both systematic extraction of labour and goods, and the removal of the chiefly estate from engagement in subsistence production.¹⁰

Class Formative Tensions in Precontact Tonga

Tongan society exemplifies several areas where kinship, particularly cognatic, claims must be either restricted, or circumvented through the use of non-kin, for one group to become permanently estranged from subsistence production. Prior to significant contact (effectively the mid 18th century), Tongan chiefly people are said to have been organized in "pyramidal ramage" (Gifford, 1929; Firth, 1968), a "conical clan" (Kirchhoff, 1959; Sahlins, 1958), or "status lineages" (Goldman, 1970). Such conceptualizations of ranked kin structures, particularly that of the status lineage, are important in analyzing class formation as a process. But the dynamics that prevented the development of classes in precontact Tonga lead us to question the patrilineal model, or any model where sisters are considered as a means for men to jockey for positions of social authority (Gailey, 1980, 1981; Sacks, 1979).

Tongan society seems to have been stratified in two estates or orders; both chiefly and nonchiefly orders were internally and relatively ranked.¹¹ Nonchiefly people seem to have been organized in loosely cognatic kindreds. The chiefly estate privileged patrilineal connections in the highest ranks. Within the chiefly estate, attempts were made periodically by the highest ranking people (mostly title-holders) to limit the cognatic claims of lower ranking chiefly and nonchiefly kin. The contradiction in this series of attempts lay in the reliance by the highest ranking people on cognatic claims to back their own contentions for title, to

socially validate high rank, and to arrange critically important marriages for their closest relatives.

Cognatic claims were derived from a set of inconsistent principles of rank (Gailey, 1980). Older was superior to younger (both in terms of relative age and genealogical depth); ties through males were superior to ties through females; but sisters outranked brothers. What is even less well-recognized is that Tongans had names for lineages descending from sisters, as "sisters' lines" (Gifford, 1929; Gailey, 1981: 46-48). Material and political claims a sister and her descendants—by virtue of superior rank—had to brothers and their descendants were expressed institutionally in prerogatives termed the *fahu* (see Gailey, 1980). A niece or nephew was *fahu* to the mother's brother and his children, and so on. Succession disputes at times ranged a father's sister and her chiefly and nonchiefly supporters against her brother's son and his supporters. In such cases, the sister's line could call on the support of lower ranking branches of the brother's line through the woman's *fahu* claims. The sister's claims would be reinforced by the lower ranking branches' disaffection from the senior branch, a situation discussed by Sahlins with reference to the "conical clan" (1958). Sahlins does not note that, at least in Tonga, the formation of opposition coalitions centered on the cognatic claims of the sister and the father's sister, and contenders for title (male and female) depended for support upon the *fahu*. Thus, the superior rank seen as requisite for title holding reinforced acknowledgement and activation of cognatic claims, embodied in the higher rank of sisters.

For any change in personal status to be recognized by others, items of value appropriate to the new status were required. The higher one's rank, the higher the title claimed, the higher the value of the items needed to distribute during the transition ceremonies. The value of an item depended primarily on the status of the maker or makers, coupled with the status of the initiator of the project (Gailey, 1980, 1981: 11-20).

Women in Tonga made those items considered to be valuables or wealth (*koloa*). Thus, if men were preferred for most paramount titles—parallel titles were characteristic of the highest ranking male and female chiefs—, men needed to acquire valuables made by women of equivalent or higher status. The political importance of the father's sister and of sisters in general re-enters at this point.

If a man were claiming a paramount title and his sister or father's sister supported the move, she would provide the requisite wealth objects. If she did not, she could provide the goods to a contender, or reserve them for her own claims and he had no

recourse. The importance of the exchanges validating title acquisition centered on the underlying support embodied in anyone's receipt of goods to distribute, and the reciprocal obligations inherent in such gifts.

Chiefly women were involved in the direct production of wealth objects, at critical junctures of the production process. They made the decorative stamps used in several forms of stained and decorated bark cloth (*ngatu*); they also plaited the fine, intricate mats which were crucial in life transition rites; and they participated in the production of the "plain" colored bark cloth (white and black) needed for birth, marriage and mortuary rituals. It should be stressed that these women controlled the distribution of the objects; they had a call on the labour of lower ranking women, notably the products of their brothers' wives.

The valuables amassed and distributed to validate strategic life status transitions of any person in the brother's line could be claimed preemptorily by the sister and her children. The father's sister could adopt her brother's children, a situation pregnant with political intrigue (cf. Gailey, 1980, 1981). The sister also arranged her brother's children's marriages, a similarly charged situation. The *fahu*, an institution expressing the inconsistency of the principles of rank, effectively provided for cognatic claims to labour, products, and authority.

Even if patrilineal primogeniture were the preference for title acquisition—and the record is unclear in this regard—the involvement of high ranking, titled female chiefs as sisters and father's sisters in the production and allocation of valuables, prevented the attenuation of cognatic claims. To substantiate any assertions of power (represented by possible superiority in warfare), cognatic claims had to be acknowledged; the making and presentation of wealth objects transformed the title-holder into a superior kinsman, and the kinship basis of social authority was reproduced. For power to become valid, it had to be transformed into social authority; the chief had to be, first and foremost, embedded in kin claims. The involvement of chiefly women in the making of valuables, then, effectively prevented regularized succession and, thus, the consolidation of power by any particular chiefly patrilineage. For class relations to emerge, the *fahu* had to be limited in terms of sisters' prerogatives, at least for the highest ranking chiefly groups.

Tonga exhibits the struggle to maintain effective cognatic claims where succession becomes associated with lineal descent. In efforts to limit cognatic claims, the development of lineal considerations can be seen as transitional. In the

nonchiefly estate, succession was not a political issue: nonchiefly people remained organized in kindreds. We also see the diminution of the role of the sister as implicit in efforts to circumvent the *fahu*.

We can discern attempts to limit the exercise of *fahu* claims by high ranking chiefly people long prior to European intervention. One prominent means of restricting kinship within the higher ranking estate, and of mediating the upper and lower strata was through strategically placed, and honorable, foreigners. The highest ranking chiefly Tongans periodically sought to insert non-kin retainers into previously kin-associated functions. Throughout Polynesia, and particularly in Tonga, chiefly ranks relied heavily on the "kindness of strangers". The ubiquitous "foreign" lineages and kindreds resident in most Polynesian islands represent, in part, an attempt to truncate cognatic claims to products and to the titles associated with considerable claims to the labour of others.

In Tonga, the so-called House of Fiji ostensibly provided a "safe"—i.e., politically neutral for those scholars who propose the exchange of women in marriage—place for the highest ranking, titled female chiefs to marry.¹² In terms of the *fahu*, such marriages would not interfere with the material claims of sisters to their brothers' goods. But according to most researchers (e.g. Goldman, 1970; Sahlins, 1958; Ortner, 1981), the political claims of these female chiefs would be blunted: nationality followed the father and "Fijian" children would be unsuitable to hold titles considered to be Tongan. I think this conclusion is moot. Nationality derived from the father, but rank followed the mother. The recorded assassinations of high ranking Tongan chiefs often point to those who were exempt from the *tapu* on touching people of exalted rank. The exempted groups consisted of anyone higher ranking than the person to be touched and those of foreign extraction. The "Fijian" children of the highest ranking Tongan female chiefs would qualify on both grounds. Fijians acted as hit men in succession disputes. The role of the highest ranking female chiefs, especially the married ones, thus appears a trifle more sinister, or certainly more politically charged, than most researchers have allowed (see Gailey, 1981, ch. 1).

If the attempt to remove high ranking women from political contention through marriage to foreigners was not especially successful, the use of foreigners to replace cognatic kin in other politically charged situations was sometimes effective. Respectable, but nonchiefly, foreign lineages were "imported" at the time when generalized exchange as an alternative means of defusing sisters was

abandoned (Gailey, 1981: 74-82). These foreign groups—said to be from Rotuma, Samoa and parts of Fiji—were inserted into existing chiefly ceremonies and daily activities at the highest levels, especially as officiants in life crisis and life transition rituals. In these activities, which were essential in the reproduction of Tongan chiefly kin relations, the new foreigners supplanted the father's sister and the sister's side in general. The paramount male chiefs in particular, surrounded themselves with these foreign retainers. The foreigners were partially supported by, and in turn supported, the highest ranking chiefs. Yet, even with this blunting of the *fahu* claims, the political importance of broader kin connections in the establishment and maintenance of title persisted. As we have seen, the division of labour by gender provided for this persistence of cognatic claims.

The structural ambiguity of such chieftainship based on kinship ranking could be resolved in two ways. Kin-associated title acquisition could become irrelevant to the exercise of systematic claims to others' labour and products. Political power could be estranged from kinship claims. The utility of foreigners signals an attempt in this direction. Alternatively, the value of the items needed for title acquisition and the reproduction of the highest ranks could be divorced from the status of the maker(s). In the latter instance, the requisite valuables could be obtained through tribute extraction or commodity production. Women in the highest stratum could thereby be removed from the direct involvement in making socially necessary goods, and class relations could emerge.

In the 150 years following contact, indirect colonization and merchant capital penetration provided support for these "resolutions" to be effected. Traditional constraints on class formation were removed, and power relations (institutionalized in class and the state) came to dominate kin-based authority. Commodity production (for the European weaponry) and enforced tribute extraction were processes encouraged by European missionary-traders in collaboration with one of the Tongan chiefly factions. The outcome was the alienation of products from the control of the makers. The curtailment of cognatic claims was slow in being effected: practicing *fahu* prerogatives was not made illegal until 1929. As in many other class societies, only those with requisite financial resources use law courts in inheritance and succession cases; the ban on the *fahu* can be seen as limiting property and succession disputes within the new landed nobility, the *nopele* (cf. Marcus, 1977). Notably, not all traditional chiefly people became nobles. The *nopele*, the land-holding

nobility that emerged in the 19th century, consisted of those chiefs who supported the missionaries and their nonchiefly ("foreign") retainers. Kin became estranged; strangers shared the spoils.

Prior to these conditions, class formation remained undecided. Labour claims and control over products were enmeshed in the vagaries and contradictions of kin-based ranking and stratification. Part and parcel of the class formation process was the limitation of women's social authority, a feature common in precapitalist class and state formation (Gailey, 1985). In Tonga, this authority was embodied in the roles of sister and father's sister.

Dissolving the "Gens": Dynamics of Class Formation

In Polynesian societies, class formative pressures were evident prior to contact. These pressures included a reduction in the flexibility of kin claims, the partial commoditization of products (Gailey, 1981; Leacock, 1979), and the attenuation of the higher ranking stratum's involvement in subsistence activities, if not its divorce from production. The Tongan example points to some of the effective limits of kin-based authority. Class formation out of kinship involves the assertion of kin idioms—sacred rank, authoritative kin roles, etc.—as a justification for immutable hierarchy. Transitional forms of stratification with associated patterns of authority such as chieftainships, are evident in Polynesia. Other forms can be detected in those areas of Southern and Southeastern Asia that periodically or partially were incorporated into state structures, as, for example, highland Burma (Leach, 1954).

For classes to develop, control of products and the production process through kin connections must be subordinated to non-kin considerations. These considerations may be phrased as kinship, but the content of the relationships is implicitly coercion, that is, a denial of the reciprocal nature of kin-based labour claims and the inalienable right that kin have to subsist (whatever higher ranking people's "due"). Reciprocal claims to labour embedded in gift exchange and prestations—whether this reciprocity is direct or mediated through other kin connections over time—must shift to immaterial return, backed ultimately by threat of force. In other words, gifts or prestations must become taxes or tribute. In short, high ranking kin must limit the effectiveness of lower ranking people's claims to social authority, products and labour.

For systematic extraction of products and labour to support a non-producing class, the claims of high ranking people on the producing population must be tempered to avert rebellion or popular support for rival claimants to title. This process typically involves a reduction in the number of avenues to title acquisition and the political power vested in the position. The claims justified through high rank in a descent structure are those to labour and social product, or to resources that are crucial to political dominance and the reproduction of class relations. To restrict the ways in which high rank can be socially demonstrated presumes that low ranking people's claims to title have already been limited. In Hawaii, for example, powerful paramount chiefs insisted that low ranking kindreds should not keep genealogies (hence, Morgan's generational kin terms); as in Tonga, low ranking people were organized in cognatic kindreds.

Apart from circumventing kin claims, the internal inconsistency of kin-based ranking structures must be made less ambiguous (Gailey, 1980). Whether or not lineal descent is asserted, a shift within the emerging ruling group from effectively cognatic bases for establishing high rank is needed. Regularized succession is not easily developed where power is attached to position, but two resolutions are possible. Cognatic claims may be restricted, or title acquisition may be divorced entirely from kin claims of any depth. In precontact Tonga, patrilineal ties were at times accentuated for the chiefly stratum, although this attempt to restrict cognatic claims was periodically abandoned. In precolonial Dahomey, the successor to the king was the victor in a period of rivalry—and often warfare—among the sons of the previous ruler by his concubines: royal wives never produced kings (Diamond, 1951).

Restriction of kin to socially recognized high rank can occur through either estates or castes; these forms of stratification can exist in the absence of class relations, although each is symptomatic of dynamics that could eventuate in class relations.¹³ These descent-based types of social hierarchy are related to, but overlap in critical ways, how labour and products are made and distributed. Both estates and castes involve hereditary ranking, and restrict access to the upper stratum through marriage and other ways of reckoning and demonstrating rank, but they are not parallel structures. The occupational specialization of caste, and the emphasis on endogamy *cum* female hypergamy are decidedly different than estate dynamics. Where class relations do emerge out of these different stratified settings, the division of labour, the politics of social reproduction, and the

character of the extraction of labour and products also differ.

Nascent class relations are extremely fragile, although many researchers have confused the rhetoric of power with institutional strength (see, for example, Wittfogel, 1957; Geertz, 1980). The acceleration of ritual occasions in precontact Hawaii, the intensification of slave raiding and trading on the Northwest Coast, among Viking groups, in West Africa even prior to the European slave trade, the disintegration of the state during interregnum periods in precolonial Dahomey, all point to the instability of emerging class structures.

The frailty of emerging class relations is due, in part, to the need to restrict kin-based claims within the non-producing class, while support of the non-producing class depends on *not* completely dissolving existing relations of production and reproduction in the producing communities. In the local kin communities, the dynamic generated by this contradiction is a long-term struggle, often taking cultural and institutional forms, over the determination of local production and the allocation of goods and labour, as well as the determination of custom and institutions of social reproduction (Rapp, 1978; Gailey, 1985). This struggle, termed "kin-civil conflict" by Diamond (1951; 1974: 9), eventually may redefine the content of kinship—especially in terms of broadly reciprocal labour claims—in narrower ways.

The redefinition of kinship extends beyond the nature of the connections and obligations between producing and non-producing classes, into the relations within each of the classes. Existing inequities within kin communities may be exacerbated as the range of effective kin claims is restricted. Differential power relations may develop within the producing class, in the remaining kin communities. Ironically, where the defense of kin communities is marked by kinship connections becoming more rigidly defined, state institutions may permeate property, labour and production relations with greater ease. Kin relations within an increasingly stratified or defensive producing community can become oppressive to those most subject to use by state officials. The means by which such changes can occur are myriad, but the process involves a radical denial of the content, although rarely the formal character, of kinship relations.

Kin relations become increasingly politicized, in the sense of determining relative social power, as social power comes to be embedded in property, wealth and control of others' labour. In pre-revolutionary southern China, the development and proliferation of class-stratified corporate lineages with state officials as prominent members

show the institutionalization of kinship as political power. Lower ranking clansmen could use kin claims only to establish the right to rent lineage lands.

Local kin communities are faced with the defense of kin-determined social reproduction (cf. Gailey, 1981: 314-318), that is, autonomous and continuous creation of social relations and the meanings attached to them. Resistance to surplus generation and appropriation, to forced labour or conscription, entails a new emphasis on control of kin within the local kin group. The defensive posture of the kinship sector involves, over time, a need to restrict the kinds of claims kin have to products, resources and labour. This resistance to extraction may spawn new labour forms on the part of the state: the form of the Inca *mita* reflected in part, the potential of non-compliance by local communities, if the conscript labour took people away for too long or during busy agricultural periods.

But the "closing of ranks" within the kin communities may become oppressive to kin members. Such complexes as Meillassoux (1975) describes as the "lineage mode of production" are not distinctive modes of production. Rather, the dynamics indicate a situation as described above, namely, a kin-communal mode of production still engaged partially in subsistence agriculture but constituting a sector in a larger social formation dominated by tributary or (in the case of the Gouro) capitalist relations. The character of these kin relations may signal a fairly successful avoidance of direct penetration by taxation, conscription, and imposed crop specialization, but the costs are increasing hierarchy within the community. Those most consistently affected by the constriction of kin claims are likely to be those most attractive to the dominant sector, in terms of generating products or labour.

For many precapitalist West African kingdoms, these groups included unmarried men and women, and women whose effective claims to their natal groups had become attenuated, such as widowed lineage wives. Oppressive kin relations, however, do not indicate classes along gender or age-group lines. Rather, the extraction to support the dominant, class-based sector of the social formation is indirectly determinate of kin relations even in areas that have not been directly annexed or conquered. In the kin-civil dynamic one can see the role of state formation in the bolstering of class relations at the expense of kinship.

The "Alien Nation": Kinship, Class and Ethnicity in State Formation

Engels (1972) held that the state was essential to the continuity of any class structure; in the sense that any class structure most benefits the dominant class, the state could be seen as operating in the interests of the non-producing class(es). Emerging class structures generally are too unstable to persist without the development of institutions to mediate in some manner, widespread opposition of kin communities to systematic surplus generation and extraction. Instances of class formation without state-associated institutions are few, and clearly are volatile. Most cases of this sort involved the use of war captives as slaves, who often were considered as subordinate quasi-kin. That slaves should provide the initial class indicates that kin connections in the specific society remained too strong for any rank or position to be removed permanently from subsistence production. Several of the Northwest Coast societies, the early Viking kin groups, and peoples in West Africa peripheral to state structures all showed tendencies toward class formation through slavery (see Terray, 1979), whether or not the slaves also were commodities. Administrative structures, that is, institutions of social control and extraction, in all cases were more assertions than empirical realities. In some cases, as in the Northwest Coast societies, constituted means of tribute extraction from kin communities remained non-existent.¹⁴

The emergence of technically defined state structures can be seen to buttress the further growth, or consolidation, of class relations, by blunting the direct appropriation of others' products or labour. The development of structures associated with the state—institutions of taxation, law and enforcement, census, conquest—may succeed in entrenching class relations. But there are many historical examples of ephemeral state structures: the Mayan kingdoms, archaic Egyptian dynasties, the Shan and other states in archaic China, and so on. The relationship of state-associated institutions to encapsulated, dominated kin-organized communities is riddled with antagonism. The structural opposition of kinship to class, as heightened in the opposition of kin communities to the state, involves the very constitution of culture and identity.

Classes have been defined by Fried (1967) as having "differential access to strategic (or basic) resources." While this is a feature of many class societies and all capitalist ones, it is not a feature of one prominent form of precapitalist society: those

class societies characterized by an “Asiatic” (Marx and Engels, 1964; Krader, 1975) or “tribute-paying” (Amin, 1976) mode of production. In the archaic states of China, for instance, the ruling classes owned virtually no land, and control over water resources was episodic (vs. Wittfogel, 1957). More typical of class relations and state structures that have emerged out of kinship societies is the description Marx provided of so-called Asiatic societies. In this mode of production, found in many parts of the precapitalist world, the peasantry remains predominantly kin-organized, as does the ruling class and other non-producing classes retained by the rulers. The nodal political and economic issue is the determination of the amount and type of goods produced, their disposition and the allocation of the labour of community members. Most peasants are not dispossessed, but since the state claims ownership of land, they are subject to taxation in the form of in-kind and in-labour rent. The goods and labour service drawn from the peasantry support the politically dominant class(es), in the form of tribute. Tribute consists of these tax/rents, labour service, and indirect taxes in kind and in some cases, in money.

The importance of kin connections for the class or classes that control the allocation of tax-goods, labour service, and administrative offices deeply affects the relationship of the state institutions to the producing classes. The state apparatus is not—or does not have the appearance of being—separate from the interests of the non-producing, dominant class(es) (cf. Krader, 1975). Indeed, state institutions often are wielded on behalf of specific kin claims, as is evident in succession decisions. The institutions of these precapitalist states are directly associated with a ruling class, and that class is directly involved in the transformation of property and labour relations. The institutions of state, therefore, are correctly identified in uprisings and less obvious forms of resistance as the source of exploitation.

Because of the immediacy of the connection between class and state in emerging precapitalist tribute-based societies, taxation typically is episodic or indirect, for long periods of time. Tolls, fees for using marketplaces, tithes for religious institutions related to the dominant class, and so on, are typical forms of indirect extraction. Control over products and labour becomes a matter of political, ideological and economic conflict, whether this erupts in violent confrontation or is entrenched in cultural forms of institutional warfare. As a rule, tribute extraction is masked to an extent by a widely promoted ideology of balanced return, or even generosity. In precolonial Dahomey, for

instance, indirect taxes were collected each time a natural calamity happened or threatened (Diamond, 1951).

The heavy use of ideological manipulation in tribute-based state societies (Amin, 1976; Silverblatt, 1978) is one indication of their fundamental weakness. So, too, are the succession disputes, palace intrigues, internecine warfare and imperious behavior of rulers toward a narrow range of retainers, as reported for the range of these tribute-based states. In the emergence of kingship, kinship in the politically dominant class(es) is decanted of reciprocal claims to labour and products; succession and the inheritance of a call on producing people's labour and tax-goods become the restricted content of kinship. Class position, rather than kinship becomes the gauge of material and physical security for all subjects.

Transitional forms such as estates, non-kin-based institutions such as military retinues, and in some cases, lineages, cross-cut the emerging classes and may serve—as Rousseau suggests (1978)—to obscure class relations. State formation, then, must be oriented to reproducing class relations, which necessarily involves defusing or deflecting opposition. The means of limiting opposition—by the direct producers or displaced high ranking people—are variable, but in all cases, direct repression is one form. Another means is insertion of non-kin, “strangers”, as allies in politically sensitive positions within the administrative structures or between the rulers and their own lower ranking kin.

Such non-kin retainers may vary in status. Non-kin retainers in Tonga were categorical foreigners. In the Abron kingdoms of West Africa, Dyula merchants were privileged outsiders who were not subject to taxation, only to periodic military service on behalf of the king (Terry, 1979). In Incaic Peru, non-kin retainers were lower ranking people who in their state-associated capacity were elevated in status. For the female *aclla*, state service involved permanent alienation from the natal kin communities, and alliance of reproductive potential with the rulers (see Silverblatt, 1978). In other cases, such as Ottoman Turkey and later Imperial Rome, high level state administrators frequently were war captives or slaves. The permanent military retinues that emerged in the Germanic societies transformed warfare from the vengeance of kindreds as collective bodies to one pillage by internally unrelated armies (Muller, 1977).

The emergence of class relations and the state, that is, the institutional means of reproducing class relations, out of kin-organized societies, necessarily encapsulates and therefore, truncates, the

previous kin-communal mode of production. Some of the labour organization (the division of labour by gender, age, kin role) and communal property-holding (called "hereditary possession" in Marx) are essential for the limited disruption of production required for systematic generation of the goods and services that support the dominant, non-producing class(es). The class relations are too tenuous to transform property and labour relations more dramatically. The kin-communal relations are instead subordinated, placed in the partial service of tribute production. The survival of the tribute-paying mode is destructive of the older form, since the class relations are parasitic. The state institutions and the non-producing class(es) are unnecessary for the continuance of the kin communities, at least at first.

One of the key dynamics in state formation is the attempt to make kin communities dependent upon the continuance of class relations and the new mode of production, including distribution and consumption patterns. To do this, a political division of labour must be imposed, often through the forced local or regional specialization in certain subsistence necessities. The distribution and reallocation of necessities from other regions then requires administrative intervention, especially where traditional forms of exchange are outlawed. This specialization is termed imposed, because even where there had been local specialization of a sort, as in pre-state Mesoamerica, the specialization did not extend to staple foodstuffs; in addition, the exchanges were conducted through kin and quasi-kin networks. The most familiar examples of this forced specialization and forced integration can be seen in West African and Mesoamerican states.

Until such time as internal marketplace distribution (Arnold, 1957) may be institutionalized, tribute generation is substantially dependent upon non-class relations of production. This is the case whether or not the work groups involved in state-destined production are kin-organized. Conscript labourers may be unrelated, but they must be replaced in the home community for the duration of the project. Except in cases where a slave class is primarily responsible for tribute, the production of crops, textiles, or whatever the tax in kind may be, generally is organized through kin connections. The extraction of tribute in labour or goods rests on the persistence of communal forms, although their continuity is a constant threat to the emerging state structure. The dependency of tribute generation and extraction upon the kin-ordered producing communities creates further tensions within the kinship sphere. These tensions center on the

necessity of new priorities in production (taxes first), distribution and reproduction (see Gailey, 1985).

Attempts to strengthen the means of tribute extraction (as through local, regional or occupational specialization) challenge the way in which goods and services are allocated through kin claims. Concomitantly, this challenge to the effectiveness of broad kin claims threatens the ways in which personal security and community security are ensured. Resistance to pressures for increased or specialized production, or labour service that extracts people from the home communities, necessitates a closer scrutiny of kin obligations and claims established through affiliation. The pressure placed on the kin groups is internalized through a narrowing of effective kin claims and a reinterpretation of what constitutes kin-based authority. If a headman is designated a tax collector, who then will perform the duties of headmanship?

Kin ties tend in this process (over a long period) to become more rigidly defined: lineage or residence rules emerge or are made more restrictive. Where lineages exist, claims to labour, products and resources exercised through these connections tend to become more explicit, if not more restricted. The tensions between tribute demands and kinship claims may be played out in open rebellion or resistance in cultural forms, or both.

If the kin-communal relations of production and social reproduction are successfully reduced to a sphere of production—rather than the basis of a culture—the resulting class-based social formation rests upon ethnocide. Ethnocide, the prevention of a people from determining their way of life, is a characteristic feature of state formation, but one rarely explored by scholars. State formation as a process may be considered as ethnocidal since the existing cultures forcibly incorporated into the larger social formation are deprived of autonomy. Their continued existence is made contingent upon the maintenance and support of a dominant, non-producing class and the institutional mechanisms for entrenching the state-associated class(es). The way of life cannot continue in its previous manner, since tribute extraction and politically enforced labour claims inject priorities into production and reproduction that are not determined by the kin-based forms of decision-making (which parallel the kin division of labour by life status, rank, kin role and gender).

On the one hand, state formation involves ethnocide for the kinship society or societies that are prevented from reproducing kin-communal relations in their entirety. On the other hand, state

formation creates *ethnicity*, as distinct from culture. Ethnicity, the forging of collective identities as reifications of previous cultures, comes to mark specific places in the social division of labour and in the tribute extraction process.¹⁵ As peoples are incorporated as conquered, slave, citizen, or “privileged outsiders”, ethnicity emerges in place of an autonomous cultural identity. Ethnic identities usually are used by state officials to differentially allocate privileges, occupations, or specific tribute responsibilities. Hostility toward the center can be partly deflected onto the parallel “other”.

But in addition to this millenia-old divide and rule technique, ethnicity has another face. Where the creation of culture is limited by the encapsulation and subordination of previously autonomous peoples, ethnic identity can provide a metaphor for the people’s deeper history and avenues of support in situations where the kin communities may no longer be capable of shelter and protection. Of course, ethnicity may merely be a parody of culture, especially where the group does not have a specific position in the social division of labour: class formation may occur within the ethnic group (as it is actively fostered in capitalist social formations) and the process destroys the basis for solidarity.

State ideologies work to stem attempts at ethnogenesis, the forging of a new people out of shared (and in state formation, oppressive) circumstances. Local deities are drawn into state pantheons, but in the incorporation, the local deities lose much of their ambiguity: they are given more specialized functions. Local deities are either subordinated to the deities of the state-associated class(es), or become an aspect or facet of the major deities.

The success of attempts to forge authentic or “genuine” (Sapir, 1961) culture, that is, meanings that are autonomously created out of shared circumstance, rests upon the elimination of political subordination. Shared history provides one basis for movements aimed at political autonomy, the rejection of an ethnicity useful to the state in favour of identities developed in the subordination and resistance process. Resistance movements against the Roman empire, for instance, show an association of similarly situated, but ethnically distinct peoples.

As a process, state formation appropriates kin forms to obfuscate the overall denial of kinship between rulers and producers. Previously customary rights of subsistence and continuity are subordinated to the needs of stratification (see Gailey, 1985). During class and state formation, kin are made at least partly into strangers, in terms

of control over production and allocation of products and labour; cultures are transmuted into ethnic identities as autonomous peoples are impressed into service to the persistence of class relations.

If state formation is inherently ethnocidal, it also is not concluded as an historical process. Those who have been forced into being partial strangers to one another within the kin communities, and those who were foreigners but who have become similarly impressed into the state society, can come to recognize and act upon, their historical kinship. Ethnogenesis requires the recognition of kinship with others in shared circumstances of subordination, kinship with strangers. In seeking cultural forms of resistance to the imposition of class and state structures, ethnogenesis is one process which may develop alongside or in place of more obviously class-based movements. In some cases, such rediscovered—or newly forged—kinship may form the basis for insurrection. In a context of a class-based social formation, ethnogenesis is by nature emancipatory.¹⁶ It is typical of the dialectic of repression and resistance that a feature used to destroy solidarity of kin communities—the denial of the content of kinship and the deflection of hostility through racism, etc. onto parallel producing peoples—can become a new basis for continued resistance.

NOTES

1. It would like to thank Richard Lee, Tom Patterson and Irene Silverblatt, participants with me on the panel on Recent Theories of Class and State Formation at the Canadian Ethnological Society/Société canadienne d’ethnologie conference, held at Hamilton in 1983. I also would like to thank the participants on the panel on Northwest Coast slavery for the spirited and constructive dialogue which followed the panels. In preparing this paper, Tom Patterson, Irene Silverblatt, Laura Schwartz and Richard Lee provided cogent criticisms and suggestions, which I have tried to address and incorporate.

2. “Kinship” as used here includes fictive and adoptive forms of relationship, as well as those connections conceived as derived from affiliation and marriage. The content of kinship can be seen as diffuse and broadly reciprocal claims to labour and products, mutual responsibility, and generalized or at times, balanced sharing—regardless of sentiment. Happiness and affection are not the point; expectations that are acted upon are the content of these relationships. Age groups, age grades, sodalities, and other associations can be considered to be kin-type connections in this sense.

3. As kinship becomes estrangement, so strangers may be expected to act as kin in strategic situations. Tennessee Williams' "Streetcar Named Desire" reflects the isolation and desperate impulse to share in Blanche DuBois' "I have always relied on the kindness of strangers." One cannot, of course, rely on strangers or on kin in fragmented social conditions, such as characterize capitalist society.

The concept of the kind stranger is Biblical, from an earlier, precapitalist state context of shrinking expectations of help from kin as populations were uprooted. Indeed, in class formation out of a kin base, aid from non-kin can be used to deny obligations toward kin, as discussed later in the text. Where successful, this circumscription of kinship creates the necessity for mistrusting the narrower range of kin that may remain effective. All former functions can no longer be discharged by various kin roles (see, for instance, the discussion of the development of the "best friend" role in Dahomey, in Diamond, 1951). Personal and social security can no longer be provided solely through kin connections. As the kin sphere shrinks, reaching its minimum perhaps in industrial capitalist society, the fear, and necessity of trusting alien others for kin-like responses becomes marked.

4. Chieftainships can be useful as a concept, but prevailing definitions (e.g. Service, 1975; Sahlins, 1963) tend to neglect issues of control over the disposition of goods by the producers. As used here, chieftainship is a form of institutional authority found in kin-organized societies having estates or orders as strata. To use Sahlins' phrase, a chief has a greater call on others' labour and products. This "call" is distinct from that of "bigmen" or other positions of prominence achieved primarily through the extension of kin networks and the manipulation of gifts. The position of the chief is constituted, but on an empirical level, the acquisition of title is largely achieved through the intervention of higher, lower and similarly ranked kin. The person of the chief is embedded in kin-associated expectations of material and immaterial returns for goods presented or services rendered. Chiefly persons, that is, the titled and untitled members of a higher ranking estate, may signify or literally embody the general prosperity and fecundity of the kin group. In Polynesia, this embodiment was corporeal, at times to the extent of immobilizing the paramount chiefs. The chiefs, then, are expected to act as kin, even in Hawaii, where high ranking chiefly people asserted that they had a separate origin from the nonchiefly people. Chiefs are expected to respond as superior—and thus, generous—kinspeople.

5. The difference in a number of highland Papuan peoples, between a bigman and a "rubbish" man, is not a matter of class. To derive class relations from possession of goods or from relative prosperity (as in Legros, 1982), is to replicate, in a tangential fashion, Robert Harry Lowie's gloss of relative comfort, ownership of goods, and private property (Lowie, 1920).

6. The definition of class relations here contrasts with that of Legros (1982) and those who focus on circulation as causal in class formation. Control over

exchanges of goods with outsider groups would indicate class relations only where such exchanges involve a fundamental shift in the control the direct producers exercise over the goods produced or appropriated, or in the effectiveness of the producers' claims on those who dominate the trade. The presence of one group which may dominate trade routes does not *ipso facto* indicate a dominant class position, or class relations at all. Similarly, a strategic position held by one group, with regard to optimum or preferred subsistence resources does not indicate class relations vis-a-vis surrounding groups, *unless the continuity of the more marginal groups is contingent upon their provision of services or goods requisite to the strategically located group's support.*

7. Hannah Arendt discussed the distinction between authority and power in *The Human Condition* (1958). In another context Pierre Clastres framed the limits of authority and power in kinship societies in *Society Against the State* (1977). Roughly, the areas of congruence in their arguments center on control over social action. Forms of authority are characterized by the delegation of given areas of social decision-making by an adult population to a status or position(s), the holding of which is determined by the population.

Regardless of supposed consent or quiescence of the population, power is characterized by the vesting of social decision-making in positions or institutions that are not determined by the society as a whole. Thus, the preselection of candidates in the United States, coupled with the appropriation of political decision-making by corporations and other private economic institutions, does not permit the characterization of the state as based on relations of authority, but rather, as based on power alone. Indeed, the continued existence of political positions—whether elected or selected by shareholders—is not in the hands of the constituent population. Thus, all state societies that are not characterized by direct democracy are power-based, with coercion an implicit threat to any attempts to fundamentally alter patterns of social decision-making.

It is evident that even in the most stratified of kin societies, as Tonga or Hawaii, the determination of title holders rests ultimately on the population, since the holder had to demonstrate his or her appropriateness as a *kinsperson* to be supported by those of lower status. Clastres (1977) pointed out the circumscription of the use of power in kin contexts and the means of containing the exercise of power through kin claims. Chieftainships mark the uncomfortable authority relations within stratified kin societies, where the contradictions of being kin with potential power can eventuate in the institutionalization of power in class relations.

8. Fried's sense that societies with chieftainships either develop into class societies or become ranked bigmanships is adopted by Wolf in his recent work (1982). The positivism implied in directional change is rejected here.

9. Where "bigmen" have become the focal point of colonially-associated class formation, the prominent people have tended to become wealthy traders. In colonial situations where land was not confiscated and

where there were chieftainships, the chiefs tended to become either administrators or rulers *as well as* landholders or owners. One pattern tends toward mercantile classes, the other toward landlord/political broker classes. This is not the only possibility, but it constitutes a pattern in neo-colonial Polynesia.

10. By subsistence I mean goods needed to provision and maintain the society as constituted. In that sense, “subsistence” would include goods needed for status changes, since these are “socially necessary” in the reproduction of the people as a society. The term should not be taken, where kin-communal modes of production are involved, to be solely food, clothing and shelter. In class societies, such a sense of subsistence—as survival—may at times be appropriate.

11. Ranking and stratification in Tonga are discussed in detail in Gailey, 1981: ch. 2. Briefly, the chiefly estate included various ranks of titled chiefs and a range of untitled persons with socially recognized ties to existing or former chiefs. The nonchiefly estate included *matapule* and *tua* ranks, each of which was internally graded. One other group may have been included in the nonchiefly estate. The *mua* are referred to variously in early accounts as the collateral kin of *matapules*, or the offspring of chiefly and *tua* liaisons. The *matapules* were considered higher ranking than the *tua*; they served as attendants and artisans for chiefly people, although their artisan skills were available to other nonchiefly people as well. Most *matapules* were considered to be of foreign origin, which had political implications discussed in the text. *Matapules* were ranked both by occupation, in the case of artisans, and by the rank of the chief, in the case of attendants. They intermarried freely with the *tuas* and lower ranking chiefs.

The term *tua* generally has been translated as “commoner”, a symptom of a pervasive problem in the analysis of stratified kin societies. Analysts of precolonial Tonga, Samoa, Hawaii, etc., tend to adopt the characterization of different ranks and strata associated with the highest or one of the highest classes to emerge in the colonial or post-contact period. The highest chiefs’ view of the society thus becomes the anthropologist’s to a large extent. Early European and American travelers’, missionaries’, or administrators’ accounts have encouraged the adoption of such characterizations, as the terms applied tend to be projections from the writers’ society—or a utopian view of the writer’s society as a potential. To call the *tuas* “commoners” implies the existence of a nobility. But a nobility only emerged in the 19th century in Tonga. In an otherwise sterling ethnohistorical account, Goldman (1970) uses the term “aristocratic” to describe stratified Polynesian societies prior to contact; he thereby implies that the position of the chiefly estates in Tonga, Hawaii and elsewhere was similar to that of noble classes in precapitalist states. The notion of a “primitive aristocracy” implies incipient class relations at least; this did emerge, but the development of class relations was by no means an autochthonous process. To read inevitability or nascence back from what did occur, to what had existed is to force tensions of stratified kinship into a positivist framework.

12. Goldman (1970) and Ortner (1981), relying heavily upon Goldman, consider female chiefly Tongans to have been defused in political terms. Ortner emphasizes the role of sexuality and marriage in her proposed “trade-off” of high status for minimal political authority. Goldman held that the sister’s side bore honor, while the brother’s side of the lineage contended for political position; his characterization is contradicted by the information presented here. Ortner’s proposal is more or less a structuralist scheme: generalized exchange is taken as an ahistorical given, and nature and culture are presumed to be polarities associated with female and male respectively. Neither of these fit the Tongan case. I have discussed the historical emergence—and abandonment—of generalized exchange in Tonga elsewhere (Gailey, 1981: ch. 2).

13. Where class relations come to co-exist with estates, one class may include two or more estates. For example, the land-holding class that emerged in late 19th century Tonga included members of the chiefly estate and of the *matapule* ranks within the nonchiefly estate. Alternatively, one estate may include a range of classes, as in the *Tiers Etat* of pre-revolutionary France.

14. Prior to significant penetration of the fur trade with Europe, the development of domestic slavery in Northwest Coast societies, in the form of war captives, may indicate estate structures rather than class relations. It is unclear, in this early period, if captives were used as commodities—it appears doubtful—and available evidence points to their use to supplement, rather than to replace, subsistence production by kin.

Class formative tensions were present, both in relations between slave and captor groups and, within the non-slave kin groups, in the form of claims associated with rank. The development of a slave class over time can be seen: commodity trade came to parallel intensified raiding as a major source of slaves. Slave labour came to replace nearly all production by the highest ranking groups. Particularly as the fur trade expanded, slave labour came to be used for commodity production (see Leacock, 1979; cf. Klein, 1983). Captives once were redeemed by their relatives, a situation similar to that of female Tongan war captives; but in some Northwest Coast societies, slave status came to be considered as an irredeemable status loss. The supplementary “drudge work” role shifted to include most maintenance work and considerable productive labour. A processual analysis of changes in the nature of slavery on the Northwest Coast, relating increasing stratification within the kin communities and transformations of captive status to increasing involvement in commodity production allows one to see the pressures toward and in opposition to, class relations. Parallels can be drawn to other social formations where kin communities were highly resistant to surplus generation and extraction, as West Africa (cf. Terray, 1979).

15. Laura Schwartz (1983), in “Immigrant Voices: From Home, Work and Community,” discusses the development of ethnic identity in the United States. Ethnicity, she argues, reflected a position in the division

of labour, and provided a means of mutual aid and organizational support for working class immigrants.

16. Ethnogenesis can be taken as an authentic form of nationalism. The nation-state is, of course, a legal fiction. The making of a nation depends upon the dismissal of state-sponsored ideology of unity, and the recognition of lived-through historical experience. Most revolutionary movements include a sense of unity through shared historical subordination, and the awareness that the wealth of the society is created from below.

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